

INSPECTION REPORT

**WINIFRED HOLTBY SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY
COLLEGE**

Kingston-upon-Hull

LEA area: Kingston-upon-Hull

Unique Reference Number: 118061

Headteacher: Mr S J Liddle

Lead inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe

Dates of inspection: 11th - 14th April 2005

Inspection number: 268520

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,610
School address:	Midmere Avenue Leads Road Bransholme Hull
Postcode:	HU7 4PW
Telephone number:	(01482) 826 207
Fax number:	(01482) 839 589
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Johnson
Dates of previous inspection:	16 th - 20 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school is much larger than most, educating about 872 boys and 738 girls aged 11-16.

Pupils' social and economic background is below average. Their overall attainment on entry at the age of 11 is below average overall, although literacy levels are well below average.

Ninety-nine per cent of pupils are white; the remaining very small minority come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Both the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and the proportion with official SEN statements are a little below the national norm. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There are no pupils in the school who are refugees, asylum-seekers or travellers.

In the last (2003-2004) academic year, about six per cent of pupils joined or left the school other than at the usual time at the beginning or end of the school year.

The school gained Technology College status in 1999. It was awarded the Charter Mark in 2000; the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2001; and both the Healthy Schools and Investor in People Awards in 2004. It received a School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in both 2002 and 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Lead inspector	
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector	
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; Drama
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art and design; Design and technology
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	Geography; History
2048	Mr M D Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17923	Mr M Shaw	Team inspector	Citizenship
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4697	Mr R Black	Team inspector	Music
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education; Special educational needs
10448	Mr M F Elson	Team inspector	Religious education
1819	Mr R H Crowther	Team inspector	Business education; Health and social care

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

- Winifred Holtby provides an education that has many satisfactory and a few good features. It does, however, have serious weaknesses. Overall, **it is not a sufficiently effective school**.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is below average. Literacy and numeracy are well below average. Academic achievement is too low.
- Teaching and most learning are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. Many pupils show satisfactory attitudes and behave reasonably, but too many waste time or are difficult. Much of the curriculum is imaginative. Most parents and pupils like the school.
- The new senior management is good. Pupils are well looked after. Because of its weaknesses, however, the school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in Year 11 examinations continue to improve. Those of 2004 were the best ever.
- Pupils' reading, writing, speaking and mathematics are not improving fast enough.
- Pupils achieve well in lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) and in physical education (PE). They achieve least in mathematics and religious education (RE).
- In the lessons seen, Year 8 performed well. Years 7 and 9 did worst.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good, but there is not enough of it.
- The most able pupils should do better.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not good enough. They have to improve.
- Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are well handled. Pupils know they are valued.
- The school's vocational courses and other imaginative provision meet pupils' needs well.
- Statutory requirements are not met for RE and collective worship.
- The school's governance and performance analyses are weak.
- Staffing is now much more stable after the huge (half) turnover of the last two years.
- Leadership is good: it now has to prove that it can manage everything effectively.

Since its last inspection in 1998, the school has made unsatisfactory progress overall. Success in Year 11 examinations has risen substantially, but overall achievement is not good enough. The behaviour and approach to learning of too many pupils are unsatisfactory. The curriculum is much stronger on job-related courses, but there are gaps in RE and collective worship. The new leadership is clear on what it needs to do to improve the school's performance.

The school has not made enough progress in improving the main weaknesses identified in 1998. For example, Year 11 pupils still do not study RE. Independent learning is not widespread. Parents are better informed, though information about courses remains sketchy in Years 7-9. Spiritual & cultural development remain unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are not good enough.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	E	E	B

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

For Year 11, "similar schools" are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' overall achievement is unsatisfactory. The 2004 Year 9 national test results were both low and a poor achievement – amongst the bottom five per cent nationally. In stark contrast, the 2004 GCSE results (though below average) were a good achievement, helped by an appropriate emphasis on vocational examinations – as national recognition has twice indicated. Pupils' current level of attainment is well below average by the end of Year 9 and below average by the end of

Year 11. In most subjects pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils usually achieve well in ICT and PE lessons. In Years 10 and 11, they also do well in music and in design and technology. Many do not make the progress they should in English, mathematics, science and RE. Misbehaviour, poor attendance, lack of effort and some weak teaching hold pupils back.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed unsatisfactorily. Staff's sensitive, effective concern for the personal welfare of all pupils is a great strength. Relationships are good. Pupils know that they are cared for. Their moral and social development is satisfactory, but their spiritual and cultural growth are unsatisfactory. In too many lessons, pupils misbehave: they talk when they should not, do not listen, waste time and play about. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of pupils' education is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and in most subjects. Learning is good in Year 8, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 9. Around half the teaching is good (or better). It is not up to scratch in one in every seven lessons. Good teaching is the norm in ICT, music and PE. Teaching is weakest in mathematics. (though two lessons here were excellent). Many pupils do not study hard enough. The range of vocational courses is a strength. There is not enough help for pupils with special educational needs. There are too few computers. This is a very "inclusive" school: everyone matters.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's **leadership is good and its management satisfactory.** The new headteacher is taking the school forward with vision and determination. Senior managers work closely together. Staff morale is good. The school runs smoothly. Governance is unsatisfactory. All now have the task of pulling together to turn this school round: behaviour and achievement are their main targets.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of those parents whose views are known feel that the school is doing a good job. Most aspects are well rated. A quarter are dissatisfied with homework and half do not think pupils behave well enough. Most pupils feel it is a good school to be at, but many are concerned about behaviour. Inspectors understand the general support for the school, but agree that the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority have to be improved. Overall, most pupils like and support the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the unsatisfactory classroom **attitudes and behaviour** of a substantial minority of pupils, because they are holding back academic standards and achievement.
- Raise standards of **literacy**, because pupils should speak, write, spell and punctuate better.
- Remove the weaknesses in **teaching** identified in the main body of the report.
- Bring provision in **English, mathematics** and **RE** up to a good standard.
- Continue to strive to improve pupils' **attendance** and **punctuality**.
- Evaluate all aspects of the school's **performance** accurately and continually.
- Provide more **computers** and more help for pupils with **special educational needs**;

and, to meet statutory requirements, provide:

- a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and RE for pupils in Year 11.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The 2004 GCSE and vocational examination results were the best that the school has had. They were much higher than those at the last inspection. Although the results were below the national average, they represented a satisfactory achievement for many pupils. In contrast, the Year 9 results have been well below average for the last few years. The 2004 results were low and a poor achievement. In current work, pupils' standard of attainment is well below that expected nationally by the end of Year 9 and below what is expected in Year 11. These levels of attainment represent an unsatisfactory achievement, because too many pupils fritter away their time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards of attainment and achievement are not good enough.
- The 2004 GCSE results were the best the school has ever gained.
- The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C in 2004 was double that of 1998.
- The 2004 Year 9 national tests results were a poor achievement.
- In GCSE in 2004, pupils tended to do better in English and geography than in most of their other subjects, and worse in design and technology and in history.
- Current attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average in design and technology and in physical education (PE).
- It is well below average throughout the school in mathematics, RE and drama.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.1 (31.1)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	32.5 (30.9)	35.5 (35.4)
science	30.8 (28.8)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 325 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2003.

Commentary

1. Pupils' overall standard of attainment on entry in Year 7, in most academic years, is below average. The entry in 1999 that took their GCSE examinations in 2004 was, however, well below average. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils, for example, was about half of what is typical nationally. Fewer pupils than usual, therefore, started their secondary education with a secure grounding in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The weakest subject on entry is always English. The academic standards that many pupils have on entry do not match their abilities.

2. At the end of Year 9 in 2004, the overall standard reached in the national tests was low. Since 1999, the school's results have not kept pace with the rise in results nationally. When these 2004 Year 9 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar economic background (as measured by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed below the group average.

3. A comparison of the Year 9 results for 2004 with the standards that pupils had on entry to the school in 2001 indicates that most pupils made poor progress over their three years in school from Year 7. Indeed, their achievement was amongst the lowest five per cent in the country in all three core

subjects. For example, in both English and science, nearly three-fifths of pupils recorded the same level in national tests at the end of Year 9 that they had recorded three years earlier at the end of their primary schooling. Mathematics was a little stronger, but even here around one third recorded no measurable progress over the three years. Girls do better than boys in these tests, especially in English.

4. As current pupils move towards the end of Year 9, their level of attainment in most subjects – and overall – is below average. It is well below average in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, RE and drama, but average in PE. Pupils' current progress and achievement in their studies over Years 7-9 are unsatisfactory overall. They make satisfactory progress and achieve reasonably, however, in citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music. They make good progress in ICT and PE. Achievement is unsatisfactory in science. Pupils with special educational needs progress well from specialist teaching, but there is not enough support available in many classes where it is needed. It is an urgent task for the school to put in place a robust plan to improve achievement in Years 7-9.

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	41 (36)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	71 (73)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	85 (91)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	25.7 (24.4)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 328 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2003.

5. Pupils' performance in GCSE and vocational examinations is stronger. In the 2004 GCSE and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations, taken together, pupils' overall attainment was below the national average on most measures. This was, however, a good set of results: by national statistical measures, pupils made good overall progress from the standards they had two years earlier in Year 9.

6. Since the last inspection, GCSE / GNVQ results have improved substantially: the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-C, for example, has doubled. Over the last few years, the school's results have improved at a faster rate than the picture nationally. The bulk of this improvement has come from girls and from pupils' successful study of vocational courses alongside GCSE. All middle- and higher-ability pupils, for example, take two GNVQ courses at Intermediate level that count (together) as the equivalent of eight GCSE awards. The resultant statistical effect also helps to explain the apparent discrepancy between recent results and current attainment and achievement.

7. In the core subjects, pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A*-C in GCSE in 2004 was average in science (the majority taking a GNVQ course at Intermediate level), but well below average in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in all of English, mathematics and science (17 per cent) was less than half the national average of 39 per cent. In contrast to the poor progress many pupils made in mathematics, pupils generally made satisfactory progress in English and good progress in science in the 2004 Year 11 examinations from the standards they had when they joined the school in Year 7.

8. When pupils' performances in all the subjects they take in GCSE are compared with one another, pupils tended to do better in 2004 in English and geography than in most of their other subjects. They tended to do worse in design and technology and in history. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest A* grade in 2004 was low. No pupil did so, for example, in English or mathematics. This underperformance by higher-ability pupils in GCSE mirrors that of similar-ability pupils in the Year 9 national tests in 2004.

9. When the school's results at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was, overall, at least in line with most others in the group in 2004. For instance, the proportion of pupils gaining the equivalent of at least five grades A*-C (as well as the "uncapped" points average) was better than the group average, whereas the proportion gaining five grades A*-G and their "capped" points average were well below the group average. The school met most of the targets it set for itself in the 2004 GCSE examinations.

10. Girls achieved a much larger proportion of the higher A*-C grades in GCSE than boys in 2004 – half the girls did so, compared with just one third of the boys. The overall gap between the sexes was larger in both 2003 and 2004 than it was nationally. In 2004, girls did much better than boys in English, gaining more than double the good grades that boys did. They did slightly better than boys in mathematics, but much better than boys in science (continuing a rapidly widening trend). The reason for the difference between the sexes is that, on the whole, girls here work harder and concentrate in class better than boys.

11. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils currently reaching nationally expected standards in subjects is below average overall and in most subjects. The proportion is, however, average in science, ICT and music, and is above average in design and technology and in PE. It is well below average in mathematics, history and drama, and is low in RE.

12. Pupils' level of achievement was unsatisfactory overall during the inspection. In just over one third of the lessons observed, pupils achieved well (and sometimes very well indeed). Their achievement was satisfactory in just under half of all lessons. Achievement was, however, unsatisfactory (and occasionally poor) in one fifth of the lessons seen. In contrast, achievement was sound in Year 8: here, achievement was below a satisfactory level in just two of the 30 lessons seen, partly because these pupils behaved and concentrated better than their counterparts in Years 7 and 9.

13. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are the main factors in how well – or badly – they achieve. This is because most staff provide at least a sound standard of teaching. A significant minority of pupils, in contrast, do not make the effort necessary to learn and are allowed to chatter and waste time in class. They come to school unprepared for learning and keep inadequate records of homework. Pupils make good progress when they concentrate and think hard and when teachers control classes well, successfully encouraging pupils to do their best. Overall achievement will not rise to the level that is possible until pupils come to school, regularly, with the determination to behave themselves, to work hard and to succeed – and all staff ensure that they do.

14. Across the school, pupils' standard of literacy is well below average overall and does not improve enough as pupils move through the school. Most pupils can read well enough at the required level to handle the written material they encounter. Far fewer pupils than usual, however, are confident and accurate when they read aloud. A minority of pupils produce well-structured writing that is adequately spelled and punctuated. The overall standard of handwriting, spelling, punctuation and presentation, however, is well below average. Too few pupils take obvious pride in their work. Although often good in design and technology, class discussion is fairly rare and often of a limited standard (partly because of background chattering and inattention). The standard of focused listening to teachers or other pupils is lower than usually found. The absence within the school of a coordinated policy or thrust to improve literacy is a serious weakness that requires immediate attention.

15. Numeracy is well below average overall – in line with a similar standard in mathematics. Most high-ability pupils handle numbers fairly satisfactorily, but a substantial minority are weak on calculations. Many pupils immediately reach for calculators for simple arithmetic. Attainment in ICT across the curriculum is below average, partly because of some equipment shortages or some pupils' reluctance to exploit appropriate software. It is strongest (and of an average standard) in the specialist-taught lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance for school, though steadily improving, is unsatisfactory. Many pupils behave appropriately, but the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority (especially in Years 7 and 9) are unsatisfactory. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is satisfactory, but the spiritual and cultural aspects remain unsatisfactory. A significant minority of pupils lack pride in their school and show insufficient commitment to achieving success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is unsatisfactory: pupils' absence is a serious drag on what the school can achieve.
- Punctuality for school is unsatisfactory.
- The poor behaviour of a minority often spoils learning for the well-behaved majority.
- The school has substantially reduced the number of pupils being excluded.
- In half the lessons seen in Year 9, pupils displayed negative attitudes to learning.
- The school lacks an effective policy for pupils' personal development.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2003-2004 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.4	School data	4.0
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.

Commentary

16. Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory overall. It is well below the pattern nationally. In the 2003-2004 academic year it was 86.6 per cent. This was higher, however, than the 85.1 per cent at the last inspection. In the first two terms of the current academic year, attendance was 87.1 per cent. This is a slight, continuing improvement on the previous year, but still does not reach the target of 89 per cent that the school has set itself for the whole of this year.

17. Punctuality for school is unsatisfactory. So far in the current academic year around 12 per cent of pupils (representing an average of almost 200 pupils per day) fail to meet the morning registration deadline, although most are in school for the start of lessons. Punctuality for lessons is broadly satisfactory, although a minority of pupils make little effort to get to classes on time. The school has satisfactory methods in place to try to ensure that pupils do reach lessons across this extensive site on time.

18. During the last academic year, the weakest level of attendance was in Year 11 (at 83 per cent): just over half the pupils had an attendance rate of 90 per cent or better. Only six pupils (two per cent) had a 100 per cent attendance record. A quarter, however, had poor attendance, being absent for at least the equivalent of one day per week.

19. Absence on this scale is a serious drag on the school's academic performance. It affects not only those pupils who are absent, but also the pupils who attend well, because teachers have to divert some of their time and energy to try to help returning absentees to catch up – and thereby not cover as much new work as they would wish. Only in Year 7 did attendance climb above 90 per cent. "Cared for" pupils, however, attend well.

20. The school tries hard to secure good attendance. For example, it intensively prioritises those pupils with low attendance. Special staff patrol the school's catchment area. Parents may

use a dedicated telephone line for attendance matters. The school has a computerised system (glitches are soon to be tackled by an alternative, updated system) to check absence from lessons. Local radio actively publicises good attendance. Truancy from lessons is an occasional problem for the school.

21. The school gives high priority to the development of positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. It has mixed success. Expectations of pupils are clearly and simply stated and are widely displayed. The school has thoughtfully strengthened the pastoral system by the appointment of key stage coordinators. The school's "on-call" system offers a structure of fairly direct support to teachers, allowing the removal of misbehaving pupils from the classroom. The school records and monitors such incidents carefully.

22. The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works to achieve them. In most lessons, and around the school, most pupils show appropriate attitudes and behaviour. During the inspection, attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory (or better) in all years, except Year 9, in most of the lessons observed. They were good in Year 8: in these lessons, teachers were successful in engaging pupils' attention and interest, and so success in learning and achievement followed.

23. In around a quarter of all lessons, however, and in half the lessons seen in Year 9, a proportion of pupils showed unacceptable attitudes and behaviour that seriously impeded learning. In such lessons, pupils often arrive late, are inattentive to their teachers and do little work. When teachers fail to engage pupils' interest or to exercise sufficient control, neither the school's code of expectations nor the "on-call" system compensates for some pupils' lack of motivation and endeavour. The lack of care that a minority of pupils show for their own and other pupils' learning is a major barrier to higher achievement for all pupils.

24. This view is also held by pupils themselves. Many indicated, in their discussions with inspectors, that for them behaviour was what was most in need of improvement in the school. The majority of parents, too, who responded to their pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern about pupils' behaviour. They showed greater concern about this issue than about any other aspect of school life. They are right. It is one of the two highest priorities for the school to put right.

25. Pupils enjoy one another's company and the social life of the school. The majority relate appropriately to adults. A significant minority, however, lack both the aspiration and the endeavour needed for good achievement. Many lack pride in their school and the school has not established a sufficiently positive climate for learning. For example, although every pupil is issued with a good-quality planner, they are not effective as a tool for learning, because most pupils do not use them. Many pupils come to school without books, equipment or bags. As a consequence, pupils are slow to develop a maturing sense of responsibility for their own learning and their own lives.

26. The number of pupils excluded in recent years has been high. The efforts of the school, supported by the *Behaviour Improvement Programme* and the *Behaviour and Education Support Team*, have been successful in making a substantial reduction in the number of exclusions. In particular, the number of children in public care excluded from school has been reduced very considerably.

27. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is satisfactory, but the school's overall programme of personal development is unsatisfactory. The weekly assemblies observed during the inspection were good and often inspiring: pupils responded well to them, but they had insufficient impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. At other times, pupils do not have the benefit of an act of collective worship. The school also fails to comply with the statutory requirement to provide pupils in Year 11 with RE.

28. Provision for the spiritual and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development has remained unsatisfactory since the last inspection. The school's document on such provision exemplifies good practice, but is not an operational policy. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils'

personal development are ineffectively monitored and are easily overlooked, not only within subjects but also across the school as whole.

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	1591	252	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	1	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although learning in Years 7 and 9 is unsatisfactory. Teaching quality is similar overall to what it was at the last inspection: although there is more good teaching now, the overall picture needs to be stronger. Most pupils learn well when class discipline is strong, because most teachers are knowledgeable and highly committed professionals. In a significant minority of classes, pupils do not learn and achieve as much as they should, because they waste time and lack sustained concentration and effort.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good throughout the school in ICT, music and PE.
- It is unsatisfactory overall in mathematics.
- Three staff taught outstanding lessons – in mathematics and music.
- Half the teaching is good (or better) – a proportion that needs increasing.
- Teaching is not up to scratch in one in every seven lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 192 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	26 (14%)	69 (36%)	67 (35%)	23 (12%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; the figures in brackets show percentages. Percentages do not total 100 owing to "rounding" the figures.

Commentary

29. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They were satisfactory or better in 86 per cent of the lessons seen. Teaching quality is broadly the same as it was at the previous inspection. There is more unsatisfactory (or poor) teaching now (14 per cent) than there was (at eight per cent) in 1998. The proportion of good (or better) teaching, however, has increased from 40 per cent to its present 51 per cent. The proportion of very good (or better) teaching has increased from 11 to 15 per cent.

30. Although the majority of pupils learn satisfactorily, learning in Years 7 and 9 is unsatisfactory. This is because too many pupils in those two year-groups do not concentrate, but waste their own time and that of others. In Year 8, in contrast, both teaching and learning are good.

31. Teaching, though satisfactory overall, needs to be stronger. Too much is just satisfactory or even unsatisfactory in its impact. Not enough is first rate. The school takes seriously the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching. Under the determined leadership of its new headteacher and a revitalised senior management team, it has embarked on an appropriate programme of monitoring and training. The school has also faced considerable turnover of staff (in the last two years, half the staff are new to the school) and some difficulties in recruitment.

32. Staff work hard in this school to provide a sound standard of education. Most lessons are well planned and satisfactorily taught. Three were outstandingly successful – two in mathematics and one in music. There is a good level of morale amongst staff (teaching, support and administrative) and a deep wish to do their best for the pupils of their community. The work ethos amongst a significant minority of pupils, however, is just not strong enough. An urgent, major focus for all managers has to be the successful inculcation in these pupils of a desire to learn, to work hard and to display acceptable standards of behaviour in class.

33. Teachers generally know their subjects well enough to ensure that they give accurate, up-to-date information and usually organise well what they plan to teach. They select important topics that they know will interest pupils and usually ensure that each new lesson fits into a clear framework of learning.

34. Most lessons are soundly planned (very well in ICT). In the best lessons, teaching aims are clearly identified and shared with pupils, so encouraging them to pay attention and put a good effort into their work. The timings of different stages of lessons are explained to pupils and kept to in practice, so that pupils become better at planning their own work carefully and know how to learn. Teachers draw ideas together as lessons proceed. Importantly, they ensure that they leave enough time to conclude lessons tightly, questioning pupils about what they know and reiterating the central themes of lessons.

35. In a minority of lessons, however, not enough thought is put into precisely what it is that pupils are to learn. Neither the aims nor key messages are made clear at the outset. Teachers usually cover the ground they intend to, but often do little to deepen pupils' understanding. This is usually because the teaching is more concerned with covering the planned subject-matter than with identifying what is the kernel of learning.

36. The best lessons sustain pupils' attention. This is often because teachers' enthusiasm, good humour and clear explanations carry pupils along. It is obvious to pupils that their teachers want

them to succeed and are doing all they can to ensure that this happens. Such lessons proceed at a brisk pace and engage pupils' attention. Teachers succeed in ensuring that pupils reflect thoughtfully on their work.

37. In contrast, in a significant minority of lessons, there are two main weaknesses. Sometimes, lessons are dull and unimaginative, failing to engage pupils' interest. More commonly, pupils do not put enough effort into their work. They are content to idle their time away and chatter. In these cases, even where lessons are intrinsically interesting, teachers have to work very hard to motivate some pupils – and still do not always succeed, despite their best efforts.

38. Pupils make most progress when teachers set appropriately high intellectual and creative challenges to pupils. In these lessons where they achieve well, pupils know that their teachers have high standards, ensuring that lessons move at a brisk pace right from the outset and cover a significant amount of ground in the time available. Teachers make sure that pupils think hard, research thoroughly and give cogent reasons for their answers. They extend pupils' first ideas by searching, supplementary questions. They ensure that work is done thoroughly. In some cases, they emphasise the importance of carefully committing information and views to memory.

39. In a significant minority of classes, in contrast, teachers do not obtain sufficient quality or quantity of work from pupils. They leave topics at a superficial level, rarely probe beneath the surface of issues and miss opportunities to sharpen pupils' critical faculties. Class discussion is usually brief (and quite often predictable one-word answers to teachers' closed questions). Speaking is often ill-expressed and barely audible. Poor presentation, handwriting, spelling and punctuation are inadequately tackled.

40. Most lessons contain a reasonable mixture of different learning methods that help to keep pupils' motivation going. The scene-setting and explanations at the beginning of lessons are often clearer than the whole-class, round-up sessions at the end. The latter are sometimes rushed and cursory. Too infrequently are they crisp, comprehensive summaries of what pupils know and understand.

41. Not enough lessons make effective use of a combination of whole-class explanations and individual or group work. In the best lessons, group written assignments or discussions are carefully focused and timed. Pupils build up a solid understanding of how to learn as well as what to learn. A minority of lessons do contain a variety of activities, but the sum total of activities does not ensure that pupils learn enough, partly because they rapidly lose interest and become unsettled. Good-quality, extended discussion is rarely seen.

42. Teachers' management of pupils – in particular the adequate control of their behaviour – is a major determinant of the success of lessons. In successful lessons, teachers have a firm but pleasant hold over pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They use a combination of interesting topics, a brisk pace, good humour, encouragement, appropriate praise and a no-nonsense stance to ensure that pupils keep to their tasks, behave themselves, work hard and gain maximum benefit from lessons. In a quarter of lessons – a high proportion – teachers do not keep sufficient order. They allow pupils (or are unable to stop them) from chattering or acting foolishly, thereby disturbing those in the class who want to get on with their work. This poor class control accounts for a significant proportion of lessons where pupils do not achieve well enough. It is the school's major task to establish a calm, purposeful atmosphere for learning in all lessons.

43. A considerable proportion of staff are relatively new to the school or to teaching. They nevertheless work well together as a team. Teachers make good use of the learning assistants that are available (although there are not enough of them to support all the pupils with special educational needs who require such help) and use technical help wisely. Homework was set fairly reasonably during the inspection (except in mathematics, science and art), but the expensive *Planners* provided are very rarely used. Teachers find it difficult to get a minority of pupils to complete homework in an acceptable fashion.

44. The assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. It is good in ICT, modern foreign languages, music and PE. In these cases, clear advice is also given to pupils on how to improve their standard of work. Assessment is satisfactory in all other subjects except citizenship and RE as well as in Years 7-9 in science and geography. Most pupils are aware of the level at which they are working. Their targets are usually challenging. Progress towards these targets is judged three times a year (usually convincingly) and reported succinctly to parents. Whilst the assessment of individual pupils is improving under the direction of a newly appointed deputy headteacher, the school has no adequate way of judging its overall academic success or failure.

45. Teaching is satisfactory overall in most subjects and year groups. It is good in Years 7-9 in history, in Years 10-11 in art and in design and technology, and throughout Years 7-11 in ICT, music and PE (very good in Years 10 and 11). It is unsatisfactory in English in Years 7-9, in RE in Years 10 and 11, and throughout the school in mathematics. Teaching is good in Year 8. In all other subjects and year groups other than those mentioned above, teaching is satisfactory.

The curriculum

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities within its curriculum. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9 is satisfactory, but pupils in Year 11 are not taught RE. There is an unusually extensive range of vocational courses offered and the "alternative" curriculum meets the needs of disaffected and vulnerable pupils well. The school's Technology College status is well represented by a wide spread of appropriate courses. Not enough is done, however, to raise pupils' standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Participation in sports is good. Accommodation and learning resources are generally satisfactory, but the school does not have a sufficient number of computers. The school has unfilled teaching posts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers a very wide range of vocational courses in Years 10-11.
- The improvement of pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing is unplanned.
- Pupils in Year 11 are not taught RE.
- The school does not have enough teachers or support staff.
- A daily act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils.
- There is a good range of additional classes to help pupils to prepare for examinations.

Commentary

46. There is a satisfactory balance of subjects within the curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9. All pupils study one modern foreign language and all study drama. Every pupil in Years 10 and 11 takes at least one vocational course from an impressively wide range. Additionally, all these pupils attend a college of further education for part of their week – a feature which has led to a significant rise in the proportion of pupils continuing in education or training after the age of 16. However, the overall provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because, currently, they do not study RE in Year 11. The school has plans to rectify this from the start of the next academic year, but has not yet appointed the necessary increase in staffing. Because of its strong vocational element, the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

47. All pupils have the opportunity to experience all components of the curriculum. The ways in which pupils are grouped are appropriate. Good provision is made for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have lost interest in school. The "alternative" curriculum for these pupils enables them to achieve qualifications that include the *Duke of Edinburgh's Award* and the *Junior Sports Leader Award*. This programme has increased attendance for some of these pupils and led to some choosing to continue their education after the age of 16.

48. Specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is led and managed well. Where learning support is provided in lessons, it is of good quality. There is insufficient support,

however, for teachers in mainstream classes. Records of pupils' progress and achievement are very carefully maintained and updated. As a result, pupils have individual learning programmes appropriate to their needs. These programmes are well used by most subject departments. A variety of paired reading schemes enables nearly all pupils to make satisfactory progress in reading by the end of Year 9. Pupils with physical disabilities have specially adapted equipment and learning support provided for them. In Years 10 and 11, an alternative curriculum provides a range of vocational courses, in good accommodation, for pupils with special educational needs.

49. Special units help to reintegrate disaffected pupils who return after exclusion or after major personal disruptions. These units provide caring, sensitive support and monitor pupils' progress well. All pupils are patiently valued. Teacher assistants for these pupils work well together as a team.

50. Subjects' schemes of work are appropriately drafted to support learning and are of adequate quality. The school does not, however, have a policy for the teaching of literacy. One is badly needed: pupils do not benefit from discussions to the level they should, written work does not reflect learning adequately and many pupils do not undertake effective research. All of these factors contribute to pupils achieving less than they should. Similarly, one outcome of the lack of planning for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences is inconsiderate or disruptive behaviour from some pupils.

51. Pupils avail themselves well of the good range of sporting opportunities provided. Participation in the arts is satisfactory. The school provides a reasonable range of extracurricular activities, with satisfactory take-up by pupils. The additional classes to help pupils to prepare for examinations attract good participation and contribute well to raising standards. The school runs a range of activities for pupils with special gifts or talents. These have, however, focused (successfully) on increasing the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at C+ (or equivalent) and not sufficiently on ensuring that enough pupils achieve the very highest GCSE grades.

52. The school has experienced considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Currently, it is short of teachers of English, mathematics, design and technology, and RE. Further, some teaching in science, art, citizenship and ICT is undertaken by staff without the necessary training or experience of teaching the subjects. Whilst the current teaching assistants provide good support to pupils with special educational needs, there are too few of them to meet pupils' needs in all subjects. There is also a shortage of technicians to support adequately the teaching of art, design and technology and ICT.

53. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There is an adequate number of rooms (both specialist and general) for the curriculum offered. With the exception of modern foreign languages, pupils in wheelchairs can access at least one of the rooms for each subject. The library is a new, airy space providing a good atmosphere for study. The "model" classroom is a good, innovative facility to help to develop the quality of teaching and learning. Each year group has its own social space, but these are not of high quality. Lack of soundproofing makes the accommodation for music unsatisfactory. Accommodation for drama is also unsatisfactory. Some corridors are far too narrow, with congestion creating difficulties.

54. The school does not have enough learning resources. It has fewer computers than generally found in a school of this size, restricting the use which subjects can make of ICT. There are not enough computers in the library to allow pupils to undertake research. Mathematics does not have enough textbooks. The library is well stocked with fiction, especially to encourage reluctant readers. The range of non-fiction books is not, however, great enough to support all levels of attainment for all subjects.

Work-related learning (WRL)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 take at least one vocational course.
- A good quality programme of work experience helps pupils well to prepare for working life.
- Lack of basic skills occasionally prevents pupils from progressing to the next level of courses.

Commentary

55. The school has identified the potential of work-related learning to improve pupils' achievement. Examination results at the end of Year 11 have improved significantly now that all pupils take at least one vocational course. Furthermore, every pupil in the last two years of the school attends a local college for part of the week. This is a major reason why there has been a large increase in the proportion of pupils remaining in education or training after the age of 16.

56. Work-related learning makes a large contribution to the "alternative" curriculum followed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 – as, for example, through working with the staff of a local sports stadium to gain sports leadership qualifications. Occasionally, pupils cannot immediately move to the next vocational level on leaving the school. This is because their basic skills are not at the level demanded for their vocational study. The school does not have arrangements to tackle systematically this potential barrier to learning.

57. In spite of difficulties in obtaining suitable work-experience placements, the school has persevered commendably to make this activity available. A sense of responsibility is developed because, whilst this opportunity is available to all pupils, only those meeting minimum standards of behaviour or attendance are allowed to take part. A well-structured booklet offers valuable advice and guidance to pupils whilst on their placements. Pupils appreciate the value of work experience; during the inspection, Year 10 pupils were observed writing mature letters to employers, thanking them for their placements. During one assembly, the success that pupils had achieved on placements was celebrated.

58. Pupils are well guided as to their career choices through a good programme of careers education. Year 10 pupils, for example, were observed listening attentively to advice on how to conduct themselves at interview.

59. The use of work-based examples by subjects varies, but is satisfactory overall. Good use is made of these in such subjects as science, business education, and health and social care. Less use than normal is made of such exemplars in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. The support, advice and guidance that the school gives to pupils are satisfactory. The school's involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very good at helping vulnerable pupils and those with severe difficulties.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Pupils have the benefit of good, trusting relationships with one or more adults in the school.
- The school's arrangements for pupils' induction into Year 7 are good.
- The school council lacks influence as a responsible, representative body in the school.

Commentary

60. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Within departments and across the school, attention to matters of health and safety, including risk assessment, is effective. The school has the benefit of extensive perimeter fencing and closed-circuit cameras. The toilets are cleaned and supervised well. At lunchtime, good meals and drinking water are available. Procedures for child protection are also in place.

61. The school is very good at meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils. Children in public care are looked after very well; the substantial reduction in the number of them being excluded has been a notable success. Within its provision, the school integrates well those pupils with severe difficulties of various kinds, who are accepted by other pupils in an unobtrusive way. The coordination of the various services provided through the *Behaviour Improvement Programme*, the *Behaviour and Education Support Team*, learning assistants and mentors, together with the use of outside agencies, ensures that the most vulnerable pupils benefit substantially from the comprehensive, and often specialist, support available.

62. The support, advice and guidance that pupils receive are satisfactory. Pupils have good, trusting relationships with their form tutor and other adults in the school. The school has firm plans to extend the role of tutors from personal guidance into monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. The school does not, however, have all the key sets of data, understanding and systems in place to undertake this task in a thorough, accurate way.

63. Parents like the school's arrangements for the induction of new pupils into Year 7. Pupils have the opportunity to get to know the school and some of their future teachers before they arrive. Smooth transition, however, is impeded by the late arrival of assessment information from pupils' primary schooling. This is a weakness that requires urgent rectification.

64. The school's involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is broadly satisfactory, but should be stronger. The school council and year councils meet and keep minutes of their meetings. Because teachers rather than pupils conduct the meetings, they risk becoming briefing rather than debating sessions. Pupils do not elect a fellow pupil to chair their meetings. When interviewed, representatives from the school council said that meetings would break down without the control of a teacher. The school council does not therefore currently act as a representative, responsible body, because pupils do not receive sufficient training to help them to acquire the necessary skills and confidence. Overall, however, the school's care, patience and concern for its pupils are one of its key strengths.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents hold a generally favourable view of the school. Most are pleased with the progress their children make. They feel that the school has high expectations and good teaching, but have some concerns about behaviour. A satisfactory range of information is provided to parents – an improvement since the last inspection. Links with colleges for the provision of vocational education are good. Community links are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The community makes good use of the school's facilities, particularly for sport.
- The school has strong links with post-16 colleges for the provision of vocational education.
- Very poor use is made of pupils' planners.
- Information to parents about the curriculum is thin.

Commentary

65. The school's links with parents are satisfactory overall. Those parents and carers who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that they are pleased with the progress their

children make, feel that their children are treated fairly and encouraged to become mature and independent. They particularly feel that staff expect pupils to work hard and achieve their best. By far the greatest concern of parents was about behaviour. These concerns, as indicated earlier in the report, are well justified.

66. Since the previous inspection, the information provided to parents about the school and children's progress has significantly improved in both the *Governors' Annual Report* to parents and in the school's *Prospectus*. The school's *News Magazine* is now printed in colour, with an attractive, new layout. Sponsors of the magazine now provide financial help with production. Its circulation covers partnership schools and many community locations. A very useful information booklet is also provided to parents and pupils, as they start at the school.

67. Written reports to parents are satisfactory. These reports are suitably complemented by two Parents' Evenings each year (one for parents to meet form tutors and the other to meet subject staff). The level of parental attendance at these evenings, disappointingly, reduces as pupils move up through the school. In seeking the views of parents, the school recently issued a questionnaire on such issues as the dress code, homework and the timing of parents' evenings.

68. In many of its activities, the school encourages parents and carers to contribute a full part to their children's learning. The school's good website carries a wide and useful range of information on some of the courses and curriculum followed by the pupils, although there is variation in detail between subjects. Information for parents about the curriculum is not issued on a regular basis or in a standard format. A major weakness in enhancing the home-school partnership is the very limited use of pupils' high-quality *Planners*.

69. The school recognises the important role it plays in the community. Through its Technology College status, it provides a range of activities and learning opportunities for its community. The school's facilities (in particular, the sports hall and swimming pool) are used extensively by local groups and clubs. The Learning Link Worker promotes a range of initiatives and clubs that involve both parents and children of primary and secondary school age. Close links with the local press and media are utilised to good effect. The school has very recently recruited a (third) deputy headteacher to take responsibility for community matters.

70. There are close links with other schools and colleges, particularly for vocational education and the "alternative" curriculum. The head of Year 7 works closely with contributory primary schools. Careful consideration is given to personal factors in the composition of tutorial and teaching groups for new entrants. The good links with post-16 colleges enable the school to provide a wide range of vocational education. There are particularly close, effective links with the parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The new headteacher provides the school with good leadership. He is implementing appropriate plans to raise standards. Staff morale has risen partly because pupils' behaviour, whilst still not good enough, has improved since his arrival. He is well supported by a committed senior leadership team. The leadership of other key staff is good overall. Management is satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher has a very good understanding of how to improve the school.
- The senior management team provides the headteacher with good support.
- The school does not have an effective system to analyse its performance.
- Governors do not have enough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- School leaders make this a very "inclusive" school.
- As a result of underachievement, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Commentary

71. In the short time he has been in post (since September 2004), the new headteacher has made teachers and pupils well aware of how the school needs to improve. He is implementing good-quality plans to move the school forward. Although more work remains to be done on improving behaviour and attitudes to learning, staff appreciate the improvements in pupil behaviour he has already brought about. This is one key reason why staff morale has risen. Until recently, the turnover of staff was very high. A considerable proportion of the teachers who have completed their training at the school have decided to remain to teach here.

72. The governing body has members who show high levels of commitment to the school. It has, however, difficulties in fulfilling its duties for two main reasons. Firstly, it does not find it easy to attract members: currently, approximately a quarter of its membership is vacant. This places additional demands upon members. Secondly, governors do not have sufficient information to be able to assess how well the school is doing and so cannot provide challenge and support to the required level.

73. The governing body has not ensured that the school effectively tackled the key issues identified at the previous inspection. It does not ensure that all pupils are taught RE or that the school meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Consequently, the governance of the school is unsatisfactory. The governing body does, however, recognise its deficiencies and its new chair is determined to effect improvement.

74. The new headteacher swiftly recognised that the management structure he inherited was not adequately suited to the needs of the school. Importantly, he identified the fact that the senior team needed strengthening. The appointment of one additional deputy headteacher has already been made. He has extensive experience of improving teaching and learning and has set about improvements with infectious enthusiasm. Appointment to a further post at this level has just been made. Other members of the senior management team have had their duties redefined and relish the challenges ahead.

75. Senior leadership is well supported by other key staff of the school. Departmental leadership is good overall. It is very good in science, ICT and music. It is good in all other subjects, with the exceptions of English, art and drama (where it is satisfactory) and mathematics (where it is unsatisfactory).

76. Important areas have been neglected in the past. For example, the school does not have policies or coherent practice for raising the standard of pupils' literacy or for effectively ensuring pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The former is important, because current standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening restrict pupils' achievement, whilst the latter accounts, in part, for negative attitudes towards schoolwork and the disruptive behaviour of a significant minority of pupils.

77. Currently, the school is not able to evaluate its own performance with any degree of accuracy. For example, some senior staff do not know what the most recent examination results represent in terms of pupil achievement, whilst some attendance statistics are inconsistent. The school requires a clear model and robust system for collating and interpreting key data, in order to ensure that it always has an accurate and up-to-date picture of performance and can evaluate the impact of its policies. These omissions are a major reason why the school's management is less effective than its leadership. Nevertheless, the school functions adequately on a day-to-day basis.

78. Teams in the school function effectively. The sole exception is the team teaching mathematics. Most teams have clear mechanisms for members to meet regularly to exchange information and share good practice. This is not the case for citizenship and RE, so reducing their effectiveness.

79. The headteacher leads curricular planning and teaching well. The wide range of vocational courses on offer is not only raising achievement, but also helps to increase the proportion of pupils who remain in education or training beyond the age of 16. There is good collaboration with local colleges of further education. A beneficial feature of these links is that every pupil in Years 10 and 11 spends part of their week being educated at one of these colleges.

80. The thoughtful identification of the value of vocational courses to pupils is a prime way in which the school demonstrates its commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils. Another is its provision through the “alternative” curriculum for pupils who had previously lost interest in school. Occasionally, this range of courses is not as effectively managed as it could be: as noted earlier, pupils taking a vocational course may not have taken courses providing the necessary level of basic skills to progress with their vocational studies after the age of 16.

81. The school is effective in training staff. It recognises the need to link this work closely to raising pupils’ achievement. Performance management is now tied into the processes of teacher development. The model classroom, in which demonstration lessons can be taught, is extremely useful for disseminating good practice. Lessons are filmed to analyse teaching and learning, so that effective practice can be spread. The school is extensively involved in the initial training of teachers. This is proving an effective way of recruiting permanent staff for the school.

82. The school has experienced considerable difficulties in recruiting teachers. At the time of the inspection, three posts were unfilled. The use of temporary teachers to fill these vacant posts adversely affects achievement, partly owing to discontinuity in pupils’ education. The current reforms of the teaching workforce are being well tackled. Greater clerical support is now available to teachers and teachers no longer have to invigilate examinations. These changes free teachers’ time for lesson preparation and assessing pupils’ work.

83. The school’s finances are managed satisfactorily. Staff administering the school’s finances are new to the school, but have a clear understanding of where improvements in efficiency can be made. Governors monitor expenditure carefully, but are not fully involved in the processes of setting and evaluating the school’s budget. The school has not had a recent audit, but no serious concerns were raised on the last occasion one was undertaken. The school complies satisfactorily with the principles of best value. In the past, key decisions, such as the purchase of a computerised registration system, were not always well-informed, leading to an inappropriate use of finance. The school now tackles these issues and concerns adequately. The school receives an average amount of money for each pupil, but, as pupils do not achieve well enough, it provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	6,478,485
Total expenditure	6,042,345
Expenditure per pupil	3,726

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	398,843
Balance carried forward to the next year	436,140

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 **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' overall standards of work and achievement are not high enough.
- Most pupils' attitudes to learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory overall.
- In the best lessons, pupils make good progress.

Commentary

84. The Year 9 national test results for 2004 were well below the national average and in the lowest five per cent nationally. They were significantly lower than those of 2003 and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The 2004 results represent a poor achievement from the time that pupils entered the school in 2001.

85. The 2004 GCSE results, though well below the national average, continued to improve on the results obtained in 2003. Girls do much better than boys, gaining double the proportion of A*-C grades (45 per cent of girls doing so in 2004) that boys do. The 2004 GCSE results indicated unsatisfactory achievement from Year 9 standards, but satisfactory achievement from entry in Year 7. Pupils tended to do better in English than in most of their other subjects.

86. The standard of pupils' current work towards the end of Year 9 is well below average and indicates unsatisfactory progress since pupils entered the school at the beginning of Year 7. The standard of pupils' reading varies widely and is below average overall: pupils' understanding of what has been read and drawing inferences from it are often insecure. Pupils with special educational needs often make sound progress as a result of the support they receive. The quality of pupils' written work is well below average overall. Most pupils understand satisfactorily how to plan and organise different kinds of writing tasks, but insufficient attention is given to spelling, handwriting and punctuation to ensure that, overall, they reach an acceptable standard in these matters.

87. The quality of pupils' oral work is well below average throughout the school. Most pupils listen to their teachers' instructions, but do not always ensure when they speak aloud that they are both clear and audible and that they use standard English. The quality of extended discussion and explanation is low, partly because pupils have fewer opportunities than usual to practise these skills.

88. By the end of Year 11 the overall standard of pupils' work is below average. This represents for many pupils a satisfactory achievement from the end of Year 9. Pupils do not, however, make the progress they need to over the whole of their time from entry in Year 7 to the end of Year 11. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 often have good attitudes to learning, benefiting from their teachers' constructive comments that help them to understand what they need to do to improve.

89. Teaching ranges from very good to poor. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9 (and needs to be better), satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory overall. It is sometimes very good – as, for example, in a Year 10 lesson. Here the teacher used the pupils' prior knowledge about poetry by challenging them to read and respond to a poem (*De kinderlifde*) that was written in Dutch. Pupils' quick success in this activity also strengthened their knowledge and raised their confidence. These were quickly put to the test by the teacher's use of a copy of Georgia Garrett's poem, *Manwatching*,

in which words had been left out. The consistently high level of expectation that the teacher established throughout the lesson deepened pupils' understanding of poetry very significantly.

90. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Problems of recruitment and retention have made management tasks far from easy and have partly undermined the head of department's attempts to establish strategies to improve the department's work. Schemes of work have been suitably reviewed for Years 7-9. The informal links that exist between English and drama do not adequately exploit the benefits of joint curricular development. Overall progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

91. The standard of literacy in subjects other than English varies very widely, but is well below average overall in all years. Many readers lack confidence and speed – as, for example, in the skimming and scanning of texts. Fewer pupils than usually found are good at drawing accurate inferences from what they read. Some pupils read fluently, but many do so fairly slowly, frequently lacking fluency and expression.

92. Pupils' standard of writing is well below average overall and remains so by the time that pupils leave school. This is partly because the key skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting are not coherently tackled across the school. The planning of written tasks is usually the strongest feature, whilst spelling and punctuation are the weakest. Pupils' speaking and listening are poor overall and extended discussion is less than normally found. One reason for these weaknesses is that too many pupils are inattentive or indulge in background chatter.

93. It is a major weakness that the school does not have a cross-subject policy for literacy or effective ways of monitoring and reviewing progress in this very important aspect of its academic work. These deficiencies require early attention. Progress on literacy since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The faculty is led and managed well.
- Many pupils lack confidence in speaking.
- Assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress.

Commentary

94. In the 2004 GCSE examinations in French, German and Spanish, the proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A*-C was well below the national average. No pupil attained the highest (A* or A) grades. All pupils entered for the examination in Spanish and German gained a grade in the A*-G range. The proportion who did so in French was below the national average.

95. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils begin to study French or Spanish in classes of similar ability and continue with their allocated language through to Year 9. This academic year, for the first time, eight of the 12 classes will take the *Entry Level Certificate* in Year 9, in order to provide them with accreditation for their three years of study.

96. Pupils' overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below average. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of topic vocabulary and different constructions. This competence enables them to carry out satisfactorily such different tasks as listening exercises and the matching of sentences.

97. The standard of speaking and pronunciation varies widely, but the overall standard is well below average. In both languages, many pupils lack confidence in speaking and have poor pronunciation. Higher-attaining boys in Year 7, however, conducted short interviews from memory in Spanish and spoke well. A class of lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 likewise answered questions and read aloud quite confidently. In this class, the standard of their writing in Spanish was better than the equivalent that they produced in English. Most pupils write at a reasonable level in their chosen language. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils have a sound understanding of past tenses.

98. A small number of pupils continue to study French and Spanish in Years 10 and 11 as an optional subject. The standard of attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average in both subjects. Departmental predictions for GCSE this year show an improvement over last year's results.

99. There is a very wide range of attainment across the two sets in Spanish, but progress is helped by pupils displaying good attitudes to the subject. Higher-attaining pupils achieved well, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on school rules. Lower attainers in another Year 11 class showed good understanding of a reading passage on bullying, whilst pupils in Year 10 showed a high level of interest in a writing task in preparation for their coursework. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 in French generally lack confidence in speaking and require much support from their teachers.

100. A very small class of pupils in Year 11 studies German, a final legacy from past years. They have experienced a number of different teachers over two years of the course. Standards of attainment are well below average. Pupils showed fair understanding of a job interview and answered the questions successfully in English. A vocabulary test demonstrated clearly, however, that homework had not been learned well enough.

101. The achievement of most pupils who attend school regularly is satisfactory. Over time, most pupils acquire the necessary range of topic vocabulary, opinions and constructions. For more advanced work, pupils learn different tenses. Year 11 pupils have made good progress in their Spanish coursework. An all-girl class in Year 8 already writes confidently with three tenses in Spanish. The presentation of their exercise books is superb and shows what can be achieved when the teacher's expectations are high. In many other cases, presentation requires improvement.

102. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory overall. It suffers when pupils' attitudes and behaviour are inappropriate. They are usually satisfactory. In a Year 9 French lesson, however (for example), many pupils did not pay attention to the teacher, but chatted. Pupils' behaviour was poor in a Year 7 Spanish lesson. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but the department has insufficient support for these pupils.

103. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory overall. There is a consistent approach to lesson-planning across the department. Pupils are aware of what they have to learn at the outset of lessons. Starter activities help pupils to revise, and most lessons contain a suitable variety of tasks and skills. In some lessons, speaking in the foreign language does not occur, is not stressed sufficiently or is not followed up after chorus work by pupils being challenged individually. Teachers use resources well. At times, however, they do not focus sufficiently on what pupils have retained by the end of lessons. Pupils' exercise books are marked regularly and efficiently. Comments are encouraging and helpful: many show pupils clearly how to improve.

104. The head of faculty provides good, clear educational direction for the department. Coursework has been introduced for GCSE and two single-sex classes have been successfully created in Year 7 and Year 8 in Spanish. Management is good. Teachers are working hard to support the classes of a colleague who is away on long-term sickness. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

- Many pupils have negative attitudes towards the subject.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory, because some teachers expect too little of pupils.
- Leadership has not been good enough to raise achievement sufficiently.
- There are also grounds for optimism about teaching and learning, now that staffing is more settled.

Commentary

105. Results in the 2004 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well below average. Compared with pupils' prior attainment, they were very low. This represents significant underachievement – as was also the case in 2003. The 2004 GCSE results for pupils were well below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement.

106. Pupils currently in Year 9 entered school in 2002 with slightly below average attainment; there were fewer higher-attaining pupils than in most schools. These Year 9 pupils do not, however, achieve as well as they should, because their current overall standard is now well below average. Gifted pupils do not achieve enough, because their teaching too often lacks direction and impetus. There is insufficient classroom support for some pupils with special educational needs.

107. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard remains well below average. Many pupils in Year 11 are now making satisfactory progress, but the overall rate of progress is unsatisfactory. More able pupils make reasonable progress and many of these are entered for the GCSE examination in statistics as well as in mathematics. However, a significant number of average- and lower-ability pupils (many of whom have special educational needs) do not attend school regularly enough to achieve their potential. The achievement of this year group as a whole since entry to the school is unsatisfactory: They entered school with below average standards and since Year 9 they have been well below average. Some gifted pupils are stretched well, but too few pupils aim for the higher grades at GCSE.

108. Teaching varies from excellent to poor and is unsatisfactory overall. This was the quality of teaching in a quarter of the lessons seen. Two outstanding lessons were taught (by different teachers) in Years 8 and 10. In the best teaching seen, staff explained to pupils clearly what was expected of them by the end of lessons and ensured that their intentions were sensitively, yet determinedly, enforced. Some teachers made very good use of ICT – as, for example, in showing how distance could be estimated from a graph of speed in a given direction over time.

109. Too much teaching, however, is unsatisfactory (or even poor). In these cases, pupils are allowed to interrupt teachers, chat idly for long periods or even strike each other. Even when teaching in lessons is at least satisfactory, it is often not supported by demanding homework to help pupils to develop more interest in the subject and acquire the skills to become more independent learners. As pupils rarely take exercise books or textbooks home, book distribution wastes time at the start of lessons. Many exercise books contain graffiti.

110. Leadership is unsatisfactory and management satisfactory. Partly because of considerable staffing difficulties, the head of faculty has been diverted into just keeping things going on a daily basis. This has resulted in the emerging good practice in teaching and learning not being shared and in there being too much inconsistency of approach amongst staff. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

111. Pupils' mathematical ability is well below average overall. Despite this, pupils usually have enough skill and knowledge to carry out satisfactorily the numerical work they encounter in most subjects – such as when they interpret statistics in science, geography and history or show spatial awareness in art. The use of algebra, however, is weaker than usually found.

112. Some specific weaknesses were seen during the inspection. For example, few pupils understand how to use brackets, when devising formulae for spreadsheets in ICT. Many Year 10 and 11 pupils studying GNVQ science struggle to substitute values in formulae or to calculate accurately. In design and technology, few pupils understand how to calculate missing distances from given measurements. A significant weakness is that the school does not have a policy for implementing mathematics across all subjects – a gap that requires closing.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GNVQ examination results show a major improvement on the GCSE results of earlier years.
- A highly committed head of department offers very good drive, vision and support to science staff.
- Pupils are well motivated in upper sets, but many other pupils easily lose interest in their work.
- The achievement of many lower-ability pupils is not high enough.

Commentary

113. Pupils' overall attainment in the Year 9 national tests in 2004 was well below the national average; girls' attainment was slightly higher than boys'. This represented poor achievement, because pupils' overall level of attainment slipped during their three years in the school.

114. The school has adopted alternative courses to GCSE for over half its pupils. Approximately half take a GNVQ (Intermediate level) science course. The results in 2004 were close to the national average for science for all schools (where the vast majority take GCSE courses). In this school, pupils gain better results in science than in English and mathematics. The 2004 results represented satisfactory achievement for the top-band pupils taking GNVQ accreditation. The achievement of those pupils taking GCSE single-award science and other non-GCSE certificated courses was unsatisfactory. Those pupils taking the GNVQ course respond particularly well to the everyday contexts and applied nature of the work that they do.

115. The attainment of current Year 9 pupils is below average. It is not higher, because many pupils are inattentive in lessons, valuing socialisation more than their education. As a consequence, they do not learn and remember enough science and so underachieve. In Years 7-9, pupils respond well and achieve appropriately when teachers make extensive use of active, engaging methods of teaching. Pupils are not, in general, good at discussing and sharing what they know (and are given few opportunities to do so), because some pupils in mid-range sets are prone to off-task chatting. In the mixed-ability classes in Year 7, the more able pupils do not always experience activities that stretch their curiosity. There is also insufficient support for those pupils who enter the school with low attainment in science.

116. All teachers have adopted several strands of the national science teaching strategy for classes in Years 7-9. In some lessons, time is allocated to ensuring the correct use and spelling of scientific and technical words, but this is not a feature of most lessons. Exercise books reveal little evidence of extended writing: work is often incomplete, untidily presented and frequently lacks

guidance as to how pupils can improve their work. Literacy and numeracy are lower than they should be.

117. Some lessons grip pupils' attention. A very good Year 8 lesson on "distance versus time" graphs, for example, began with a fictitious walk to the photocopier and ended with a number of short video- sequences of a premier league football game, logging graphically the distances a footballer covered in a game. Every pupil's attention was captivated by the content offered to them. They achieved well, showing clearly the impact made by the teacher's imaginative use of material and pitching work at just the right level.

118. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work in the sciences is average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall – and particularly for those pupils of middle to upper ability. The achievement of a significant minority of pupils in mid- to low-range sets, however, is less than satisfactory. This is because these pupils are often content with mediocre work. In these cases, teachers have to work hard to engage the interest of pupils, many of whom demand continuous attention. Those pupils with SEN statements usually receive well-targeted assistance and make satisfactory progress. In contrast, other pupils with special educational needs tend to make unsatisfactory progress, largely because they receive little additional, in-class support.

119. Teaching ranges from very good to poor. It is satisfactory overall throughout Years 7-11. Half of the lessons observed were good (or better). Teachers usually have good command of the subject and plan their lessons in detail. The wide variety of teaching approaches used by most staff is a notable feature of the department. Three lessons seen were unsatisfactory and one was poor. The basic weakness in these lessons (taken by temporary or inexperienced teachers) was that pupils learned and worked too little. Pupils' learning often lags behind the quality of the input from teachers, because many pupils do not put in enough effort.

120. A highly committed head of department leads very well by example. She has brought fresh perspectives and impetus to this large department, raised staff morale, implemented new courses and ensured that policies are more than just words. The team of teachers listens to her good counsel and is moving forward together. The department has clearly identified what it needs to do to improve the subject. There is a clear and justified sense of optimism for the future.

121. Good management systems are in place, but require more consistency in practice. For example, end-of-unit assessment procedures and other data track pupils' attainment and achievement soundly, but the marking of pupils' work and target-setting are inconsistent. Most teachers use such ICT resources as computers and digital projectors particularly well. Three hard-working technicians offer an efficient and much appreciated service. All classrooms have a digital projector that is well used. Corridor displays help the positive learning culture that the department is striving to promote. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, with the promise of more substantial improvement in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school, rapidly acquiring suitable knowledge and skills.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average.
- The school does not have enough computers to fully support the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Bad behaviour limits progress in too many lessons.
- Departmental planning is excellent. The department is very well led.

Commentary

122. Pupils' standards in ICT are low on entering the school. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below average, but they have made good progress. In 2004, for example, just one third of the year group had reached at least Level 5 (a significant improvement on the previous year). The school predicts that two-thirds of Year 9 will reach this level in 2005: current evidence indicates that this is a secure judgement. The recent rate of progress has been made through improving the time available to teach ICT and ensuring that the subject is taught by specialist staff. Year 9 pupils now use computers with some confidence, interrogating databases and understanding systems for simple computer control.

123. Pupils taking an external examination course in Years 10 and 11 reach an average standard overall. In 2004, around one fifth of pupils entered for the GNVQ (Intermediate) level examination and just over three-quarters of them passed. The work of current pupils varies widely. It is average overall, although some coursework is of a higher standard. Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 11, pupils produce a wide variety of different publications, tailored in style for different audiences and purposes. They investigate, for example, business models, looking at the variables that determine profitability.

124. Pupils not studying the GNVQ course do not follow another specialist ICT course in Year 10. They also receive only a single ICT lesson each week while they are in Year 11 towards assessment for a Certificate of Competence in ICT. Current work, covering a range of ICT applications, is broadly average. There is insufficient teaching time available for these pupils to realise fully their capabilities in ICT.

125. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. Planning is very thoroughly done. Pupils learn with success and enthusiasm. Their progress is sustained by careful, patient and demanding teaching. Pupils' work is marked and assessed well, in a constructive way. Pupils know the level or examination grade at which they are working and are given clear advice how they might improve.

126. The full effectiveness of teaching is, however, constrained by low-level misbehaviour and lack of interest: some pupils talk when they should be listening and are disinclined to work and concentrate, even on straightforward tasks. Such immature behaviour limits their achievement and deflects teachers' endeavour. In a few lessons, some pupils' attitudes are very poor: they do little or no work, disturb pupils who wish to learn and cause frustration for teaching staff.

127. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a very clear, ambitious vision for the development of the subject. Planning at every level is excellent. The head of department has developed imaginative solutions to some of the problems of staff recruitment and retention, providing excellent support and mentoring to mature entrants. The team of teachers works effectively together. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

128. Information and communication technology is now well established in many subjects. Rapid progress has been made, particularly with teachers' use of portable computers, data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Some shortages of equipment remain (including in the library). To reach the required national ratio, about 74 additional computers are needed – a significant shortfall.

129. The standard of ICT usage across non-specialist subjects is below average overall at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Use of ICT has, however, been satisfactorily integrated into many subjects – such as through the manipulation of data in mathematics and the use of ICT in English to extend the range of writing styles. In design and technology, pupils often use ICT well for aspects of computer-aided design (CAD). Pupils with special educational needs are supported by software that teaches and reinforces basic skills. Pupils studying for GCSE make good use of ICT for

presentation, especially in PE. In music, there is a shortage of software for composition and editing. Difficulty over access to equipment has restricted some subjects (such as art and RE).

130. The school is actively seeking to support pupils' learning outside school hours through the provision of learning materials on a private website. Communication with parents and the wider community is well supported by a wide-ranging, up-to-date, public website. The school has excellent planning in place for future developments. It has recently been awarded a quality mark (NAACE) for its whole-school approach to the use of ICT to enhance its teaching and learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are providing the drive to raise standards.
- The immature attitude of many pupils often limits teachers' capacity to teach well.
- Pupils' achievement in some lessons is held back by their poor behaviour.

Commentary

131. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is below what is expected nationally. Many pupils begin Year 7 with geographical understanding and skills that are well below the expectation for pupils of that age. The standard of work seen during the inspection was below the national expectation. Most pupils achieve reasonably in Years 7-9, because they are taught soundly. In a small minority of lessons, however, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because many pupils do not appear to wish to learn, despite their teachers' efforts to help them.

132. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have basic knowledge and understanding of the weather and of such physical processes as volcanic activity and the effect of rivers and waves in forming the landscape. Higher attainers use graphical and statistical data adequately in their explanations. They make appropriate links between factors in explaining, for instance, the impact of the environment on human activity. Most pupils do not draw maps, diagrams or graphs well. The standard of written work is below average; few pupils write well at any length.

133. The overall attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is below average. The proportion of grades A*-C obtained in the GCSE examination in 2004 was well below average. It was also lower than in 2003. The proportion of pupils who obtained an A*-G grade in 2004 was close to average. Very few pupils gained an A grade and none an A*. Overall, however, pupils did better in geography than in most of their other GCSE subjects.

134. The work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is below that expected nationally, although the work of a small proportion of pupils is above average. The overall standard of work in Year 10 is higher than that of Year 11. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, because most are focused reasonably well on their work. Too many pupils, however, do not achieve as well as they should, because they chatter instead of listening or working. The pace of many pupils' work is slowed by their inability to skim-read information accurately or to write quickly.

135. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have simple knowledge and understanding of such geographical processes as river flooding. They explain successfully some reasons for changes in industrial location. Higher attainers explain satisfactorily the social and economic impact of such changes. The majority of pupils do not use correct geographical terminology confidently or accurately. Map work is poor: pupils often do not draw or label maps accurately or always use normal mapping conventions.

136. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Most teachers manage their classes well enough to enable pupils to learn satisfactorily. Activities such as group and paired work are used effectively to involve pupils actively in what they are learning. Pupils enjoy these lessons and often participate well. Many pupils lack confidence in their own ability, but teachers encourage them, calmly and patiently. There is not enough additional support for the pupils with special educational needs and the lowest attainers, but teachers do their best to provide extra help and guidance.

137. Pupils' learning is affected to some extent in almost all lessons by the poor attitudes of some pupils. This sometimes prevents teachers from teaching well. It slows the pace of lessons, because teachers have continually to wait for pupils to be quiet. Many pupils lack the self-discipline needed to be good learners. Occasionally, teachers allow too much chatter or accept slapdash work without comment.

138. The department is led and managed well. An enthusiastic, determined head of department is leading a young team in implementing strategies to raise standards. She is making appropriate use of expertise from outside the school in this work. Staffing is now stable, following problems two years ago when experienced staff left. There is, however, a large number of staff who teach just one or two classes in Years 7-9, so making the coordination of teaching difficult. This is compounded by some sharing of classes between two teachers.

139. There are some unsatisfactory aspects to the timetable arrangements. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have lessons which are one hour and 40 minutes in length; these are too long for pupils to maintain a high level of concentration. Some pupils taking GCSE receive less lesson time than others who are following the same course. Three classes in Years 7-9, taken by a newly qualified teacher, have both their lessons on the same day of the week. The department makes little use of ICT: there is one interactive whiteboard, but no computers for pupils to use within the department. Overall, however, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are beginning to raise standards and achievement.
- Teaching and learning are slowed in many lessons by pupils' immature behaviour and attitudes.
- Most teachers manage classes satisfactorily and involve pupils actively in learning.
- GCSE standards are well below average.

Commentary

140. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is below that expected nationally. Very few pupils reach the highest standards. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7-9 from their low starting point on entry to the school. They are usually taught well and many try hard with their work.

141. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have adequate knowledge of past events. They describe the past and explain why events have happened. The higher attainers have sound understanding of past events and understand that different views of the past may co-exist. Few pupils, however, use historical sources well or evaluate their reliability successfully. This is, in large part, due to their low level of literacy. Most pupils do not read text quickly to extract the key points. The written work of the majority of pupils is below average in standard.

142. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were well below average for A*-C grades, but were significantly better than those of 2003. Very few pupils gained an A grade and none an A* grade. In both 2003 and 2004, a significant number of pupils underachieved in their examination. This was usually because they had had a large amount of absence from lessons or, in some cases,

because they failed to complete their coursework adequately.

143. The standard of work of pupils currently taking the GCSE course is well below average, although a small minority reach an above average standard. The overall standard of work is a little higher in Year 10 than in Year 11. Pupils describe the past adequately and explain satisfactorily why events have happened. They successfully identify changes that have happened over time – as, for instance, in their work on medicine. They have difficulty evaluating the reliability of the sources they use. Many, because of their low literacy level, struggle to understand the meaning of what they read. Written work is below average.

144. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 began their GCSE course with a level of knowledge and understanding that was well below average. They achieve satisfactorily, because they are encouraged by their teachers and because they try hard. A small proportion, however, do not achieve satisfactorily, because they show little inclination to learn and their noisy chatter disrupts the learning of others.

145. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is occasionally very good and sometimes unsatisfactory. It is a little better (and good overall) in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11. As a result, most pupils learn satisfactorily. Most teachers manage their classes sufficiently well to give pupils the chance to learn well.

146. In the best lessons, teachers use activities that get pupils actively involved in what they are learning. In these cases, pupils respond positively and often learn well. This was evident in a good Year 8 lesson, for example, in which pupils used ICT to produce their own interactive quiz in their work on the Plains Indians. It was so successful that the pupils did not notice that the bell had gone for the end of the lesson. In these successful lessons, lively teaching and the use of artefacts motivate pupils into learning well.

147. In a minority of lessons, weak class management allows too much chatter and immature behaviour to disrupt learning. Most pupils are not good learners and need firm management to keep them focused on work. Their lack of self discipline – coupled with their lack of understanding of when to listen and when to speak – means that teaching is frequently interrupted by the need to restore order and quiet. There is insufficient specialist support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs, although class teachers try hard to give whatever help they can.

148. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The department is led and managed well by a teacher only in her second year of teaching. She has been in post only two terms, but has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards and improve achievement. Her strategies have yet to have full impact. She leads, energetically and with enthusiasm, a team that is prepared to accept beneficial change.

149. The current timetabling arrangements for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory. Not all pupils receive the same amount of teaching time. Those lessons that last an hour and 40 minutes are too long, because pupils cannot maintain their concentration for that length of time. The department has no computer of its own to enable it to make sufficient, suitable use of ICT. A few pupils use ICT soundly, because they happen to be taught history by an ICT specialist.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school still fails to make RE provision for pupils in Year 11.
- The match of teachers to what needs to be taught is poor.
- Pupils are negative in attitude in many lessons.
- Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory.

- Departmental leadership is good, despite adverse circumstances.

Commentary

150. As at the time of the two previous inspections in 1993 and 1998, the school fails to comply with the requirement to provide RE to all pupils. This is an unacceptable failure. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Although provision for pupils in Year 10 began in September 2004, pupils in Year 11 still receive no RE and so have no possibility of reaching the standard expected in the agreed syllabus. The governors appear unaware of this breach, because their Audit of Statutory Requirements (Form S3) includes the assertion, "The school provides teaching of religious education for all pupils in accordance with the agreed syllabus".

151. By the end of Year 9, pupils' work falls well below the standard expected. Pupils use a limited, rather than an increasingly wide, religious vocabulary. They make links between religious beliefs and their sources, but fail to recognise how similarities and differences illustrate distinctive beliefs within, and between, religions. They ask questions, but lack the discipline to reflect on them and apply other people's perspectives to their own lives. Progress during Years 7-9 is slow and achievement is unsatisfactory. Too many pupils are negative in attitude and, as a result, gain little personal benefit from their study of religions. Many pupils also lack skill and confidence in both speaking and writing.

152. In Year 10, pupils follow the GCSE short course. Some pupils are clearly acquiring the knowledge and developing the skills and understanding that the course requires. Progress and achievement for these pupils are satisfactory. Many pupils, however, have had to depend on temporary teachers during recent months and their exercise books show many gaps and much unfinished work. For these pupils, progress is patchy and achievement is poor. Success in the examination in 2006 for these pupils is very uncertain. They have not begun to develop the depth or detail of knowledge and understanding of which they are capable. Overall, achievement is poor. As already stated, pupils in Year 11 achieve nothing in the subject.

153. Teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall, but has weaknesses. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching, clear planning and appropriate levels of expectation. In some lessons, however, teachers do not do enough to engage the interest and attention of pupils, with the result that pupils do not always make the best use of their time. Learning by pupils in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory, mainly because of many pupils' negative attitudes. The introduction of assessment by "levels" has not yet done enough to help pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

154. Teaching in Year 10 is unsatisfactory, because the school has not recruited a specialist teacher. Lack of specialist teaching has made much of the school's provision for the new course inadequate. Learning overall is poor and systematic assessment is not in place. The match of teaching to the needs of the curriculum is poor.

155. Despite such adverse circumstances, leadership within the subject is good. It provides a clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and a good role model to pupils and other teachers. Management is unsatisfactory, however, because at present the department is in "survival mode". Moves towards self-evaluation, through developing the use of data collected from more systematic assessment, remain a task for the future. The urgent need now is for the school to secure compliance with statutory requirements by the appointment of a full-time specialist teacher for September 2005.

TECHNOLOGY

156. The main focus was on design and technology, but lessons were also sampled in construction, engineering, and hospitality and catering.

157. One Year 10 lesson of the BTEC First construction course on axonometric projection was sampled. The overall standard in theoretical work and technical drawing was above average.

Pupils' attitudes to work were very good. The class teacher has high expectations of work and behaviour, communicates his messages precisely and demonstrates effectively. As a result, pupils understood very clearly the quality to be aimed for in their drawing. Their efforts showed that they had listened carefully to their teacher's advice. Pupils learned and achieved well.

158. Four lessons were sampled in engineering – two in Year 10 and two in Year 11. The overall standard of work seen was slightly below average. Pupils achieved satisfactorily. Their attitudes reflected the teaching they received: they varied between satisfactory and good, and were satisfactory overall. In the two good lessons seen, teachers planned work very carefully, posed thoughtful questions to their classes, introduced useful background information and made pupils think carefully about their work. A good demonstration on the radio control of boats and planes captured the imagination of a Year 11, all-boy class and well underpinned the main thrust of the lesson. In another Year 11 lesson, a slow start set the pace for the lesson, with boys doing just enough to get by. Overall, learning in the lessons seen was satisfactory.

159. One Year 11 lesson was sampled in hospitality and catering. The standard of work was average and pupils' achievement satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes were satisfactory when doing theoretical work and good when working on practical tasks. Girls worked in a more focused way than boys – as, for example, when reading instructions on commercial food packets before writing information down. Some boys copied the same information without understanding the content of the message. Teaching and learning were satisfactory.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most Year 11 pupils achieve well as a result of the high quality teaching they receive.
- The 2004 GCSE results were well below average.
- There is insufficient classroom assistance for pupils with linguistic and behavioural problems.

Commentary

160. The overall standard on entry to the school is well below average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard of pupils' work is below average in knowledge and understanding about materials, processes and making things, and is well below average in the element of design. This level of attainment represents satisfactory achievement over Years 7-9. The standard of written work is, however, well below average in terms of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Teacher assessments accurately confirm this picture.

161. By the end of Year 11, although the GCSE results of 2004 were well below average, the current standard of work is above average. The GNVQ results in 2004 were above average in both hospitality and catering and in engineering at Intermediate level. Practical work and coursework in food, textiles, graphics, resistant materials and engineering are generally of high quality. Pupils use computers well for designing, data-analysis and research. Less word-processing was, however, seen than usual.

162. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9. It is sometimes unsatisfactory. In one Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the very poor attitudes of both girls and boys disrupted the learning of most pupils and led to significant underachievement in both the designing and practical tasks. In a second Year 9 class covering the same topic, pupils behaved well but achieved very little, because the task set was undemanding. The new homework books are a good feature in all elements of technology. They have raised significantly the importance of homework for Years 7-9.

163. Year 7 pupils achieve well in practical tasks in food and electronics. In both cases, they are encouraged to think for themselves and to support one another in overcoming difficulties. Where

pupils are insufficiently involved in what they are learning, behaviour deteriorates and achievement is unsatisfactory.

164. Year 8 pupils achieved well in a good food lesson, when assessing existing products and designing new ones. The design of a new food product excited pupils' interest. They used the knowledge gained earlier in the lesson to aid their decisions. Many pupils are poor at spelling. Whilst dictionaries are available, they are insufficiently promoted by teachers or consulted by pupils.

165. By Year 9, pupils achieve best in areas such as graphics where they have received consistent teaching throughout the unit of work. In areas like food, where continuity of learning has been disrupted, achievement is unsatisfactory, even though pupils behave well and show positive attitudes.

166. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good overall. The best achievement is in Year 10. In one very good graphics lesson, for example, two-thirds of the pupils worked accurately to draw a net for a carry-bag, using a design software package. Even so, one third of the pupils lacked confidence in subtracting numbers and, as a result, underachieved when using ICT for design.

167. In Year 11, in an all-girl textiles group, higher attainers read accurately and made sensible decisions about (for example) the absorbency of materials, whilst girls who had missed lessons through absence did work to try to catch up. The bags, manufactured by these girls using commercial processes, represented a very good achievement.

168. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 7-9, good in Years 10 and 11, and good overall. One Year 9 lesson was unsatisfactory. Although staff recruitment has been difficult, teachers work well together as a team and are ably supported by the technician. They plan well, structure lessons appropriately and use computers effectively for design and manufacture. As a result, most pupils enjoy making things. The management of behaviour is far from easy in Years 7 and 9. The lack of classroom assistants and of a dedicated food technician adds to the pressure on teachers. It also adversely affects provision for those pupils with special educational needs and behavioural problems.

169. Leadership and management, by the two coordinators, are good overall. They are ably supported by the coordinators for food and textiles. A clear sense of vision has led to an innovative mix of GCSE, GNVQ and BTEC courses being offered in Years 10 and 11. The carousel arrangements for pupils in Years 7-9 are a known, unresolved problem. Other weaknesses include insufficient liaison with primary schools, the delay in introducing an ICT design programme until Years 10 and 11, and the lack of ICT facilities in food. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Minor health and safety concerns were shared with the school.

170. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good: standards are better in Years 10 and 11, ICT is very well used and the pace and challenge in most lessons has improved. Overall, the specialist technology status of the school has made a significant impact on the quality and range of provision for pupils.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is leading to some improvement in attitudes and behaviour.
- The 2004 GCSE results were well below average.
- Year 10 girls achieve well, when taught in single-sex groups.
- ICT resources are inadequate.

Commentary

171. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard of pupils' work is well below average. This is the standard of work in two and three dimensions and in pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists' styles of working. Many pupils have a fear of failure when drawing and a reluctance to look beyond pop culture. The majority of pupils have skills in speaking, listening, reading with understanding and writing that are well below average. Teachers' assessments are accurate and in line with these judgements.

172. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is below average. Most pupils understand the quality aimed for in individual lessons – as, for example, when working on pattern or painting a tile. Too many, however, do not have the skill to plan, research and organise their time well. Few, without a lot of teacher help, present their work in a way that shows that they have covered all the examination objectives. The 2004 GCSE results were well below average and significantly lower than those of 2003.

173. Achievement in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory overall. Many Year 7 pupils enter the school with far below average standards and do not display the motivation to learn. Their immature behaviour (for example, sucking electronic dummies during a lesson), combined with their poor behaviour, limits their achievement and slows progress. The needs of more talented pupils (such as two boys who revealed a deep interest in Gaudi) are not met, because too many pupils waste their teachers' time by not listening to instructions and do not recognise that social chatter gets in the way of their own – and other pupils' – achievement.

174. Most Year 9 pupils respond well to the listening strategies or sanctions that teachers use. They appreciate merit cards. Those girls with short attention spans and low self-belief achieve well, when given the opportunity to make practice drawings before they draw cartoon imagery. All pupils react well to the visual resources provided for them – including exemplar drawings by one of their teachers. In one class, however, only one pupil had done the required homework research – and even that had been left at home. Progress is unsatisfactory, because too many pupils are reluctant to learn. The lack of classroom support for pupils with behavioural and linguistic problems and the inadequate provision of ICT also act as barriers to raising achievement.

175. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Work in sketchbooks and pupils' folders varies from good to poor in both observational drawing and in studies of the drawing styles of different artists. The best features are printmaking and three-dimensional work, using clay and plaster bandages. The pride on the face of one girl, who shared with her teacher her delight in her spherical sculpture, was a pleasure to see. The best achievement seen in lessons was in the observational drawings made by Year 10 girls in a single-sex class. Personal research using the Internet is a weak feature: there are no computers available within the art areas and few pupils indicate that they have computers at home.

176. Two GNVQ lessons were sampled in Year 11. Pupils' attitudes varied from good to unsatisfactory: pupils reacted more positively in one lesson than they did in the other. Some pupils have limited understanding of the meaning of regularly used words (such as "alcove" or "culture"). Pupils are happy to draw, colour images, make repeat patterns and construct models, but take little responsibility for organising their work or seeing that they have covered the various units of work needed to gain a predicted grade. Teachers insist that pupils catalogue their work to ensure coverage, but pupils do not undertake this task willingly. One teacher's offer to give up personal time to take pupils to a Toulouse Lautrec exhibition at a local gallery, to ensure coverage of a unit, was met with little enthusiasm and many excuses. Although standards at Intermediate level in 2004 were above average, current pupils' work is below average.

177. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and good overall. The best teaching was seen in a Year 10 lesson, where the teacher had planned thoughtfully for the different learning styles of boys and girls. All pupils behaved well and raised their self-esteem. The weakest features of teaching lie in the inadequate control of behaviour, the lack of engagement of

some pupils' interest and the failure to motivate pupils to do homework. The weaknesses in learning lie in the fact that too many pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes to work and take little responsibility for their own actions.

178. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear vision for what is needed to improve the provision. The new building provides clean, welcoming spaces for creative activities. Unfortunately, non-existent ceiling insulation (so adding to the noise levels), poor storage facilities and a lack of ICT spoil the provision. There is no art technician, even though the department uses a wide range of materials. Displays are of a high standard. The art club and visits to galleries are good initiatives for helping to widen pupils' cultural awareness. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory: standards are lower for Years 7-9, ICT does not make its expected impact and GCSE results are still well below average.

Drama

Provision in drama is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm are high.
- Standards are well below average and achievement unsatisfactory throughout the school.
- Teaching is satisfactory, but needs to be stronger.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

179. Drama is taught to all pupils in Years 7-9 and is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. The standard of work throughout the school is well below average. In the GCSE examination in 2004, less than one third of the pupils who took the examination obtained grades in the A*-C range. Achievement is unsatisfactory throughout the school.

180. Pupils in a Year 7 class quickly consolidated their knowledge of two features of tableaux (facial expression and body language) before developing their own tableaux. Although clear instructions ensured that pupils knew what they had to do, the teacher's subsequent monitoring of the development of tableaux was insufficient to ensure that pupils made adequate progress.

181. Although pupils in a Year 9 class were keen to "act" the ghost scene in *Macbeth*, the teacher emphasised the sequence of events to help them to focus the development of their interpretations. The pupils' learning was (and had to be) supported by strong guidance, demonstration and firm management from the teacher. The pupils' reasonable achievement in developing language and ways of expressing emotion appropriate to the scene was the direct result of the teacher's determination to sustain pupils' engagement and not allow them to misuse their time.

182. Both the staff teaching the subject are relatively new to the school. Indeed, the new head of department has only been at the school for one term. The major problem facing staff is pupils' limited background in the subject and, in some cases, their poor attitudes to work. Pupils' attainment and achievement are particularly hampered by the low level of skills that most pupils bring to lessons.

183. The quality of teaching is satisfactory (and sometimes good) throughout Years 7-11. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department is well aware of the need to improve the quality of provision in the subject and is beginning to get to grips with the issues involved. Schemes of work are being reviewed. An ambitious programme has already begun for talented pupils in Years 7-9 who are following the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) courses and examinations. Curricular links between English and drama are limited. The accommodation (including flooring) for drama is unsatisfactory: it has, for example, no

provision for technical work using lighting or sound, so limiting pupils' achievement. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led.
- There is much good (or better) teaching, as a result of very thorough planning.
- Assessment is well structured: pupils know clearly how well they are doing.
- Very poor resources restrict pupils' achievements.
- Inadequate soundproofing results in poor teaching conditions.

Commentary

184. In recent years, GCSE results have been well below average. All three of the present music staff joined the school in September 2004. In the current Year 11, standards are broadly average. Achievement is good overall. Some pupils, for example, produce effective compositions for instrumental ensembles, working very confidently and competently within "Big Band" style music.

185. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 and 2004 showed that the overall standard was well below average and represented underachievement. Some of the earlier deficiencies are still evident in the work of present Year 9 pupils, where the overall standard is below average (but achievement satisfactory). In the lessons seen in Years 7-9, only one was of an above average standard. Many pupils are having to catch up on skills that were not effectively learned at an earlier stage.

186. Teaching is good overall. Some teaching is very good. Where the teaching is good (or better), it is very well planned and is taught with considerable authority. It also engages pupils in demanding and stimulating activity. Pupils in one Year 8 lesson on chord structures received excellent teaching. In this outstanding lesson, the teacher's professional competence, personality and justified praise shone vividly through, with the result that pupils were entirely cooperative and hard-working, producing imaginative, accurate work and thoroughly enjoying the whole experience. Some teaching, in contrast, is barely satisfactory. It is typified by superficial planning and impeded by considerable, low-level disruption.

187. Overall, learning is good. Where pupils are involved in well-planned and carefully presented activities, their attitudes are very positive and relationships good. Sometimes, the misbehaviour of a few hinders the learning opportunities of the rest of the class.

188. The poor level of resources is a considerable barrier to raising achievement and standards. Available keyboards are either very basic or old: none, for example, has the facility for saving work on disk, touch-sensitivity or the necessary facilities for composition (particularly for pupils in Years 10 and 11). There is no computer in the department capable of running the compositional software that is common in schools. The only access to music technology is through making bookings for the computer suite. In some cases, teachers are having to bring in their own equipment. These deficiencies sometimes result in pupils' disaffection, particularly in Year 9.

189. The department's accommodation is very inadequate. Soundproofing is ineffective: activities in one teaching room are clearly audible in another. There is much clutter about in the form of unwanted sinks, inappropriate storage and even a kiln – a hangover from the art department which previously occupied the rooms.

190. The new head of music gives very good leadership to the department and manages its provision well. There is a determination to raise standards and expectations by providing a more

stimulating environment for the subject. In her short time in post, she has very quickly taken the department a long way on the road to improved standards. Departmental planning is thorough.

191. Assessment is very carefully structured and done well. Pupils are given very good help to know their own standards and to understand what they need to do to improve further. The three staff complement one another well and make a most effective team. There are good arrangements for pupils to extend their personal interests in learning instruments or singing. Pupils enjoy the opportunities for choral singing and taking part in school productions. During the inspection, the contribution of the choir to morning assemblies was a joy to hear. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is nearly always at least good and often very good.
- A successful GCSE course has seen results improve well over the last three years.
- Well-planned lessons help pupils to learn and achieve well.
- Pupils have good opportunities to compete in sport.

Commentary

192. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard in practical activities is average. The best standards are seen in rugby league, where some boys perform well and have above average skills. In swimming, boys also perform to above average standards. Most swim competently and there are very few non-swimmers. Standards are not as high, however, in gymnastics and few pupils (particularly girls) have the essential range of basic movements. Both boys and girls with special educational needs achieve well. Very good provision is made for these pupils, who take part in activities with anticipation, obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment.

193. In Years 10 and 11 it was not possible to see any non-examination lessons during the inspection, but three GCSE lessons were observed. GCSE results have improved progressively over the last three years since the course was introduced. In 2004, results were in line with the national average and six pupils (five boys and one girl) gained grade A results. This course is popular and recruits well, but has far more boys than girls on it.

194. Practical standards are above average amongst many pupils on the GCSE course. Most achieve well. The best written work is very good. Some pupils respond particularly well to the independent work that is required. For example, they use their ICT skills to very good effect in writing up personal projects. The department runs a weekly, extracurricular support session to assist pupils with their coursework and revision. In a practical lesson, standards of play in rugby were well above average.

195. Teaching is good and often very good. Where it is at its best, teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, to which pupils invariably respond well. Lessons are well prepared and nearly always have clear learning objectives that are displayed and shared with pupils. Relationships are good. Pupils behave well. Lessons have pace and purpose and pupils clearly enjoy them. With only a few exceptions, pupils arrive promptly and take part enthusiastically in lessons.

196. Leadership and management are good and effective. A very experienced head of department leads with tact and authority. The department performs well against other subjects. The PE curriculum has been adjusted to give pupils a wider range of opportunities. Accommodation is good, except for the floodlit, all-weather pitch which, as at the time of the previous inspection, remains in need of resurfacing. Lack of a teaching base for the examination course causes inconvenience for teachers.

197. Many boys and girls compete in sport at city and county level, particularly in the major games. One boy has represented England at rugby league this year. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good and the GCSE examination course has been successfully introduced. The *Junior Sports Leader Award* is shortly to commence to enhance pupils' communication and leadership skills.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

198. The main emphasis was on business education, but lessons in health and social care were extensively sampled in both Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are good. Intermediate-level classes are well organised. They produce good work, based on both Internet research and useful paper-based resources provided by the teacher. Many of these students achieve well. Foundation-level pupils show similar skills, but often produce written work with weaknesses in sentence structure, spelling and punctuation. Many achieve satisfactorily.

199. Pupils at both levels work conscientiously on their own or in small groups, researching and writing up material for assignments. They enjoy their lessons. They appreciate those teachers who are firm and well organised and who maintain a good pace of work. They respond well when the purpose of lessons has been clearly explained to them at the beginning of classes. Pupils are not confident in discussion and sometimes have difficulty in conveying precisely to others what they mean.

Business education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers create a very supportive working environment.
- Many pupils produce inaccurate work and do not behave well enough.

Commentary

200. The present Applied GCSE course started in 2003 and therefore the first examination results for the course are due in summer 2005. Results from modular tests taken earlier in the course suggest that most pupils will pass and that the majority will achieve grades in the range A*-C.

201. Attainment is broadly average in standard and achievement satisfactory. Most written work is suitably detailed and accurate. The best work shows that pupils have the ability to analyse and evaluate information, and not simply to paraphrase it. A minority of work is marred by poor sentence structure, punctuation or spelling.

202. The standard of oral work, in contrast, is well below average. In Year 11 lessons, where pupils had opportunities to explain and discuss (as, for example, how to improve their written answers or aspects of staff recruitment), the responses that were volunteered were short and often lacking in precision and confidence. Some of the work being done at the time of the inspection did not provide pupils with the opportunity for an extended exploration of topics, although many communicated clearly with one another, whilst working in groups on practical tasks.

203. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well organised and keep to time. Pupils are also kept to time in handing in their assignments. Appropriate attention is paid to topical news that is relevant to the subject – as, for example, the problems of the MG Rover group. Teachers regularly review progress and often suitably praise and reward pupils for their efforts. Occasional, inappropriate chatter in some classes is dealt with calmly, so that a positive atmosphere for learning is maintained. In other classes, a disproportionate amount of time is spent in controlling and motivating pupils. Pupils are not always challenged to learn as well as they should and minor errors in drafting are not always spotted by teachers. Some waste their time and act rudely.

204. The more motivated pupils settle quickly to work, learn well together and are conscientious in what they do. They show good interest in their work. Written work and test scores indicate that pupils have a good grasp of the content of the subject. They make sensible use of computers for drafting, designing and searching for information.

205. Leadership and management are good. The course has been developed by two teachers of modern foreign languages who have business education as an additional teaching subject. This connection is opening up possibilities for further links between the two subjects. Very good use is made of enterprise projects and competitions that are particularly targeted at gifted pupils. Sessions are offered after school for coursework improvement and examination preparation. Regular, thorough assessment and self-assessment are prominent features. The department has useful links and shared teaching with a local college of further education. Exemplar material and other resources are being developed for Intranet access.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school's programme for personal, social and health education is taught by form tutors. Six lessons were sampled. The quality of teaching and learning in these lessons varied from very good to unsatisfactory, and was good overall. Pupils' attitudes and learning during these sessions are nearly always good. Pupils usually achieve well. Many of the elements on the course contribute to the school's provision for citizenship or complement what is taught there. The school meets its statutory requirements in respect of teaching sex-related education, anti-drug education and careers education.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department has a clear vision of how to develop the teaching of the subject.
- The team that teaches the subject is not fully effective, because it cannot meet regularly.
- Well-chosen resources make the subject relevant to pupils.
- Pupils assess their own work, but are not clear how to do this.
- Too many pupils do not achieve what they should, because they are absent from lessons.

Commentary

206. Pupils' attainment is below what is often found by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Boys and girls achieve satisfactorily – and equally well. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted achieve as well as other pupils, because they are taught in classes where their needs can be met appropriately.

207. Pupils in Year 11 understand the impact that the media have upon their lives. They appreciate how news is presented in different ways by different sources. The highest achievers also detect ways in which the media use stereotyping – as, for example, to target certain markets. In most lessons, pupils are willing to put forward their ideas. The quality of pupils' listening, however, varies widely and so pupils do not always learn from one another as much as they could. Pupils rarely undertake any extended writing. Most written work consists of notes that are often poorly presented and of little future use to pupils.

208. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to poor. It is satisfactory overall, leading to satisfactory learning. In the best lessons pupils engage in very lively debates of high quality. This is because pupils are interested in the work, appreciating how it will be relevant to their lives. In many instances, this is because the teacher has chosen topical material that appeals to pupils. Often this has a local dimension. The best teaching ensures, through expert chairing, that all pupils contribute

to discussions. Good use is made of members of the local community – such as when ex-prisoners visit the school to discuss the perils of crime with pupils in Year 7. When teaching is less effective, tasks are set at too low a level – as, for example, the colouring-in of flags of European countries. There are occasions when information given to pupils is incorrect or reinforces stereotypes.

209. Overall, pupils have satisfactory attitudes to their work. Occasionally, when work is undemanding or pupils do not see the topic as being relevant, they drift off task and indulge in chatter. However, too many pupils (especially in Year 11) do not attend citizenship lessons. The best attendance observed in a Year 11 citizenship class, for example, was below three quarters. Absence on this scale prevents pupils from achieving as they should.

210. Pupils assess their own work at the end of each topic. However, they are not given guidance as to what might constitute good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory achievement. In consequence, pupils do not gain anywhere near as much as they might from this potentially useful activity and the information available to teachers to assess the effectiveness of their teaching is greatly restricted.

211. The head of department is a highly skilled teacher of citizenship and provides a very good exemplar to others of how to teach the subject. He has a very clear idea of how to make the subject interesting and appealing to pupils. In consequence, he leads the subject well. Whilst some teachers show similar levels of commitment to the subject, others have not chosen to teach the subject or have minimal experience of teaching citizenship. There is no formal structure through which teachers of the subject can meet to discuss developments, share good practice or explore areas of difficulty. For this reason, the management of citizenship is only satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	5
Attendance	5
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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