

INSPECTION REPORT

Wexham School

Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 110078

Headteacher: Mr J Richardson

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Chamberlain

Dates of inspection: 6th - 8th December 2004

Inspection number: 269482

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Modern (non-selective)
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll; 734

School address: Norway Drive
Slough
Berkshire
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Telephone number: 01753 526797
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Appropriate authority: Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Fowler

Date of previous inspection: 8 November 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wexham is smaller than other secondary schools with 738 pupils compared with an average size of 1013 pupils; it has been oversubscribed for many years. It has an above average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils, over half, whose first language is not believed to be English, is very high. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, account for a third of the population which is well above average. The proportion of those with statements is above average. The school is a designated Sports College in partnership with Arbour Vale Special School. It has an "autistic resource base". Most pupils failed their eleven plus. The school not only loses pupils to the grammar schools but also to comprehensive schools outside of Slough. When pupils enter the school, they have attainment levels that, when averaged out, are well below expectations. The school has recently set up provision for students at post 16. This operates in conjunction with East Berkshire College.

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2971	Kathy Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	Anne Wallis	Team inspector	Geography, citizenship
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. Its excellent multi-cultural acceptance and first-rate relationships are fine examples that produce peaceful coexistence. Very strong leadership and rising standards combined with good teaching set against regional difficulties in staff recruitment results in a school that not only provides very good value for money but one that offers a very effective, viable alternative to the selective schools in the area.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership is of a uniquely high-quality; The insistence on valuing each and every individual not only acts as a tool to aid the pupils' personal development but ensures racial harmony and successfully encourages responsible citizens.
- Teaching is good and consequently pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are cared for very well; as a result they have very positive attitudes to school; they behave very well.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to enrich their lives. Sport is a strength of the school. The granting of sports college status has had a very positive impact on the school.
- The school has excellent links with the community.
- Provision is very good in physical education, modern foreign languages, English, mathematics, drama and business studies.
- The development of religious education is insufficiently prioritised and statutory requirements are not met.
- Teaching in music is uninspired and its management is unsatisfactory.
- Although there has been substantial improvement, boys' achievement is still lower than it could be.
- There is insufficient independent learning.
- Pupils' targets are not always sufficiently sharp; consequently assessments do not ensure that pupils know how to improve.

Improvement since the previous inspection

There has been **very good** progress since the previous inspection. Most significantly has been the acquisition of sports college status, the introduction of post-16 provision and the autistic resource base. The school was declared as one of the top sixty most improved schools and has gained two DFES achievement awards. It has gained many other commendations. However, the school has still to work on the provision of religious education.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented, is good. Across the school, achievement is very good in English and mathematics; it is also very good in drama, art and physical education in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in music in Years 7 to 9. The standards of work seen in the inspection are below expectations in Years 7 to 9 and in line with expectations in Years 10 and 11, having been well below average on entry. English and literacy skills are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' competence in mathematics and ICT are satisfactory.

Year 11 results

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

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

Pupils' attitudes to work and learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Pupils are courteous, caring and aware of each other's needs. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good**. The quality of relationships is excellent and underpins the harmonious ethos in the school. Racial friendship is the norm. Pupils' attendance is **satisfactory**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching is **good** or better in about three quarters of lessons. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Learning matches teaching. In Years 10 and 11 about two fifths of lessons are very good. On four occasions teaching was excellent. On rare occasions teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good, overall, in English, drama and business education. Assessment is **good**. Pupils' academic performance is monitored well. A good range of information is used well to identify pupils who might be under-performing. The curriculum is **good** overall. It meets statutory requirements except in religious education. There is a **very good** range of extracurricular activities providing enrichment for pupils particularly sporting activities. The care and guidance of all pupils at Wexham is **very good** and has improved since the last inspection. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are **very effective**. **Good** quality support and guidance is made available to secure pupils' ongoing achievement and development. The school enjoys a **very good** and improved partnership with parents and carers. There are **excellent**, productive links with the wider community. Links with schools and colleges are **good** and improving.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school has been **good** but is unsettled as it goes through a period of change. Leadership by the headteacher is **excellent** and reflects a clear sense of purpose, a commitment to the promotion of equality and a concern for the individual. Other key staff are **very good** and are an asset to the school. The effectiveness of management is **good**, being frustrated by staffing and budget restrictions. Financial control is secure.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Views expressed by parents and carers indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school and widespread pleasure at the progress they see their children making. An overwhelming majority say their children like school and feel that the school is helping them to mature and be better prepared for later life. Pupils from all age groups are unanimous in saying that they are happy at Wexham, that the school is welcoming and friendly and that they enjoy attending.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure additional improvement in the achievement of boys.
- Prioritise the development of religious education in the school; ensure that statutory requirements are met in Years 10 and 11.
- Facilitate more independent learning.

- Improve teaching and management in music.
- Sharpen pupils' targets through assessment so that lesson planning improves and, consequently, pupils know how to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and those whose first language is not English, is **good**. Standards seen during the inspection are **below** expectations in Years 7 to 9 and **in line** with expectations in Years 10 and 11, indicating good progress. By the end of Year 9, standards in statutory tests and teacher assessments are **below** national averages. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results are **well below** the national average for 5 A* to C grades but **very high** for 5 A* to G.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well.
- Achievement is very good in English and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in practical lessons.
- Standards of literacy rise as pupils move through the school.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.9 (32.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	32.5 (32.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	30.4 (29.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 147 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment which, when averaged out, are well below the national average. All pupils have failed the eleven plus. However, the school picks these pupils up well. It gives them masses of support and enables them to move forward positively and build their self esteem in the process. Although results do not look particularly impressive when compared with all schools, they are not too low when the context of the school is accurately considered. The trend in the school's point scores is above the national trend in Years 7 to 9 and in line with this trend in Years 10 to 11. The very high score for GCSE 5 A* to G grades illustrates the good progress the school is enabling pupils to make. Occasional dips are usually explained by staffing difficulties.

2. In Years 7 to 9, standards in the work seen are below expectations in science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and modern foreign languages. In other subjects, they are in line with expectations. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, where pupils are prepared to experiment with structure and vocabulary to produce a particular effect and in mathematics, where pupils are highly motivated; it is good in ICT, design and technology and geography and unsatisfactory in music, where little fun is experienced by most pupils and religious education, where the amount of work in books is very limited. In other subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	31 (31)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.1 (30.2)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 143 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In Years 10 and 11, standards in the work seen are below expectations in science, design and technology, geography and ICT and in line with expectations in other subjects. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, where pupils gain confidence in making their own interpretations of multicultural poetry and in mathematics, where pupils express high levels of intellectual capability when revising, for example, index operations; it is good in ICT, science, design and technology, geography, music, modern foreign languages and business education. In other subjects, pupils achieve in line with expectations.

4. Overall standards of language and literacy across the curriculum are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average by the end of Year 11. This represents very good achievement. Speaking and listening are at the national average in all years. Reading is average by the end of Year 11, but writing is below average across the school. A difficulty facing teachers is that English is an additional language for more than four out of every ten pupils. Even those pupils who are not on the school's priority list often have problems understanding their reading, have a limited vocabulary and cannot always distinguish between colloquial and standard English forms.

5. Pupils use their mathematics skills satisfactorily to support learning in other lessons. In history for example, pupils use government statistics to investigate poverty in Victorian Britain. Pupils use graphs and charts effectively to analyse weather patterns in geography and to interpret the results of experiments in science. In physical education pupils collect and analyse data connected with fitness related training. Opportunities such as these reinforce pupils' mathematical skills and give them a good insight into the practical applications of mathematics.

6. Pupils' competence in ICT is satisfactory. Although all pupils have regular access to ICT through timetabled use of the computer suite, they have insufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge skills and understanding so that ICT can contribute positively to standards.

7. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils. Their learning is particularly good in lessons where there is less emphasis on verbal instructions, for example practical and active lessons in drama and design and technology. Pupils whose first language is not necessarily English and those who are gifted or talented achieve as other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is **satisfactory**. Their attitudes to work and learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel valued at Wexham, enjoy excellent relationships with staff and as a result show an enthusiasm to learn and to make the most of the opportunities presented.
- The very good behaviour and the complete absence of racial tension in the school ensure a safe and orderly environment and contribute positively to pupil achievement and development.

Commentary

8. Pupils from all age groups are unanimous in saying that they are happy at Wexham, that the school is welcoming and friendly and that they enjoy attending. Overall attendance levels are slightly above the national average for similar schools and unauthorised absence is low. There is wide agreement amongst pupils that staff are helpful, treat them as young adults and make the learning experiences fun. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school and play a major part in shaping pupils' attitudes to school and to learning. In conversation pupils talk excitedly about their studies and in lessons they often become engrossed in their work and show a real determination to succeed. The wide range of extra curricular activities are highly valued and enthusiastically supported. Pupils compete keenly for the chance to represent the school and they are proud to take on responsibility for aspects of day to day life. Inspectors all remarked on the number of times pupils offered to give directions and were impressed with the enthusiasm and pride shown by pupils chosen to greet and receive visitors at eight-o'clock in the morning.

9. Pupils' behaviour in school is very good and has a positive influence on the progress they make. The school is a safe and orderly environment in which pupils know the routines, respect the behaviour code and respond enthusiastically to praise and reward schemes. In lessons there are numerous examples of pupils sharing resources without trouble, taking turns and being considerate towards each other. On the very few occasions where silly, immature behaviour was seen teachers were able to deal with it quickly. Around the school at breaks pupils interact in a polite and socially mature manner. There were no signs of any racial tension with pupils from the full range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds mixing amicably and enjoying each others company. Whilst no examples of unacceptable or oppressive behaviour were seen during the inspection, records show there are rare incidents of bullying but pupils themselves confirm that these are quickly and effectively dealt with and that bullying is not an issue at the school.

10. The school works hard to develop in its pupils an awareness and consideration for others. It endeavours to raise their self-esteem and is very successful in this. This aspect of spiritual development is strong. Opportunities to reflect and be quiet are characteristic of most assemblies. Opportunities for this in other areas of school life however are not frequent and this is an area for further development. Provision for moral development is very good and the outcomes of this are also very good. Pupils are well-behaved and respectful of other pupils and staff alike. High standards of behaviour are expected across the school and pupils respond well to this. Several subject departments, such as citizenship, have specific units of work help pupils to know the difference between right and wrong. Social development is a particularly strong aspect of school life. The school offers its pupils many opportunities to take responsibility. A wide range of activities both within the school and outside it, such as camping in Wales, helps pupils develop positive relationships. Cultural development is very good. There have been significant improvements on this since the last inspection. Many clubs and activities help pupils appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions. These include the environment club, field trips, visits to museums and dance festivals. The multi-cultural aspect of development is also strong. There are contacts with pupils overseas and films from other cultures are often shown in the school. Opportunities to learn other languages are available on Saturday mornings.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.5	School data :	0.6
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

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	206	4	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	6		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	11		
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	2	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	124		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	277	5	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	12		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	19		
Black or Black British – African	13		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	8		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	11		
No ethnic group recorded	11		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** with over a quarter of lessons **very good**. Assessment is **good**. The quality of the curriculum is **good**. There are **very good** enrichment activities. The pupils receive a **good** personal development programme. The school is not meeting statutory requirements in religious education. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health are **very good**. Links with parents are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- One in twenty lessons is excellent, well structured lessons being an important contributor.
- Active citizenship aids pupils' learning.
- Teachers' expertise helps make pupils' learning interesting.
- There are insufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- Pupils' academic performance is monitored well.
- Assessment does not always indicate well enough what pupils need to do to improve.

Commentary

11. Teaching is good or better in about three quarters of lessons. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Learning matches teaching. The high quality of relationships between pupils and their peers and teachers partly explains the improved quality in teaching and learning as pupils move through the school. On rare occasions teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, about two fifths of lessons are very good. In four lessons seen, teaching and learning were excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (5%)	25 (23%)	52 (48%)	25 (23%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

12. Teachers use well a three part lesson. Mostly starter activities are appropriate; on occasions they do not relate to the main thrust of the lesson. When lessons are thirty five minutes long, teachers struggle to make all three parts viable. Not all teachers use the seventy-minute lessons appropriately to take account of different learning styles or pupils' needs. By contrast with the level of responsibility offered to pupils outside the classroom, inspectors judged that strategies for encouraging independence within lessons were less than might be expected for example, in design and technology and mathematics contrasting with very good provision in drama.

13. Many lessons, as in history, incorporate citizenship. As a consequence, pupils respond by acting as good citizens during lessons and taking responsibility seriously. ICT is used effectively to aid teaching and learning but opportunities are too few to really raise standards.

14. Excellent and very good teaching in this school is characterised by very well constructed lessons that make it very clear to pupils what is expected of them. Lessons have high levels of challenge; pupils are given constant encouragement in order to help them rise to the challenges set. A range of techniques are used to make lessons interesting for example, pair work, individual work, work in groups, prompt cards, as in poetry, and plenty of interaction between teachers and pupils. Pupils are invited to interpret and explain the information they are gaining. Teachers use teaching assistants very effectively in very good lessons. They ensure that the assistants are fully aware of the subject matter and able to really aid learning. In a mathematics lesson, a good teacher became flustered and lost her way in her calculations on the board; impressively she was able to ask her assistant to indicate her problem. The assistant calmly corrected the teacher and the lesson continued without incident, the excellent quality of relationships being highly relevant in this case. The promotion of equality and respect is normal and represents an excellent aspect of classroom life. High standards are expected at all times. Very little unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in lessons.

15. Good lessons always involve expertise on behalf of the teacher. The ability to extend interest beyond the basic objectives and yet remain focussed on the overall goals enhances learning and adds colour and interest to the lesson content. Planning is detailed and takes account of the varying needs of the pupils in the class. Teachers give good expositions; they reinforce learning constantly; they question intelligently taking account of the pupil's individual potential. In history, a rare opportunity to see a sixth form lesson occurred; teaching about the USSR, the teacher was able to develop a stimulating argument that was focussed and relevant and enabled pupils to consistently use correct terminology and evaluate the context in which ideas were produced.

16. Unsatisfactory features of lessons include the tendency to start late. Pupils do not settle well. Demands are minimal and pupils are likely to receive information overload, rather than challenging independent tasks. Targets are imprecise and there are few diagnostic comments.

Extension work for most able pupils is lacking and appropriate tasks for those who have learning difficulties are inadequate. Unspecialised teaching does not always produce satisfactory learning.

17. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. A general point for improvement involves the limited opportunities for pupils to work independently. Although some rooms are small, making independent learning difficult to facilitate, teachers indicate reluctance when it comes to risk taking in this respect. Their measured and safe approach to teaching has merit, especially when taking into account the context of the school. However, the time for a more ambitious, less teacher directed approach is looming. With careful monitoring, pupils could greatly benefit from the freedom to take more control of their own learning.

18. Gifted and talented pupils are catered for well. The school aims to make “clever cool”. Pupils whose first language is not necessarily English learn well and are taught carefully to ensure that they can progress effectively. (see page 19).

19. Teachers' lesson plans for special educational needs show a range of outcomes for three ability levels, but do not address the particular learning needs of pupils with special educational needs. Lessons that contain active learning strategies and the use of a wide range of resources are most successful in enabling pupils to learn, for example, in drama, food technology and physical education. Paired and group-work in modern foreign languages help supports pupils' learning well. Some pupils provide mature and responsible support for lower achieving peers. Individual learning assistants have good knowledge of different special needs, but their knowledge is not sufficiently well used by teachers to plan for meeting individual needs.

Assessment

Commentary

20. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good. There is a good range of information used well to identify pupils who might be under-performing. The use of formal assessment to track the progress of pupils is good and results are used well to focus efforts to raise standards. In lessons assessment is not always used effectively to identify with pupils how well they are learning and what they could do to improve. Using assessment to adapt teaching work to meet the learning needs is at an early stage of development.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** overall. It is broad and balanced, and meets statutory requirements except those for religious education in Years 10 and 11. There is a **very good** range of extracurricular activities providing enrichment for pupils. The match of teachers to the curriculum is **good** overall. The match of support staff is **satisfactory**. The quality of accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory whilst the quality of resources is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sports college status has boosted pupils' confidence and raised self-esteem.
- The growing sixth form presence on site encourages all pupils to aim higher.
- The balance between academic and work-related courses is appropriate for the needs of the pupils.
- The range of opportunities for taking responsibility outside the classroom is outstanding.
- Very good enrichment opportunities are provided in sports, drama, music, modern foreign languages and citizenship.
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met, in Years 10 and 11.
- Music is a weak area of the curriculum in terms of time allocation, teaching and management.

Commentary

21. The school's status as 'sports college' and 'Arts Mark Silver' award has a very positive effect on the curriculum, by providing opportunities for a very wide range of achievements to be recognised and celebrated. It has enabled the school to access funding to draw areas of the curriculum together within the school as well as to make links with other local schools and the wider community.

22. The curriculum is carefully planned and offers a broad range of opportunities. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as religious education in Years 7 to 9, drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in Years 10 and 11 because of staff turbulence. Suitable, ongoing guidance is provided to help pupils to make the right choice of subjects. There is a good programme in place to teach pupils about sex and relationships and drugs. The short course in citizenship at GCSE level adds significantly to older pupils' understanding of what it means to be a good citizen in today's society.

23. There is a good choice of curricular opportunities for pupils moving into Year 10. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, the choice of a work-related learning programme (WRL) includes motor vehicle repair and hairdressing. Year 10 pupils benefit from very well planned work experience. *Connexions* staff make a very positive contribution to the curriculum: for example they make regular visits to the school and hold group workshops. The careers library is well-stocked and the teacher in charge has a clear over-view of the changing work place and the advice pupils may need in order to ensure that they make the most of their abilities.

24. With the exception of music and art, all subjects appear to have satisfactory or good timetable provision. The inadequate time for Year 9, in these two subjects, is recognised and being addressed by the school. However, management and teaching in music is also unsatisfactory

25. A very good menu of extra-curricular provision includes sport, creative arts, modern foreign languages and citizenship. Extension activities after the school day are provided in many subjects as, for example, in English and science. Pupils' involvement in every aspect of school life, outside the classroom, develops their sense of responsibility and understanding of active citizenship extremely well.

26. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Design and technology delivery is much improved, EAL provision is better but ICT is still not making the impact it could in all subject areas and religious education delivery is a concern.

27. The overall quality of staffing is good. Staff appointments are well matched to the curriculum and to the ethos of the school. Every effort is made to address recruitment issues. Support staff are becoming increasingly integrated into the school.

28. During the past few years improvements have been made to the school's accommodation, which have done much to redress the shortcomings that were noted at the previous inspection. The school's staff has made considerable efforts to ensure that the accommodation is of an acceptable standard for the education of the pupils. Almost all departments are in accommodation that is judged to be at least satisfactory, although some of the rooms are too small for the size of groups using them. Given the wide range of activities that are undertaken by the physical education department the on-site accommodation is not adequate. The accommodation for the special educational needs department is cramped and there is insufficient access to computers to support record keeping. Pupils take care of this school. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism. Stunning displays of pupils' work and photographs of pupils' activities enhance the appearance of buildings. The site manager and his staff maintain the site to a high standard.

29. Resources are good and support the pupils' learning well. The resource provision in P.E. and drama is very good and good in many other subjects. There are no areas in which resources are unsatisfactory. The small but well stocked library supports pupils' learning throughout the day

and is well used. Some basic texts are available in other languages. ICT provision has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

30. The joint sixth form provision with East Berkshire College is well managed. Leadership of the on-site provision is good. Accommodation is very appropriate with very good common room and ICT provision. The combination of GNVQ and A-level courses provided offer students the best of both vocational and academic education. Careers advice is well pitched for the needs of students. External mentors from local firms offer good advice for work placements and Oxford Brooks University provides regular seminars for those students choosing this route. Students have access to the facilities offered by the Sports College and a number make full use of these opportunities. The joint sixth-form provision is proving increasingly popular, with many past students achieving well at university level.

Care, guidance and support

The care and guidance of all pupils at Wexham is **very good** and has improved since the last inspection. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are **very effective**. Based on monitoring, **good** quality support and guidance is made available to secure pupils' ongoing achievement and development. **Very good** procedures ensure that pupils' are involved in the school's development and that their views are routinely sought.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school looks after pupils effectively.
- Pupils enjoy very good and trusting relationships with staff which contribute positively to their achievement and development.
- The careful monitoring of pupil achievements ensures that support and guidance to secure continuing development is timely and effective.
- Pupil involvement in the life and development of the school is very good and positively influences their attitudes.

Commentary

31. Good arrangements for child protection are in place and the school is both vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. All staff show high levels of care for pupils and good procedures ensure that the school is a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning and development. In lessons and at breaks appropriate supervision is always provided. Good systems ensure that identified hazards and safety concerns are quickly eliminated and risk assessments covering all off site activities are routinely carried out. Equipment is regularly tested, there are frequent evacuation practices, clear procedures covering medicines on site and appropriate rules relating to internet access are in place and closely followed.

32. The vast majority of pupils respond very positively to the consistently supportive approach shown by all adults in the school. Staff and pupils enjoy high levels of mutual respect. Pupils develop strong trusting relationships with adults, become less inhibited and more confident and have no qualms about turning to staff with any concerns or worries. A good example of this was observed when a Year 11 boy became pre-occupied with personal issues during a lesson and rather than disrupt proceedings or walk out of school took it upon himself to seek advice and support from his head of year.

33. The assessment and tracking of pupils' academic achievement is good overall but does vary by department. In the best cases teachers monitor levels of understanding and progress against carefully agreed short term targets and adapt their levels of support to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils' personal and social development is a priority for all staff. Very good induction arrangements ensure a smooth transition into the school and initiatives like the Year 7 residential visit enable staff to get to know pupils early in their time at the school. All pupils have mutually agreed and regularly reviewed personal targets and the combination of conscientious staff and very good communication

systems ensure that any pupil experiencing behaviour or social difficulties is quickly identified. A wide range of strategies and approaches is sensitively and effectively used to help and support any pupils with problems.

34. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to express their views and to become involved in day to day routines. They enthusiastically accept responsibilities around the school and when meeting with visitors or representing the school their efforts are, quite rightly, highly valued by staff. Pupils are always involved in their own termly target meetings where they express opinions on their work and performance and play a responsible part in agreeing future goals. Through the School Council pupils make positive suggestions on how to improve school routines and facilities. Recent improvements to playground facilities and the imminent changes to restaurant arrangements were closely influenced by the pupil voice.

35. Special educational needs pupils are well supported on an individual, personal level. There is very good support for those pupils in danger of being excluded. There are good opportunities for individual discussions with parents outside the school day.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school enjoys a **very good** and improved partnership with parents and carers. There are **excellent**, productive links with the wider community. Links with schools and colleges are **good** and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good communication and consultation with parents ensures their involvement in the education and development of their children.
- Excellent community links effectively extend pupils' learning experiences.
- The very good links with a local special school and the developing partnership with the college help pupils' social development and preparation for life after school.

Commentary

36. The very strong partnership between the school and parents has improved since the last inspection. Views expressed by parents and carers indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school and widespread pleasure at the progress they see their children making. An overwhelming majority say their children like school and feel that the school is helping them to mature and be better prepared for later life. There is widespread recognition and approval of the quality of leadership, teaching and the fact that all pupils are treated and valued equally regardless of their ability. A small minority of parents expressed mild concern over bullying at the school. Inspectors agree with pupils when they say that the isolated instances of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with and that it is not an issue in the school.

37. At initial open evenings and throughout pupils' induction programmes the school makes every effort to establish positive relationships with parents and to involve them in school life and in their children's education. Effective communication is maintained through the home school book, telephone calls, parents' evenings and target setting meetings, social events and the formal annual reports and reviews. Reports provide a good overview of what pupils know, understand and can do together with a good summary of social and personal achievement. Target meetings and consultation evenings are well attended and the school makes alternative arrangements for any parents unable to attend. Parents are quickly involved if problems occur and the school is always available if parents have any concerns. The school regularly consults parents, values their views and opinions and always takes note of suggestions for improvement.

38. The headteacher and senior managers are outward looking and have established some excellent, productive links within the wider community. The school effectively involves community organisations in its own development, provides facilities and expertise to help community groups

and ensures that pupils enhance their own learning and development through involvement in a wide range of community initiatives. Numerous community groups use the facilities including the Chinese Saturday School, a local group of Korean and Philippine hospital workers, a choir, many sporting clubs and English language classes for parents and community members are held in school every Saturday. Since achieving Sports College status the school has become very involved in providing facilities and expertise to many local sports clubs and individual community members. A developing link with the parish council will soon see pupils attending all meetings. There are regular events where pupils interact with local community members, like the senior citizens party, the harvest festival, multicultural celebrations and community work projects where pupils help to improve the neighbourhood and maintain old people's gardens. Community figures and companies are regular contributors to curriculum teaching and there are many visits to local and national places of interest to support learning. An excellent wider community link has been established with a South African school and is being well used to broaden pupils' awareness.

39. Relationships with other schools and colleges are good and developing quickly. The link with a local special school developed through the Sports College bid is very good and there is beneficial interaction between teachers and pupils. Links with feeder primary schools are good and ensure effective transition. Discussions with local secondary schools over closer working relationships are well advanced and there are plans for more teacher collaboration within departmental areas, more sharing of resources and facilities and more opportunities for pupils to mix socially and to share learning experiences. The collaboration with the college over the establishment of a Wexham sixth form has helped to create some opportunities for younger pupils to experience taster days and sample some vocational courses. It is planned to further develop the college link and to extend the range of vocational studies that Years 10 and 11 pupils can access at the college.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership by the headteacher is **excellent**. It is **very good** by key staff. The effectiveness of management is **good**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership.
- The whole school is involved in the school's self evaluation process.
- A core of governors is very active in the life of the school.
- Management in music and religious education is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements are not met in religious education.
- Targets are insufficiently specific for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

40. The headteacher's leadership of the school is excellent. His clarity of vision, commitment to inclusion and non-negotiable, noble principles which emphasise the importance of the individual, ensure that all in the school feel valued, cared for and safe. As a result, the foundations of a durable structure have been laid and substantial growth has occurred. There is a strong sense of purpose in the school. Other key staff match his commitment, are very good and are vital to the school's success. Very effective teams are defined by the school as groups of staff who are highly professional and pass the "human being" test. Heads of Years are usually home-grown by the school and are very good role models that are taking on an increasingly academic overview of pupils' performance as well as taking care of pupils' pastoral needs.

41. Management is very hands-on and its effectiveness is good, being frustrated by staffing and budget restrictions. All managers are dutifully involved in the school's self evaluation. It is regarded as whole school process. Middle managers vary in expertise and efficiency. Overall, their management is good but there are deficiencies in music and religious education, mainly due to staffing difficulties. Statutory requirements are not met in religious education.

42. Governance is good. Governors are proud of their school. The governing body is in a period of transition. A core of very keen governors takes a very active part in school life. As a consequence and in line with recent educational reforms, the number of governors has been reduced to twelve to make a more efficient team. The governing body has a sensible committee structure which includes a finance group, health and safety, personnel and discipline group. Wisely, it has also a named governor for the sixth form. Governors are involved with the school development plan. They challenge when necessary but are a very supportive group. The chair of governors, for example, meets at least weekly with the headteacher.

43. Leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met. While the provision has been improved since the last inspection, developments in the special needs department have been limited by the long-term absence of the head of learning support. Nevertheless, there are aspects of monitoring and evaluation that are insufficiently well focused on outcomes for pupils. Targets set for pupils are not always measurable. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice to share good practice.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,469,231	Balance from previous year	310,137
Total expenditure	3,177,623	Balance carried forward to the next	291,608
Expenditure per pupil	4305	*figures exclude sport co-ordinator finances	

44. Finance management is good. Previous weaknesses have been remedied. The school development plan and most subject development plans contain appropriate development targets with clear indications of costing. Financial control is good. The Governing Body maintains a satisfactory overview of the school's budget and spending.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

English as an additional language

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well. Their progress is carefully tracked.
- Pupils competent with English help those who need it.
- Several pupils still have significant literacy needs.
- Links with the community are good.

Commentary

45. There are no pupils at the very early stages of learning English but there are twenty-one at end of Year 9 who require significant support. These are on the school's priority list and they receive support, either in lessons or through withdrawal for individual or small group work. Additionally, there are over 300 pupils who are supported through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant and local authority funding and who have a range of literacy needs.

46. The school's data shows that EAL pupils achieve well. Teachers are well supported by the new co-ordinator who also assists them in setting pupils' learning targets and in assessing, tracking

and reviewing their progress. Teaching is good overall and other pupils who are competent in English often help their less fluent peers in lessons. The specialist in-class support and individual withdrawal sessions are very good. Pupils show considerable commitment and enjoy very good relationships with their teacher and the teaching assistants, all of whom work hard to ensure that pupils understand the content of subject syllabuses, and encourage them to use their first languages, when necessary, to explore difficult concepts and to develop their overall language skills. There are, however, many pupils who are now beyond Stage 3 but who still have significant literacy needs. Whilst there is some very good practice, not all teachers regularly take into consideration the different needs of these pupils when planning lessons, particularly in checking that they understand cultural differences or in ensuring that they fully understand instructions.

47. The management of EAL is good, and is now developing well after a short period when it was unable to move forward owing to staff absence. Currently, the head of special educational needs and a new co-ordinator manage it jointly. Links with the local authority adviser are very good, as are those with parents. The department also works very closely and successfully with English to identify and address pupils' literacy problems, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are regularly assessed and their progress carefully tracked; and the department is now developing ways of helping all teachers to plan for and meet the wide range of needs which pupils have. One very important recent initiative is ensuring that pupils in all subjects fully understand the wording of examination instructions. This will enable them to write relevantly and to show what they know, understand and can do when answering questions.

48. There are very good community links and events, such as an annual Cultural Evening, in which languages, food, music, art, costume and traditions are shared. These give both parents and pupils the opportunity to experience and celebrate the rich cultural diversity found in the school. Additionally, the school values and encourages pupils to use their mother tongue and provides GCSE classes in Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic.

Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)

Provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well particularly when there is a learning support assistant in lessons
- There is very good oversight of pupils' personal and social development
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and feel secure and confident
- Monitoring is insufficiently based on evidence of strategies to ensure learning
- Targets are insufficiently well focused and are not always measurable
- Teachers across the curriculum are not always aware of pupils' individual needs

Commentary

49. The resource base for pupils on the autistic spectrum has been established since the last inspection. This specialist provision was developed to enable students with ASD to be educated in a fully inclusive environment. It helps these vulnerable young people to achieve their full potential both academically and socially. The progress made, as a result of this provision, in integrating and including ASD pupils into all aspects of mainstream school life has resulted in it being over subscribed, attracting referrals from neighbouring authorities in addition to Slough pupils.

Pupils' achievement is good and similar to that of other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties on the autistic spectrum achieve well in a range of extra-curricular activities. Some higher attaining pupils are predicted to achieve very well in external examinations. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning because they enjoy school and are grateful for the support of adults. They achieve very well in lessons that are clearly and unambiguously structured and that have individual support from teaching assistants.

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers often display the key specialist words and emphasise them well. Some teachers use writing frames. Some teachers include a range of activities that enable pupils to learn in different ways and make good use of visual clues through well presented learning materials. Overall, however, teachers do not make sufficient use of strategies suggested on the pupils' individual education plans.

51. There is good oversight of pupils' welfare. The quality of relationships is very high and is a major factor in enabling the pupils' good progress. There is a good induction process for pupils and their social and communication abilities are effectively assessed on entry and as they proceed through the school. Contact with parents is good and there is good telephone contact. However, pupils' targets are not always sufficiently well focused to be measurable. There is scope for better organisation of pupils' files to make them more useful tools for maintaining oversight of pupils' progress and achievements.

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are appropriate procedures in place with respect to the setting. However, procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are insufficiently focused on outcomes from lessons. Meetings tend to rely on issues brought to the group by individuals. Opportunities are missed, therefore, to share good practice and to systematically address the aids and barriers to the learning of all pupils. There is scope for greater annual reviews and target emphasis on supporting teachers to make better use of individual education plans.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE English results are rising, though they remain well below average in literature.
- Most pupils gain GCSE pass grades in both English and English literature.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, together with very good teaching, ensure that they achieve very well.
- The department does not make sufficient use of computers to develop pupils' learning.
- Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Commentary

53. Whilst the focus was on English 11 to 16, one Year 12 English literature lesson was observed at the school's request. Standards were average. Students achieved very well because of very good, challenging teaching and their own high level of interest, commitment and maturity.

54. In 2003, standards in the Year 9 national tests were at the national average. They were above those attained in schools with a similar ability intake and well above average when compared with secondary modern schools whose pupils have similar backgrounds. Results dipped slightly in 2004 and fewer pupils attained level 6 and above, though there was an overall improvement in the standards of writing. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally. In 2003, performance in GCSE English was at the national average for grades A* to G, but below at A* to C. Literature was well below average. Overall, results in English in 2004 showed a good improvement and continued the rising trend. Literature results were similar to those in 2003.

55. Standards of work seen are average in Years 9 and 11. This represents very good achievement, given that the standards of these groups of pupils were well below the national average when they entered the school. Speaking skills develop well and are average in all years because of the frequent opportunities to discuss, collaborate and explore ideas in every lesson. Although most pupils can read aloud competently, some have problems understanding their reading because of a narrow vocabulary and their failure to recognise implicit meanings. Even middle ability pupils have undeveloped deductive and inferential skills. In all years, personal and creative writing is lively and entertaining, though critical writing in literature and media studies is often descriptive rather than analytical. By Year 11, the higher attaining pupils write cogently and accurately; the lower attainers in all years have difficulty with writing to instruct and inform, and their vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are weak.

56. Overall achievement by pupils of all ethnic backgrounds and abilities is very good. Pupils' very positive attitudes, their desire to succeed and very good teaching help it considerably. There is also a rich extra-curricular programme, including regular theatre trips, extra GCSE English classes and a very successful boys' reading group, which develops all pupils' literacy skills very well. However, the department does not make regular use of computers to enrich and extend pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose mother tongue is not English receive high quality individual support from both teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils needing extra help with literacy in Year 7 have regular lessons using National progress units and make rapid gains as a result. By the end of Year 11, all pupils make sufficient progress to be entered for English and English literature at GCSE and almost all attain passes in both subjects, unlike in most schools.

57. Teaching and learning are very good overall, even though two experienced members of staff are currently on maternity leave. Teaching is carefully planned and ensures that learning is rewarding and enjoyable. The department has successfully researched pupils' learning styles and methods for encouraging boys. Consequently, it has rewritten its schemes of work to ensure that new approaches, tasks, texts and themes help all pupils to improve their achievement. There are choices and challenges and, when necessary, lower attaining pupils receive well-designed prompt sheets to help them to structure their writing. Most teachers use test and GCSE assessment information well to plan appropriate learning experiences and to identify pupils who are underachieving. All have very positive relationships with their classes, share learning objectives with them and involve them in assessment and target setting processes. They also work very well with the very capable teaching assistants, whose work is widely regarded as examples of good practice, to support lower attaining pupils.

58. Although the head of department is temporarily absent, the leadership of the department is very good. This is because a strong, corporate vision and philosophy of English teaching, with the pupils firmly in the centre, has been established. It is an innovative, reflective and ambitious department in which communication, commitment and teamwork are impressive. New teachers are well inducted and supported and teaching assistants thoroughly involved in all aspects of its work. The temporary management is good. The department is regarded as a model of good practice. There is an excellent staff handbook and thorough schemes of work address the learning needs of all pupils: however, whilst target setting, use of assessment data and marking are good overall, there are inconsistencies in the usefulness of teachers' comments in class books. Standards, achievement, pupils' attitudes and teaching have all improved; but the regular use of computers by pupils is still limited. All pupils with English as an additional language make sufficient progress to obtain GCSE passes in both English and English literature and have access to the full curriculum. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Provision is good. Much work has been done across the school over several years to raise awareness and to train staff so that they all see themselves as teachers of literacy. Literacy is well managed by an assistant head teacher and the head of English. Most heads of subjects monitor its teaching and planning, but there are inconsistencies between departments, such as in the quality and usefulness of correcting and in the range of writing tasks set. The guidance and examples provided to help pupils to structure and develop their written responses also varies. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy and this is embedded in the work of almost all departments. Consequently, teaching is good overall, particularly the teaching of subject specific vocabulary and the encouragement of pupils to use talk as a learning tool which helps them to share and extend their ideas, to solve problems and to make decisions. The English department gives first-rate support to other subject areas, as do the specially trained teaching assistants. The best practice is in modern languages, drama, physical education, geography and history: however, in some subjects, pupils' literacy needs are not always identified in lesson planning. There are good opportunities for reading and discussions during morning registration time and literacy is strongly promoted by the library and the very knowledgeable librarian.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is mainly good and occasionally excellent
- Leadership and management are very good and have the vision and capacity to lead the department forward
- Achievement is usually at least good and gives pupils a strong sense of self-worth

- Attainment, particularly of boys, which is beginning to improve, has the capacity to improve further
- Assessment is not well enough developed to enhance/support pupils' learning. Hence data is not used effectively to raise standards

Commentary

60. All pupils begin to study French in Year 7 and by the end of Year 9 their attainment, although well below national averages, is at least as high as in similar schools. Nearly all pupils continue to study French to the end of Year 11 which is almost twice as many as the national percentage and in 2003 they all gained an A* to G grade which is above national averages. There is a similar pattern at the end of Year 11 with evidence indicating a gradual improvement in GCSE results over the last three years and a significant improvement in 2004, including a much higher number of pupils gaining the higher grades. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' throughout the school, reflecting the national pattern. In 2003 pupils were generally at least as successful in French as in other subjects. Pupils also have the opportunity to study GCSE Urdu and Punjabi and enjoy a high level of success.

61. Standards of work seen are higher than those reflected in examination results and are indicative of a general trend of improvement. Attainment in lessons is only slightly below national expectations and, therefore, above the expectation for similar schools. This is also reflected in the standard of work in pupils' exercise books. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to describe a variety of clothes, use adjective agreements accurately and match pictures to descriptions. In a higher ability Year 11 class, pupils could use the present, future and perfect tenses with a high level of accuracy when talking about their shopping experiences, and use them in complex sentences. Exercise books show that at every stage of pupils' acquisition of French, they have experience of reading, listening, speaking and writing skills and demonstrate a steady and successful progression from simple sentences and grammar to very complex sentences incorporating a variety of tenses, adjectives and pronouns.

62. The achievement of pupils is at least good across both key stages. Most pupils, regardless of ethnicity or ability, achieve their potential. A group of lower ability Year 11 students, many of whom had special educational needs, were able to talk about items that they had bought using the perfect tense and had a real sense of pride in what they had achieved. Exercise books of pupils of all abilities are generally well-presented, indicating that pupils take a pride in their work.

63. The quality of teaching is good at end of both Years 9 and 11. The best lessons are characterised by the high quality of relationships between teacher and pupils where pupils respond eagerly to the real interest and care which teachers show towards them. There is a tremendous feeling of partnership and mutual respect between teachers and pupils in the department. The pace of lessons also played an important part in pupils' success. Where there was a variety of activities, constantly reinforcing learning in different ways before moving on to the next stage, pupils were always interested and enabled to succeed. The way in which lessons challenged pupils was also integral to their success; both the more and less able pupils were stretched and no-one felt excluded from the learning process. Where lessons were less successful, pupils did not feel so secure in their learning.

64. Although assessment procedures are not yet fully developed and it is not therefore possible to use them to help raise standards, work is underway in this area. Pupils are already told clearly what they have to do to improve further and their work is marked regularly and carefully.

65. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of modern languages and knows how to achieve it. New schemes of work are now in place, a new course has been introduced and departmental documentation is up-to-date and of a high quality. Teachers observe each other's lessons on a regular basis and are therefore able to share expertise, which is already helping raise standards further. The use of performance data, however, to help raise standards, is not well enough developed. The enthusiasm

and commitment of the whole department, which emanates from the excellent role model provided by the head of department, is infectious and passed on to the pupils. All the teachers are well-qualified French nationals. This also helps set the high quality tone for the department.

66. The modern languages department is housed in a suite of rooms, incorporating an office and a computer room and each teacher has her own room. The rooms are large, light and warm and very well furnished and resourced. Display, incorporating pupils' own work, grammar, some labels in Urdu or Punjabi, advertising of departmental events and posters, gives the whole area a multi-cultural dimension and sets a positive tone for learning.

67. The extra-curricular activities organised by the modern languages department are extensive. Events include an annual visit to France, a French breakfast organised by Year 9, multi-cultural films, cross-curricular days where other departments have a French theme, a gifted and talented conference and "French Experience" events. The motivational factor provided by these activities plays a significant part in pupils' eagerness to continue to study French until the end of Year 11.

68. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The most and least able pupils are challenged and enabled to make good progress. Standards overall have improved and new schemes of work have put the department at the forefront of developments in the teaching of modern languages.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Standards are rising quickly due to excellent subject leadership and management.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers assess work thoroughly and use information very well to develop strategies to improve pupils' performance.

Commentary

69. Standards on joining the school in Year 7 are well below average. However, pupils are taught well and make very good progress. Standards in Year 9 are rising, continuing the trend begun several years ago. In 2004, test results for pupils in Year 9 were just below the national average. However, there is not yet any data to compare this result with performance in similar schools. Current Year 9 pupils are on course to surpass this performance. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with the national average. This represents very good achievement. Results at GCSE have improved markedly in recent years. In 2004, pupils achieved very well in attaining national average standards. Current Year 11 pupils are on course to match this very good achievement. Throughout the school, previous differences in performance by boys and girls have largely been eradicated. They now perform equally well.

70. The improvements in performance owe much to the excellent leadership and management that has developed in recent years. The quality of leadership is recognised by the local authority as a model of practice to be shared with other schools. Members of the department, including the specialist teaching assistants, work very well together planning and implementing initiatives. Expectations are high. Assessment information is analysed rigorously to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Once identified the department takes action, for example to raise the performance of pupils working at just below average standards. These interventions are increasingly effective in raising standards. The department has a clear vision for the future and knows what developments still need to be made, for example to involve pupils in assessing their own progress and to develop their understanding of what they need to do to meet their targets.

71. Grouping pupils of similar ability together for teaching (a process called “setting”) works well. Teachers match work well to the ability of the pupils in the set. Lessons are often a mix of short class discussion and written tasks. This is effective, for example in developing pupils’ understanding of fractions because it builds in small steps on pupils’ existing knowledge of multiplication tables whilst introducing new ideas such as the concept of equivalent fractions. Pupils respond very well to the challenges they are set. Classroom relationships are very good, pupils behave very well and they work hard. Consequently lessons move on briskly without interruption, allowing teachers and support staff to help individual pupils when they need it. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well in lessons, although teachers do not adapt teaching styles specifically to meet the needs of a small number of pupils from the special needs unit.

72. At its best, teaching is an excellent combination of highly challenging work taught at rapid pace and sustained high levels of thinking. For example, Year 11 pupils achieved very well in a lesson that revised their understanding of the laws of indices and began to explore further features of the number system such as surds and irrational numbers. Although teaching overall is good, some lessons are less effective because class discussions are too long which restricts individual working time and reduces the progress pupils might otherwise have made. Additionally, teachers sometimes focus too much on teaching skills, such as simplifying algebraic expressions, rather than developing pupils’ understanding of the underlying processes involved. Consequently, pupils can complete the exercises set but they cannot fully explain why their answers are correct. Teachers use text books and other equipment well, but pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT to support their mathematical development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Excellent subject leadership and management have driven up standards markedly and teaching is more consistently good. Pupils use their mathematics skills satisfactorily to support learning in other lessons, for example in history, geography, science and physical education.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers establish a good climate for learning in the classroom through the development of very positive relationships with their pupils.
- The department is well led with high aspirations.
- The teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, so pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to learn independently.
- The development of pupils’ writing skills is not regularly emphasised.
- ICT is rarely used to support pupils’ learning in experimental science.
- Pupils’ knowledge of how they can improve is not widespread.

Commentary

74. The 2003 national test results for Year 9 were well below national standards but were above average for similar schools. Pupils did less well in science than in mathematics and English for similar schools and girls did better than boys. The results were similar for 2004. Since the last inspection in 1999, standards have risen in line with national trend. However standards have not risen in real terms in recent years due to the adverse effect of high staff turnover. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were below average when compared with all schools but above average when compared with similar schools. Girls did better than boys and pupils did well in comparison with other subjects. The results were similar for 2004. Since the last inspection GCSE results have steadily improved. The impact of frequent staff changes has had a greater adverse effect on younger pupils in Years 7 to 9 than those in Years 10 and 11.

75. The standard of work seen for pupils in Years 7 to 11 was below average overall. Pupils in Year 8 are able to prepare a compound from a mixture of iron filings and sulphur but few of them really understand the chemical difference between the starting and end products. Top set Year 11 pupils have a clear understanding of the dangers of smoking. However, in preparing their arguments for the banning of smoking in public places, they do not consider if the data they have collected is sufficient to support the conclusions they draw. Most pupils are able to use their mathematical skills effectively to support their learning in science but pupils sometimes do not have the necessary writing skills to produce correct and accurate written scientific explanations in response to open-ended questions.

76. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels of attainment in science. They achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 obtaining the levels expected of them in the national tests based upon their entry levels. They achieve well in Years 10 and 11 obtaining higher grades in the GCSE examinations than their end of Year 9 results predict. Achievement has improved in Years 10 and 11 since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, achieve as well as other pupils but occasionally those pupils who are particularly gifted or talented are not challenged sufficiently and do not achieve as well as they could.

77. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teaching is characterised by the development of very positive relationships with pupils based upon mutual respect. Classroom management is good and pupils behave well and enjoy their lessons. Pupils achieve well when the teaching includes planned activities that challenge pupils to think for themselves and work independently. For example in a Year 10 lesson on investigating the relationship between voltages at various points in an electrical circuit pupils were given clear guidelines on what they were to find out using a well structured worksheet together with a short input from the teacher. For most of the lesson they worked in small groups by themselves building circuits, trying out ideas and arriving at meaningful conclusions. As a result they achieved well, establishing a rule for the voltages around an electrical circuit. Experimental work has improved since the last inspection and is now more investigative than it was. In less effective teaching, opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to develop independent learning skills. Teachers' use of ICT to support pupils' learning is satisfactory but pupils have little opportunity to use ICT to support their experimental work. Pupils' progress is monitored well over time and many pupils know their target grades and what level they are currently working at. However, most pupils have little knowledge of what they need to do to improve over shorter time periods.

78. The recently appointed acting head of department leads the subject well and has a clear vision for raising standards. A committed team of teachers and technical support staff share this vision and work hard to ensure that pupils do as well as they can. The head of department is supported well by senior management and an external adviser. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has had a positive effect on some of the teaching but it has yet to impact on results at the end of Year 9. The department is managed satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis and staff are clear about their roles. The curriculum includes many activities, outside normal lesson time and beyond the classroom, that link science to the every day world.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources and time allocation for pupils in Years 7 to 9 have improved substantially since the last inspection but time allocations are too little for Years 7 to 9.
- Standards are rising and achievement is very good in the GCSE group.
- The quality of teaching is good and as a result pupil attitudes to learning are very positive
- Ongoing assessment is not used rigorously enough to inform next stage of learning.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their ICT skills in other subjects.

Commentary

79. Pupils start school with a wide range of ability levels and subject expertise. Overall these are well below what might be expected nationally. By the end of Years 9 and 11, although standards are below national expectations, there is evidence that they are rising. This represents very good progress over time. Pupils who are studying the full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress. Significant improvements have been made to the opportunities available for older pupils. There is a variety of courses appropriate to the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is carried out regularly and is related to the National Curriculum. The department acknowledges further work is necessary to ensure it is used to inform the next step for learning. All students, regardless of their attainment on entry or their special educational need, are achieving very well.

80. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Strongest features are teacher subject knowledge and expertise, and management of pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and teachers use their subject knowledge well to explain procedures. The relationship between pupils and their teachers is very good. Pupils work well together including those from different ethnic groups. Teachers have very good knowledge of their pupils' learning needs but this is not always informing what they expect to be learnt or achieved by the end of the lesson. Plenary sessions are often too brief with insufficient time given to highlight good work and assess pupil problems. The school now provides one ICT lesson per week for all pupils in Years 7 to 9; however the school is aware that time allocation is tight for the delivery of the Key Stage 3 strategy.

81. Leadership and management are satisfactory with the potential to be good when current temporary staffing difficulties are resolved. The co-ordinator of ICT is regarded as a lead practitioner within the local educational authority. The department has further work to do to following the recently improved level of resources within the school. Rigorous monitoring of the use of these updated resources to ensure ICT is making an active contribution to pupil learning in all areas of the curriculum is a high priority. The last inspection judged the provision for ICT as unsatisfactory. Provision has now improved, there is a focus on raising standards, the school now meets the requirements of the national curriculum. Standards are rising with pupils achieving in line with expectations. Pupils are developing subject specific language and all pupils learn about and can use main software applications. The strategic plan for ICT has ensured that staff have been very well supported to deliver ICT Suites of computers have been established both in the ICT department and around the school. Accommodation is well designed with access to multimedia projectors and there is a range of specialist software. These are having a positive effect on pupil learning. There is a good awareness of areas that are underdeveloped. Plans for the curriculum need to be more effectively co-ordinated and implemented. Progress since the last inspection has been good and the capacity for further improvement looks positive.

Information and Communication Technology across the curriculum

82. Across the school the use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory and provision has now improved. Pupil competence is satisfactory. In some subject areas, for example, mathematics, design and technology, drama and physical education, ICT is used well to support pupil learning. Use of interactive whiteboards is developing as part of the approach to improve pace in teaching. The school has worked hard to ensure teachers have good ICT skills and feel confident to use it to improve practice. The school is reviewing how each subject uses ICT to enhance teaching and

learning. Monitoring cross-curricular progress is a key area for development, both to increase opportunities and ensure consistency across the school. The order in which developments have been implemented has been appropriate.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were very low.
- Pupils' achievement and standards in geography are improving.
- Teachers plan and structure their lessons well so that pupils are productive.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and lessons take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork in Years 8 and 9.
- There is insufficient use of ICT by teachers and pupils to support learning.

Commentary

83. GCSE results in 2004 and 2003 were very low compared to national averages. In 2004 the very small number of pupils who took the examination did not do as well in geography as in many other subjects they took. In the 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 results were well below average but school data indicates that these improved in 2004. These results represent good achievement for the pupils concerned compared to their attainment when they entered the school.

84. In work seen standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average. However pupils' achievement is good because they make good gains in knowledge and understanding from a well below average starting point in Year 7. All pupils in Year 9 can recognise geographical terminology and higher attainers can use these words accurately and confidently to describe, for example, the links between birth rates, life expectancy and population growth. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive constructive individual help from teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils in Year 11 collect and analyse data well in order to answer geographical questions about, for example, developments in the London docklands.

85. Pupils' achievement and their standards in geography are improving because teaching and learning are good. Following a period of staff absence and change the department now has a settled team of subject specialists. Support for the department from colleagues both inside and outside of the school has helped to bring about improvements in pupils' learning. Teachers plan and structure their lessons well so pupils are clear about what and how they are going to learn. Teachers check their pupils' learning carefully to make sure that the lesson objectives are met. The use of interesting and varied resources helps to engage pupils' interest. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork in Years 8 and 9 and ICT is not used fully to support learning. Most pupils have mature attitudes to learning and respond well to the good teaching they receive by working hard and achieving well. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

86. The leadership and management of geography are good. Clear priorities have been identified for development, which include refining systems for setting targets for pupils so they are clear about how to improve their work. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively.

Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory because teaching has remained good and pupils' achievement has improved. The department has both the capacity and the commitment to improve further.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages students to achieve their potential.
- Positive working relationships exist between pupils and staff.
- The use of assessment to monitor progress is effective.
- There is a shared commitment to improving standards.
- Independent learning skills are weak.
- The literacy policy is not raising standards for all pupils.
- ICT is not integrated into schemes of work.

Commentary

87. Standards of work seen in history are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Pupils' interest in history causes their learning to be good. As a result, pupils' achievements, overall, in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7, are satisfactory. There is value added at the end of Years 9 and 11.

88. At the end of Year 9, tests for 14 year olds were broadly average. Boys and girls do not gain similar results. A majority of girls do better than the boys. Overall, results have risen slightly over recent years. At the end of Year 11, GCSE examination results in 2003 and 2004 were below average over the whole grade range. They were well below average for the top grades A* to C. Broadly, pupils do not do as well in history as they do in some other subjects. There have been major staffing issues which have contributed to this poor performance. While the results in 2004 were similar to those gained in 2003 a slightly higher proportion of pupils gained grades A* to C. Predicted grades for 2005 show some improvement.

89. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are, broadly, average for pupils, reflecting recent test results. Most pupils have at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of time, and past and present events which they have studied recently. The higher attaining pupils can exercise their memory to a higher degree than the lower attaining pupils. Because of their better recall of what they have learnt and remembered the higher attaining pupils often do better than expected for their age. For example, pupils in Year 9 make accurate use of historical terms when describing a past event. A class, for example, examined the killing in Sarajevo that started World War 1 using the correct terms, such as terrorist and assassination. Lower attaining pupils, however, find it difficult to express their understanding clearly in their writing. For the majority of pupils the research work they undertake is the most exciting part of their studies. The level of skill shown is a match to their attainment in other aspects of history.

90. Pupils' overall achievement in history by the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory. They enter the school with attainment that is below average. At the end of Year 7 it has improved and by the end of Year 9 it is average for a majority of pupils. At the end of Year 11, however, they gain GCSE results that do not match the national average over the whole grade range. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in history. They receive good teaching with activities that are carefully matched to their needs. For example, these pupils make good progress in developing their skills in information technology to secure good historical data. There is, across all levels of ability, a strong sense of shared common purpose to sustainable progress over years.

91. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers follow detailed schemes of work. These schemes ensure that pupils move on quickly to new ideas which continually reinforce pupils' understanding from earlier work. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress because they are provided with a rich and interesting variety of tasks. For example, a Year 11 class examined the experience of American troops in Vietnam using the Oliver Stone film 'Platoon' as a

discussion point leading pupils to associate with individual soldiers. They examined, in-depth, questions of the decline in morale and the widespread use of drugs.

92. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of humanities leads the team well. There is a strong sense of commitment to teaching interesting history. The team know what has to be improved and the subject plan is relevant and sensible. The subject has made progress since the previous inspection. Examination results are slowly improving. Teaching is better. Marking is now more helpful to pupils as their work has clear indications of how improvement can be achieved. There is, in the humanities area, a sense of collegiate responsibility.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in the Year 10 option group
- Although there have been developments in certain areas, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall
- The staffing is unsatisfactory
- Despite the best efforts of the head of humanities, leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements are not being met in Year 11 and they are only partially met in Years 7 to 10.

Commentary

93. At the end of Year 11 in 2003, the standards of attainment in the GCSE course are unavailable. No pupils took the GCSE examination in year 2004. The standards of work seen during the inspection in the GCSE option group are in line with the national average, sometimes they are above this. Pupils can make intelligent reference to a variety of moral and social topics within several world religions. These include issues surrounding marriage and divorce. Pupils can express their points of view on topics like justice and equality and they are able to distinguish between needs and wants in the context of the examination syllabus. The written skills of most pupils are good. The standard of girls' work tends to be better than that of boys. The achievement of pupils is good. No work was seen of the pupils not in the option group so no statement can be made about standards and achievement of these pupils.

94. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are variable. Most are below the standards indicated in the locally Agreed Syllabus and some are well below. The limited amount of time available for religious education in these years and difficulties in staffing are having a significant effect on standards and achievement. Pupils are familiar with various aspects of Buddhism but often their knowledge is not developed to extent of them being able to relate it to questions of meaning and purpose. Pupils have some knowledge of religious buildings but they are often unclear as to the central beliefs that lie beyond these external manifestations. The amount of written work in a significant number of books is very limited. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. For some pupils it is unsatisfactory.

95. The teaching and learning in the GCSE option group is very good. Lessons are well prepared and a range of activities help to put across the learning in a clear way. At times, the content drawn from world religions could be stronger in individual lessons. Very good preparation is made for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. Consequently they make good progress. The teaching makes a good contribution to pupils learning about citizenship as well as developing literacy skills. The teaching encourages pupils to give their opinion about a range of subjects and to be able to justify them. An active and effective assessment policy is in place. Homework is set.

96. No teaching was seen of the rest of the pupils in Years 10 and 11.

97. The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Some of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Occasionally it is good. Where it is unsatisfactory, very little learning is done over the longer period of time and the learning often lacks continuity. The marking of pupils work is inconsistent and so not all pupils know how they can improve. Where teaching is satisfactory or better, the short lessons mean that very little work can be developed to the extent it should be in the very limited time available. As a result learning is often restricted to the 'facts' of religions with little work being done on the wider issues.

98. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory although the head of the humanities faculty is working conscientiously. The staffing is unsatisfactory in that there is insufficient subject expertise in the department. Progress has been made on some issues since the last inspection. In Years 7 to 9: for example, teachers are now drawn solely from the humanities faculty. Some arrangements have also been made for the teaching of religious education in Year 10. Overall however, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as statutory requirements are not being fully met in Year 10 and are not being met in Year 11. Statutory requirements are not being fully met in Years 7 to 9 due to the limits on time. The accommodation is good. The resources, other than time allocations, are good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because they have relevant and enjoyable experiences in lessons
- The department is well led and managed and has made significant improvements since the last inspection
- Assessments are not used sufficiently to plan lessons especially at end of Year 9.

Commentary

99. Although standards are below average at the end of Year 9 in comparison with those nationally, pupils' achievement is good. At the end of Year 11, standards remain below average overall, but they are average in food technology. Although standards in external examinations at the end of 2003 were below average, their achievement was only slightly below that of the whole school. This year, the majority of pupils achieved at or above their expected grades and, overall, they achieved better grades than the rest of the school. This represents good achievement. Pupils achieve best in food, electronics and resistant materials technology, least well in textiles technology. Results show an upward trend and the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades has risen from 23 to 39 over the last four years. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including special educational needs, the highest achievers, those whose first language is not English and boys and girls.

100. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons provide pupils with enjoyable and relevant experiences. In Years 7 to 9, pupils work with design problems. Teachers provide a wide range of activities, such as taking part in a batch production line, testing different food products, using computer programmes, for example, to find out about mechanisms, and making hats. Lessons are well managed and pupils learn how to work safely and confidently with a range of machines and equipment. In the best lessons, there is a very good pace to learning because activities are changed frequently. This suits the limited concentration of many pupils. In food lessons, pupils are grouped to ensure that pupils with greatest need are best supported, either by their peers or by the teacher. Pupils are better behaved and motivated in lessons where the teacher has planned for active learning. In these lessons, questions are well-focused on individual pupils to check and

extend their understanding. Some teachers in food and textiles make very good use of professionally produced help sheets. This enables pupils to help themselves to find information. Some teachers provide very effective feedback on pupils' work and this helps them to improve. Information sheets for pupils in electronics, detailed guidance for pupils in food, and clear deadlines for completing coursework in resistant materials help pupils to know what is required for the examinations. Good use is made by the explicit use of key words and some teachers make good use of writing frames for lower achieving pupils.

101. Although no unsatisfactory teaching was observed, there are some features that prevent teaching and learning from being very good. Planning contains insufficient detail to address the special educational needs of pupils. There is insufficient challenge in some lessons for higher attaining pupils. Occasionally, there is a lot of teacher talk and, as a result, pupils stop paying attention. In some lessons, teachers do not ensure that pupils use objective criteria for evaluating their work. The system for assessing pupils' progress is not yet sufficiently well developed. Pupils receive verbal feedback and they have their work levelled against National Curriculum criteria. However, they do not always receive written feedback that is sufficiently specific to help them to improve the quality of their work. Teachers make insufficient use of the information from their assessments of pupils' work to improve the precision of their planning. In some lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils do not make enough use of information and communication technology to support their weak literacy skills. Numeracy is not systematically reinforced.

102. Leadership and management of the department are good. Members of the department work well together. Statutory requirements are met. The use of information and communication technology has been much improved. The accommodation has been improved, but that for resistant materials is dated. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixty pupils, who worked with the Ugandan sculptor, achieved exceptionally well.
- Good teaching has resulted in improved standards of drawing and painting in Years 8 and 10.
- Some boys, in all year groups, slow the pace and disrupt the learning of all pupils.
- The use of ICT is having a positive effect on achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

103. The standard on entry to the school is well below average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard is below average. It is better for skill development in drawing and painting than it is for knowledge and understanding of art and artists. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is average in two-dimensional work and, for those who have had the opportunity, well above average in ceramic sculptures of the human figure. GCSE results in 2004 are well below the national average for A*-C grades and below for A*-G. In 2003 pupils performed at the national average for A*-G grades. There is no significant difference between boys and girls' attainment by this stage.

104. Achievement in lessons, in Years 7 to 9, is good overall. Girls, in Year 9, are further ahead than the boys are in their studies of Surrealism and in the development of their collage studies as paintings. Some boys appear to be behind with their work because of lessons missed for sporting commitments. All pupils react positively to teacher demonstrations and make better progress after one-to-one tuition. Talk is usually about the work being undertaken whereas in Year 7 talk has little to do with the topic studied and noise levels and silly behaviour by boys often slows the pace and prevents learning. Year 8 pupils are achieving well in their abstract paintings, higher attainers showing a particularly good sensitivity to colour application and surface texture. There is no

difference between different ethnic groups and autistic spectrum disorder pupils in Year 7 achieve better than other pupils do. This is because of the continuous support they receive from the teaching assistant. Written work is minimal and the use of ICT non-existent at present.

105. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. All Year 11 pupils are confident when drawing from real objects. They use chalk and charcoal sensitively or boldly to render form and describe the effect of light and tone. They are very proud of their achievements in producing clay figures. The experience of working with an Ugandan sculptor has not only raised their awareness of the quality aimed for but also of the desperate plight of Ugandan children. The ICT research carried out by older pupils is good but this is an area for further development.

106. Teaching is always satisfactory, usually good and occasionally very good. Very good skill development in drawing and painting underpins this practice. Weaknesses in classroom behaviour, time management and lack of familiarity with English pupils, adversely affects learning and achievement in Year 7 and to a lesser degree with the older pupils. The South African teacher and technician work well together. The department is well supported by an advanced skills teacher

107. The leadership and management of art are good. Opportunities for enrichment through the creative arts/Educational Action Zone funding are well used to raise awareness of what quality is in the visual arts and to offer links with other subjects. Too little monitoring of classroom practice has taken place and as a result issues such as behaviour management, the use of ICT and the provision of opportunities for discussion and reflection have not been resolved.

108. Improvement since the last inspection has been good: standards at GCSE are higher, work is better planned and class teaching has improved. ICT is still not used sufficiently.

DRAMA

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and results in pupils achieving very well.
- Large numbers of pupils value and benefit from the very good enrichment opportunities provided.
- Drama makes a significant contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.
- The lack of drama lessons in Year 7 slows progress in Year 8.

Commentary

109. The standard on entry to the course in Year 8 is below average. The lack of a programme of study in Year 7 means that Year 8 pupils are in a catch-up situation. By the end of Year 9 standards in knowledge, understanding of drama terms and ability to work as groups to achieve an identified objective are average. By the end of Year 11, attainment in these areas is above average. GCSE results in 2004 are below average but this is not typical. Results in 2003 were above the national average. Fewer boys take drama by this stage but those who do attain well.

110. Achievement in lessons, in Years 7, 8 and 9, is very good. All pupils in Year 9 listen attentively; work hard to solve problems set by the teacher and enjoy performing in front of their peers. They learn a great deal about human relationships through drama as well as how to be a good citizen. Not all Year 8 pupils are so positive or achieve as well as Year 9 particularly in the slot after lunch. Strategies for dealing with immature pupils or for involving pupils by providing pair work prior to group activities have started to make a difference.

111. In the lesson seen Year 11 pupils achieved exceptionally well. They explored ideas for sound-scapes, tried them out on one another, reflected on their strengths and weaknesses and

developed a very professional opening to a play which would capture the audience's imagination. Work in folders represents good achievement although lack of access to computers limits research. There is a wider gap both in quality and quantity in folder work than in performance. The needs of those identified as gifted and talented are met through after school performances.

112. Teaching is either very good or outstanding. Excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm for the subject and an infectious sense of humour draws even the most reticent pupil into the fold. As a result the majority work collaboratively and rise to whatever challenge is offered. The use of national curriculum levels is at an early stage of development but moderated portfolios of past Year 11 pupils' work is a valuable resource for helping current pupils to understand the quality aimed for at examination level.

113. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The creative arts silver award and the Educational Action Zone partnership funding have enriched the curriculum offered and the links existing between subjects. Drama makes a significant contribution to personal, social and health education (PSHE), and citizenship. The school productions, the senior citizens' concert and the opportunities to take part in Windsor Arts and the St. George's chapel dramatic events enrich a very large number of pupils' experience. Improvements since the last inspection have been good: an Afro-Caribbean unit has been introduced for Year 10. Lighting and sound systems are in place. The accommodation and resources are now very good. PSHE and citizenship however, have still not been mapped into schemes of work.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There have been significant improvements in instrumental teaching provision, which is heavily subsidised.
- Opportunities for enrichment activities in music are steadily improving and involve increasing numbers of pupils.
- Examination results over the last five years have been well below average and involve very small numbers. However, in 2004 the very small group gained grades matching the national average.
- The curriculum is not appropriate for the needs of these pupils, and citizenship, ICT and the work related curriculum are not covered.
- Assessment does not link National Curriculum criteria and levels to pupil self assessment.
- Teaching and learning with Years 7 to 9 is neither creative nor exciting and consequently, achievement between Years 7 and 9 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

114. Standards on entry are well below average, and remain well below average by Year 9. GCSE results have been consistently well below average since 2000, but the very small group in 2004 were at the national average. Numbers have been consistently very small, and the current Years 10 and 11 groups are of similar size.

115. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, with standards below average. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good, and standards are at the national average. No variation was seen between boys and girls or by ethnicity, and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve as well as others. Pupils having instrumental lessons and involved in extra curricular music are progressing very well and gaining a great deal from their practical music making. Recordings heard showed no progression over time, and there were no recordings of Year 9 work. Year 11 recordings included an effective multi-layered composition and a high quality piece of percussion playing.

116. Teaching and learning are both barely satisfactory within Years 7 to 9. They are both good within Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at its best where the teacher is relaxed and confident and where relationships are secure. At all levels preparation and planning are thorough and clear targets set and shared. However where teaching is less successful, the need to manage pupils is constantly just under the surface. Consequently tasks do not stretch pupils, and often do not match pupil ability or aptitude. Most pupils do not experience success in music, and this has negative consequences on both attitudes and behaviour. In one Year 8 lesson, a group of girls composed and performed an effective piece in a medieval style in spite of the very high ambient sound levels around them.

117. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. They are good in some areas, such as instrumental tuition and extra curricular developments, but the curriculum does not meet the needs of the pupils, and there are significant gaps in citizenship, ICT and work-related learning. The assessment system does not link National Curriculum criteria and levels to pupil self assessment. Work does not match pupil ability or aptitude, and the needs of the most able are only met through instrumental teaching and extra curricular provision, both of which are significantly improving. The high level of subsidy from the Local Education Authority is an important factor in giving access for pupils. The potential for poor behaviour is always present with Years 7 to 9 pupils. Accommodation and resources are good. The school has been taking positive action reflecting their own perception of the inadequacy of music provision.

118. Improvement since the previous inspection has been inadequate, with many issues remaining.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination have significantly improved in the last two years.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent and all staff share a commitment to raising the status and standards of the department.
- Very good relationships and good lesson management mean pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject.
- The indoor accommodation is inadequate.
- There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that are supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils.

Commentary

119. In September 2001 the school gained sports college status. This has significantly raised the profile and status of the subject within the school. In the 2003, GCSE examination in physical education, the number of pupils gaining the higher A* to C grade passes was well below the national average. However, in the 2004 examination there was a big improvement in the number of pupils gaining these higher grades with the overall level being just below the national average. Pupils' performances in this examination compares very favourably with the results obtained in their other subjects. A small group of students took the AS examination in 2004 and obtained pass grades that were in line with the gained nationally. A large group of Year 11 pupils have also successfully gained the Junior Sports Leaders award. This is a national award for young people who wish to improve their sports organisational skills.

120. The formal of assessment by teachers at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards in physical education are in line with the national average. This is confirmed by inspection evidence.

121. This represents good achievement by pupils who frequently bring with them from primary schools limited experience and skills. However, with the introduction of the sports co-ordinators

scheme with specialist physical education teachers assisting in feeder primary schools, the level of attainment entering secondary school is improving. Basic skills are well developed and provide a sound platform for future development. In games activities pupils demonstrate good levels of ball handling skills and spatial awareness, and are developing the skills that will enable them to compete successfully in a wide range of sporting activities. For many pupils dance is a new subject. They quickly respond to the good quality teaching, make good progress and by the end of Year 9 many are able to demonstrate good patterns of movement and gesture.

122. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 now take a public examination in physical education. Progress during these two years is very good, and by the time pupils are 16 years old most are demonstrating standards that are better than those seen nationally. Theoretical work is well linked to practical work and results in above average levels of knowledge and understanding. A small number of pupils began a GCSE in dance course in September 2204. They are responding very positively to the high quality teaching and are able to compose and perform accurately and expressively and communicate their intentions through dance. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, given much sensitive and skilful support, and reach levels of attainment that are commendable. Many pupils take part in many inter-school games and competitions and gain much success. A good number have represented Slough and Berkshire in a range of sporting activities.

123. Overall teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach lessons that are well structured with a choice of tasks that promote a high level of interest and effort, and enable all pupils to make progress. There is an expectation that pupils will work hard, behave well, and achieve well, and overwhelmingly, these expectations are met. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.

124. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. High quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and aids the delivery of the subject. The indoor accommodation for the subject is inadequate. Hardworking teachers work very well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to both their pupils and to the improvement of the department. In 2003 the department gained the Sportsmark (with distinction). This is a national recognition of high quality provision in physical education. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been significant improvement in examination standards and an extensive improvement in the range of extra-curricular activities.

IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL GAINING SPORTS COLLEGE STATUS

125. The granting of sports college status has had a very positive impact on nearly all aspects of the school's work. Pupils perceive the school as somewhere special and they and their parents are very happy to support it. There is now a very much wider range of extra curricular activities in which the majority of pupils are involved. Overall standards of achievement and attainment have improved. The status of the physical education department is much enhanced.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall
- Leadership and management are very good
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work
- In the school, pupils have limited access to the use of information technology

Commentary

126. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, standards of attainment in the GCSE course are broadly in line with the national average. These results are above those of 2003. There is a rising trend in the results. Overall the standards seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the levels expected nationally. Pupils have a good grasp of a wide range of issues surrounding business organisation and development. These include knowledge and understanding about international trade, the market economy, and the environmental factors related to trade. Pupils are good at tracking company shares and reflecting on what factors might be responsible for their rise and fall. Pupils have limited access to the use of information technology and so their skills in this area could be stronger. Pupils have good written skills. The standard of attainment of girls is better than that of boys. Overall the achievement of pupils is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language achieve as well as the rest, as do the gifted and talented pupils.

127. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are well planned and they have a good range of learning objectives. A wide range of activities and methods are used to put across the learning. These include a range of worksheets and up-to-date information on share prices. Occasionally some teaching does not allow enough participation by the pupils themselves. Lessons have a strong learning atmosphere and pupils are attentive and well-behaved. A fast pace and strong demands ensure that pupils achieve well. The teaching makes a good contribution to the developing of skills in numeracy and literacy. The teaching also makes a strong contribution to work related learning. The teaching makes good use of many business organisations to put the pupils' learning into a business context. The teaching effectively uses current events and topical issues as a source of learning. An active and effective assessment policy is in place.

128. Leadership and management are very good. The staffing is very good. No particular issues were raised at the last inspection. Progress since then has been very good with more pupils opting to do business studies. The accommodation is good. Resources are good.

Work-related learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results for college based courses are poor.
- The socially inclusive curriculum and the development of an alternative curriculum brings equality of opportunity.
- The quality of community involvement is good and brings relevance to the study of school subjects.
- The opportunities to practise skills, such as team work, are good.
- Initiatives and associated training are sensibly related to the school's priorities.

Commentary

129. The provision of work-related learning and the standard of its teaching are good. Pupils make good progress in lessons and training exercises. In Years 10 and 11, the vocational curriculum is a success. In Year 11 pupils develop their own insights and learn in a real context. The more highly motivated pupils take a great deal of responsibility themselves, for much of the work. The course is successful in that pupils fully participate in work experience, community service and out of door pursuits. The courses allow for success at different levels. It is attracting large numbers and a wider range of abilities. The teaching is good and supported by a range of assistants who help to consolidate learning. Pupils succeed in gaining practical vocational skills and enjoy a curriculum relevant to the world of work. They show positive attitudes and demonstrate high attendance rates. Key skills are integrated into the various programmes. Most pupils work well and with maturity.

130. Work related learning as an extended school initiative brings relevance to the study of school subjects. There are 100 pupils involved. The programme achieves high standards. Progression routes between school and programme areas are good. However, some of the double GCSE results have been below average. To address this problem greater attention to the pupils' learning needs is being developed. There is a community involvement database which is up-to-date. The preparation of pupils for work is thorough. Pupils are taught to act and think for themselves, with a good set of personal skills to meet the work demands of adult life. Pupils acquire personal and vocational skills in relation to the world of work. Courses are supported by local business partners and employers. The teachers involved are skilled in drawing in support from Slough firms. The community dimension or involvement covers leisure, tourism, health and social care, engineering, applied ICT, hairdressing and motor vehicle maintenance. It is a broad and flexible curriculum in association with the East Berkshire College that is developing local progression routes.

131. The leadership and management of this area of study are good. Staff promote high standards. The process of monitoring pupil learning, target setting and promoting community contacts is effective and efficient particularly with the levels of co-operation that exist with Master Foods which is a firm greatly involved with the school. There is also an innovative partnership with the local college covering post-16 studies and the Increased Flexibility Programme. An increased range of experiences for pupils has been established and is being effectively deployed. The consultation with local community groups is raising awareness of the school's vision and priorities. Although best practice is monitored reasonably, not all initiatives are checked sufficiently for quality.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for active participation in citizenship are very good.
- The new head of subject has a clear vision for citizenship and has identified appropriate priorities for development.
- Systems for assessing and reporting on citizenship are at an early stage of development.
- Subject departments do not consistently identify and make explicit their contributions to the teaching of citizenship.

Commentary

132. Standards in citizenship meet national expectations at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents satisfactory achievement for pupils of all ages when compared to their attainment when they enter the school. Citizenship is taught as part of a combined programme with personal, social and health education by form tutors who know their pupils well. In Year 10 all pupils are following a short course in GCSE citizenship and in Year 11 pupils study either GCSE citizenship or other courses which make a significant contribution to their understanding of the subject. This programme of study ensures satisfactory links and consequently coverage of the curriculum requirements for citizenship.

133. Although it was possible to observe only a part of this programme during the inspection, pupils' work and discussions reveal a satisfactory understanding of citizenship. For example, pupils in Year 9 are developing a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens by studying topics such as government, voting systems and human rights. The sensitive coverage of topics such as drugs and sex and relationships education encourages pupils to participate in discussion and express their own views confidently whilst also listening to the opinions of others. In Year 11 pupils studying the GCSE course show a good understanding of citizenship issues and develop their enquiry skills well when planning their coursework investigations. Pupils on the junior sports leadership course work well together to organise a day of sporting activities for a primary

school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. For the majority of pupils teaching is satisfactory but in the small number of lessons seen in Year 11, where citizenship is the main focus, teaching is at least good and in one lesson was excellent.

134. There is an impressive range of activities which encourage all pupils to participate in international, national and local community projects. These range from links with Uganda through an art project to fund raising, environmental awareness projects and organising a tea party and concert for over 100 local senior citizens. These activities, in which large numbers of pupils participate successfully, give them many opportunities to become active citizens. Within school almost all pupils take responsibility of some kind, for example as prefects, form representatives and mentors for younger pupils. There is a well organised 'pupil voice' where pupils' views are listened to and acted upon and which has been instrumental in improving aspects of school life.

135. The leadership of citizenship is good. The new subject co-ordinator has already made a significant impact on the way citizenship is led and managed. With support from colleagues inside and outside of the school there is now a clear vision for the subject and a good awareness of what needs to be done. The management of the department is satisfactory. A clear scheme of work is now in place and appropriate resources have been purchased. Systems for assessing pupils' work and reporting their progress to parents are at an early stage of development. Subject departments have a clear policy for citizenship but many have not yet identified where they can contribute to the delivery of the subject. They do not make their teaching explicit so pupils are not always aware they are studying citizenship. Teaching and learning are not yet monitored effectively.

136. The department is now poised to improve further.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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