

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NORTHGATE SCHOOL**

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122161

Headteacher: Ms S Webb

Lead inspector: Mr J Donnelly

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 269483

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupil's	11 - 16
Gender of pupil's	Mixed
Number on roll:	96
School address:	Queen's Park Parade Kingsthorpe Northampton Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN2 6LR
Telephone number:	(01604) 714 098
Fax number:	(01604) 777 822
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard Church
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2000

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Northgate Special School caters for pupils aged 11 to 16. It is situated close to the centre of Northampton. The catchment area is large and nearly all pupils arrive at school in taxis or minibuses. The social and economic conditions for a significant number of pupils are below average. It is a one-form entry school and, with 96 pupils on roll, 20 girls and 76 boys, is about an average-sized secondary special school. Attainment on entry to school is below the national average and for a significant number of pupils, well below. There are currently no pupils with English as an additional language. The majority of pupils come from white British backgrounds. There are a small proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school other than at the normal times is average. All pupils have statements of special educational needs for a very wide range of special needs, the majority including moderate and severe learning difficulties. There is also provision for pupils with autistic tendencies and sensory impairment.

A recent development to the school is the learning support centre for pupils with very significant learning difficulties. This has been set up to provide for pupils with very challenging and unpredictable behaviour, most of whom have been permanently excluded from their previous schools. A new headteacher had been in post three weeks when the inspection took place.



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23637	J Donnelly	Lead inspector	Physical education Provision for pupils with English as an additional language
9092	R Elam	Lay inspector	
27058	K Cannon	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology
20444	D Hughes	Team inspector	English Modern foreign languages (French) Music Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs
21899	G Lawson	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Citizenship Geography History

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# PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

## OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. The main causes are the high level of exclusions and serious weaknesses in the quality of leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. Behaviour is satisfactory in most of the lessons but not around school at other times. Overall, pupils' personal development is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are serious weaknesses in the overall quality in the learning support centre and the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.
- The headteacher, who has been in post for three weeks, has good plans for improving the school.
- Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties, and governance is unsatisfactory. Performance management is not in place and aspects of the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- Provision in the learning support centre is unsatisfactory and pupils' behaviour is too often out of control. They are not satisfactorily included in the life of the school, due to their very challenging needs.
- Standards in the externally accredited courses at the end of Year 11 are improving.
- Standards in English at the end of Year 11 are weaker than in science or mathematics.
- Teaching and learning in many lessons in English and mathematics is good.
- Pupils' attendance, punctuality and exclusions are unsatisfactory.
- Behaviour of pupils moving around the school is unsatisfactory and the management of this behaviour is inconsistent; at times teachers' expectations are too low.
- Parents and pupils regard the school well; relationships between pupils and staff are warm and trusting.

The school's effectiveness has declined since the last inspection and improvement is unsatisfactory. This inspection identifies weaknesses that were identified by the inspection team in 2000; namely, behaviour management, aspects of leadership and management and standards in English. The new headteacher has examined carefully all aspects of the school's work and has drawn up suitable action plans to show how the many weaknesses will be addressed. Good progress has been made in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 11	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

## **Overall achievement is satisfactory.**

Most school leavers of all abilities pass a satisfactory range of externally accredited examinations, and they move on to further education and training. Where pupils do not achieve enough, this is because of the weaknesses in teaching and assessment in English. Pupils in the Learning Support Centre do not achieve as they should, as too much time is spent reacting to the pupils' intimidating behaviour. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology and in the development of their confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory and this slows pupil achievement. Behaviour for most pupils in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes, for the most part, are good. The high number of exclusions is unsatisfactory. Overall, arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes to their work in the Learning Support Centre are unsatisfactory. The school's positive reward system is inconsistently applied and, as a result, pupils are not clear about what is expected of them.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. Teaching and learning and assessment are satisfactory. Pupils' poor behaviour occasionally gets in the way of their learning. The curriculum is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' care and welfare is good overall as is the support and guidance they receive. Links with parents are satisfactory. Links with other schools and the community are good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership of the new headteacher is good, but there are some unsatisfactory management issues, which have not been addressed since the last inspection and are unsatisfactory overall. Governors are supportive and have a range of highly relevant skills, but they do not monitor the work of the school well enough to make sure that they fulfil their statutory obligations.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents particularly like the approachable staff and the fair treatment of their children. Pupils are most positive about having someone on the staff they can talk to and be listened to. Parents' and pupils' concerns about bullying were investigated by inspectors. Bullying certainly occurs, but it is not widespread and is dealt with effectively.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels and fulfil statutory requirements.
- Raise standards in English.
- Ensure that the curriculum is available to all and that no pupils are disenfranchised.
- Provide a clear behaviour policy and ensure consistent strategies for managing behaviour in all aspects of the school day.
- Improve the attendance and punctuality of pupils.



- Reduce the level of exclusions.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPIL'S**

#### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

**The standards achieved by pupils are below national expectations, but this is due to their learning difficulties. Overall achievement is satisfactory.**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievements of pupils with additional or more complex needs are generally satisfactory or better.
- Pupils' achievement in the learning support centre is unsatisfactory.
- Achievement in English is unsatisfactory.
- Achievement in information and communication technology is good.
- Some pupils with behavioural problems do not achieve well due, in the main, to a lack of clarity of purpose in teaching, especially in the Learning Support Centre.
- The high level of exclusions and attendance is a contributory factor to slow rate of progress.

#### **Commentary**

1. Achievement is best in Years 10 and 11. In 2003 there were 16 pupils who sat external GCSE examinations. In Year 11, nine courses are available at certificate of education and the results from 2000 are included below:
  - Nineteen passes in literacy;
  - Sixteen passes in numeracy;
  - Fifteen passes in science;
  - Eight passes in design technology; and
  - Twenty passes in physical education.
2. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs in the main school, that is to say those with additional or more complex needs, are generally satisfactory or better. Most pupils make significant progress and make good strides in their learning. The way in which the teaching and learning of pupils with hearing loss are taught, supported and organised, and the facilities and teaching of pupils who fall within the autistic spectrum, are a significant strength. This is mainly due to the consistent use of signs, symbols and appropriate study areas in lessons, and the very good support pupils receive from the team of dedicated support assistants. Pupils with behavioural problems in the learning support centre do not achieve well, as for the most part, they choose to be disruptive in and do not make the progress they should. Teachers in the learning support centre (LSC) do not always know where pupils are and it is not clear what aspects of the curriculum pupils are studying or have studied. Assessment in the LSC is not rigorous enough to identify pupils' academic strengths, and individual education plans are not used effectively in the classroom. Inspectors judge that the current provision available to the very distinct needs of pupils in the learning support centre is at best unsatisfactory.

3. Pupils' achievement in English is unsatisfactory. The standard of pupils' work is below average throughout the school. Only three Year 9 pupils were entered for the National Assessment Tests in 2004, in comparison with many more in mathematics and science. This is unsatisfactory, as pupils are not being given the teaching and learning they deserve. The standard of work in reading, writing and speaking and listening overall by Year 9, is below average in comparison with similar schools.
4. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening in the lessons observed was satisfactory. They are given plenty of opportunities during structured and unstructured lessons to exchange ideas and develop their oral communication skills.
5. Although the standard of reading and spelling is below average, the pupils' reading and spelling ages improve significantly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have worked hard to raise standards in reading and spelling, and 'Big Books', computers and whiteboards are used well to promote these skills. Pupils in the Autistic spectrum make very good progress, demonstrating their retained knowledge and comprehension of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.
6. Pupil's standard of handwriting is well below average. Many are still at the stage of tracing words and the formation of letters is uneven, unjoined and sometimes illegible. Higher achievers are not always sufficiently challenged. Conversely, dyslexic pupils are provided with individual word-processors. Higher achieving 15-year-olds have begun GCSE coursework and some express themselves well in writing short stories and poems, but these are in the minority.
7. Where pupils do not achieve enough, this is due to weaknesses in teaching and assessment in English in the past, and the high level of exclusions and absences. Pupils in the Learning Support Centre do not achieve as they should, as too much time is spent reacting to the pupils intimidating behaviour. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well in the development of their confidence and self-esteem.
8. Standards of achievement by pupils in mathematics are satisfactory throughout the school. Results in national examinations are steadily improving and despite a dip in results in 2002, the trend is upward overall. Pupils leaving school in Year 11 have a good range of accreditation possibilities. Pupils achieve well in lessons in Years 9 and 10 and they achieve very well in lessons in Year 11 because of the strong teaching and effective planning. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 make satisfactory achievement in lessons. However, achievements over time throughout the school are depressed by the high level of exclusions and absences, which leads a minority to underachieve.
9. Pupil achievements in science in the lower part of the school (Years 7 to 9) are satisfactory, and in the rest of the school (Years 10 and 11), are good and improving. As at the last inspection, standards in science remain higher than those of mathematics and English. This is due mainly to the high standard of classroom teaching and the teacher's planning of lessons. Achievements at the end of Year 9, however, are hindered by weakness in managing behaviour when pupils miss out on aspects of the curriculum. The long-term planning does not ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum, with too little emphasis being placed on scientific investigation or method.

10. Overall, pupils' learning and achievement in ICT are good. Pupils in Year 9 were seen using ICT to gather information to prepare a multimedia presentation about themselves and their school.
11. Pupils in Year 11 make good progress in their examination modules and are able to open, and run many applications with growing confidence and proficiency. Pupils achieve well because the teacher plans their accredited courses thoroughly and chooses appropriate teaching methods and resources.
12. The school does not offer national accreditation in art, but two higher achieving pupils attended art classes and gained A\* grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations at a nearby college.

## PUPIL'S' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

In general, pupil's attitudes to school are **good**. Overall, their behaviour, attendance and punctuality are **unsatisfactory**. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, have positive attitudes to work and enjoy being at school.
- As at the time of the last inspection, the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils affects the learning of others.
- The level of attendance is below that of special schools around the country.
- The school is not taking sufficient action to improve attendance and punctuality.

### Commentary

13. Pupils' social development is good. The school provides opportunities for pupils to interact with classmates in groupwork and monitor tasks within each class. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a range of responsibilities around the school as prefects. The school council enables pupils of all ages to work together. The sports matches against other schools and visitors extend pupils' understanding of the wider world. Overall, pupils' relationships with their peers and with adults are good and have been maintained at this good level since the time of the last inspection, and contribute to the quality of work in lessons and to the progress they make.
14. The attitudes towards learning of the majority of pupils are good. This includes those of pupils with additional special educational needs. They are interested in what happens in school and they enjoy their work. They follow instructions and usually settle quickly to the tasks given. These positive attitudes reflect the quality of teaching and the variety of interesting activities built into the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs display generally good attitudes and behaviour with the exception of a few behaviourally disturbed pupils who are either in the Learning Support Centre or integrated into the main school.
15. Many pupils respond well to the moral guidance from the school. They are aware of how their behaviour can affect others and the great majority show good self-discipline resulting in an orderly school. They behave well in the classroom and at break and lunchtimes. They are polite to adults and to each other and welcoming to visitors. However, a significant minority of pupil's show unsatisfactory behaviour. They walk out of class or respond inappropriately or even threateningly in their reaction to a classmate's comments. This causes the teaching to be disrupted, as the teacher has to deal with the situation at the expense of others who want to learn. The behaviour of a small minority can be very extreme especially some of the pupils in the Learning Support Centre. The staff use a variety of disciplinary actions and these are generally understood by the pupils. Nevertheless, the good behaviour support techniques are not followed consistently by all the staff. The new headteacher is aware that staff would benefit from additional guidance and is arranging further training. However, the behaviour problems are compounded by the disproportionately high number of referrals to the school of pupils

showing extremes of behaviour. They require support beyond the resources of the school. As parents indicated, there are some instances of bullying or other aggressive behaviour. When it does occur, it is dealt with promptly and effectively.

## Exclusions

Last year the number of exclusions was exceptionally high as can be seen in the table below.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupil's on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	91	92	2
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupil's excluded.*

## Attendance

16. The table below shows the absence figures for the school. The level of attendance (at 88.2 per cent compared to a national figure of 89.5 per cent) has deteriorated since the last inspection. Around half of the pupil's are out of school for four weeks or longer and this limits their achievement. The unauthorised absences are at a very high level, especially for pupils in the Learning Support Centre. In part, this is because the Local Education Authority insists on pupils staying on roll even when they are not coming to school for extended periods that can run into several months. On most days, some pupils are late because of the late arrival of the taxis that are bringing them from home and in some instances the taxi service may not even call at their home. Again this affects the learning of pupils, both those arriving late and their classmates whose lesson is disrupted. Despite many attempts, the school is unable to improve punctuality, as the transport service is not within its control.

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	5.4
National data	8.7	National data	1.7

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

### Teaching and learning

**Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is also satisfactory.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is effective with clear learning objectives and suitable teaching strategies apart from in design and technology, as discussed below.
- Individual needs are well catered for and teaching assistants make a good contribution.
- Relationships are good and the majority of pupils respond well with increased focus in lessons.
- Most staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. However, on a few occasions teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well and this results in an unsatisfactory climate for learning and pupils do not make the progress they should.
- There is limited use of homework to extend and reinforce learning.
- There is some inconsistency in teacher assessment.

## Commentary

17. **Teaching is satisfactory overall** although there is much good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Detailed planning, that describes outcomes for different pupils, makes sure individual pupils' needs are effectively met through their individual education plans. The majority of teachers provide good introductions to the lesson so that the pupils are clear about the relevance of the learning. In ICT, the effective start to many lessons helped to remind the pupils what they had done in the previous lesson, and as a result, new learning was more effectively understood. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods designed to motivate and engage the pupils. They use a mixture of class teaching, individual work and groupwork, effectively supported by learning support assistants, and most pupils are included in the planned activities. Staff circulate all the time, supporting, challenging and encouraging pupils as they move around the class. They encourage pupils to think and work out solutions. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils had prepared sandwiches and were asked questions such as, "If you didn't want to eat it now, but tomorrow, how would you keep it?", "Can you put tomatoes in the freezer?", "What would happen to them?". As a result, pupils' motivation is sustained throughout lessons, and they remain productive. Drama, role-play and music are used to involve the pupils, for example, in a literacy lesson, where pupils were reading '*The Pied Piper*'; a learning support assistant played a tune on the recorder to signal his arrival. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, pupils had to set out bills for a café, recording their choices of food and drink. The teachers work hard to engage and maintain pupils' attention, and use resources well for this purpose. For example, in a science lesson, the use of an electronic whiteboard enabled pupils to participate enthusiastically. Teachers' skilful use of questioning encouraged the pupils to extend their knowledge. In the best lessons, questions are individually tailored to ensure that pupils are able to succeed. In these lessons, verbal feedback and well-earned praise, as well as challenge for chatter and off task behaviour, are all constant.
18. Most staff establish good relationships with pupils; as a result, pupils are generally keen to do well. They generally manage pupils' behaviour well; however there is a significant difference between the management of behaviour in the best teaching and that in lessons which are only satisfactory or where there are weaknesses. Where teaching is strong, pupils are infected by the teachers' enthusiasm, and challenged by lively questioning and exciting activities. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of the lesson is slower and expectations are sometimes too low. When temporary or new teachers take over groups, they sometimes tolerate inappropriate behaviour. Some teachers do not remind pupils regularly enough about individual targets for improving behaviour and are not prompt enough to intervene when behaviour becomes unacceptable. However, good practice



can be seen in several areas. For example, in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders where much potentially very challenging behaviour could occur, behaviour is managed extremely well with clear routines and procedures. Thus, pupils understand what to expect, and what is expected of them. In most cases, pupils understand that lessons are times when learning takes place, and follow their teachers' instructions. In the better lessons, where teachers are most confident in their relationships with pupils, they are able to share humour or sensitive subjects without pupils losing their focus.

19. Most teachers know pupils and their abilities well in the school. This is not the case in the Learning Support Centre due to significant weaknesses in assessment of pupils' curricular needs. The school records a great deal of information about pupils' improvement in behaviour and attitudes, and also keeps track of pupils' literacy and numeracy levels from their baseline assessment on entry. Base line assessment is beginning to help pupils to set their own goals and teachers to differentiate work. Reading, spelling and mathematics scores are regularly tested and are being used to track pupils' progress.
20. The majority of teachers have a sound grasp of National Curriculum levels, and the school has adopted the national system of using pre-National Curriculum levels (P scales). They use these to accurately assess pupils and set work that offers a suitable challenge. However, there are some inconsistencies in teacher assessment and less evidence to support their assessment in Years other than 9 and 11, where pupils' work is externally verified. In a few cases, pupils' workbooks are not dated or marked well enough to provide secure evidence of attainment in order to plan for the next stage of learning.
21. In most core lessons, pupils are involved well in evaluating their performance in lessons, and teachers review learning in sufficient detail for pupils to recognise their personal achievements and be aware of what they need to do to improve further.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	3	10	13	2	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.*

22. Due to the very disruptive behaviour of pupils in the LSC, it was not possible to record a significant number of lesson observations, as too many lessons were not completed.
23. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs overall is sound. Teaching and support staff, including the local education authority's teachers of hearing impaired pupils, display considerable expertise in relation to the teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders or hearing impairments. Their consistent use of supportive materials such as Picture Exchange Communication System or British Sign Language and the provision of suitable environments ensure that such pupils make consistently sound progress. These pupils are well included. However, the lack of a clear and consistently applied structure for behaviour results in low achievement for those pupils with behavioural difficulties in the LSC. These pupils are not included in the learning the school has to offer, as they require a more specialist provision which the school cannot provide.

## THE CURRICULUM

**The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.** Too many pupils do not receive their full entitlement to a balanced and relevant curriculum. Aspects of design and technology do not comply with National Curriculum requirements. Opportunities to enrich pupil's learning are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and reflects the aims of the school though some pupils have a narrower range of opportunities than others.
- Provision for pupils with additional or more complex needs is satisfactory overall, but provision for some disturbed pupils is unsatisfactory.
- The number, experience and expertise of staff to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils are generally satisfactory, although some staff expertise is misplaced or underused.

### Commentary

24. Overall, the curriculum is unsatisfactory as a significant number of pupils attendance is unsatisfactory and exclusions are too high. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they should. All subjects (with the exception of some areas of design and technology) are taught to the majority of pupils, but the organisation of pupils and a high level of absenteeism from lessons disenfranchises some pupils from the full range of learning opportunities. There is a wide variation in the quality and quantity of learning opportunities for pupils who display complex learning difficulties. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with hearing impairments, speech and language difficulties and in the class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils in the Learning Support Centre and those with behavioural difficulties, however, are not given sufficient time for learning. The school does not have adequate strategies to keep pupils in school during lesson time or to ensure that lessons do not overlap or impinge upon each other.
25. Many pupils have part of their individual curriculum based on targets identified in their individual education plans. Although these are wide-ranging for some pupils and they achieve well in relation to these, for others, their special needs and targets are not met due to the lack of a clear structure to the curriculum. This reduces the good, and on occasion, very good teaching, and reduces pupil's achievements.
26. The school supports pupils' special educational needs well by providing supplementary communication programmes for individual pupils such as Picture Exchange Communication System or British Sign Language.
27. There is a sound range of accredited courses for the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11. This is based on accredited records of achievement, entry-level certificates, ASDAN youth award schemes and, on occasion, the higher-level GCSE examinations. This work is well supported by a range of work experience placements and by pupils accessing a range of courses at local colleges, including work taster courses.

28. There is a satisfactory range of outside experiences to enrich the curriculum. Cultural activities are well promoted, for example, by visiting musicians and dancers and by visits to outside theatres. Pupils benefit from this involvement. Local agencies such as the fire service and the police are well used to enhance and expand pupils' knowledge and experience. Additional activities, such as residential visits to an outdoor pursuits centre at Longtown further enhance pupils' personal development. The school does not, however, provide additional facilities outside the school day or for the high number of pupils it excludes and this consequently limits pupils' learning.
29. The changing population of the school has been generally well met with, for example, the provision of a well-designed specialist room for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. However there remain some inadequacies within the building including the poor design and fitting in the learning support area and a lack of attention to detail in the sports hall where poor acoustics and walls that reflect sound make it unsuitable for pupils with hearing loss or for those who have autism.
30. There is a good number of well-qualified and experienced staff to provide for the needs of the pupils and to support the curriculum. Enthusiastic and committed teaching assistants play an important role in working alongside teachers and in ensuring individual targets and needs are addressed consistently. There are a high number of unqualified teachers working in the school, however, and the school does not fully utilise the specialist skills and knowledge of all staff. Some subject co-ordinators, for example, are not subject specialists although such specialists are amongst the teaching force.

#### **CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are **good** overall and support pupils learning appropriately. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring are **good**. The involvement of pupils in the school's work through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils trust the teachers and other staff and know there is always someone they can turn to.
- The adults in the school are very caring and know the pupils well.
- The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to express opinions about life in the school.
- The school effectively monitors pupils' progress through the school.
- There are effective procedures for ensuring a healthy and safe environment.

## **Commentary**

31. The school's arrangements for ensuring health and safety are satisfactory and have been monitored by the fire brigade and the local authority. Their recommendations led to the governors producing an action plan. A member of the senior management team has produced risk assessments, though during the inspection, it was possible to see only those relating to visits. The school has installed effective fire alarms since the last inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science and design and technology. Healthy eating is well promoted during food technology lessons. The school has good procedures for child protection. The school follows the local procedures and staff have received guidance on how to deal with any concerns that may arise. The arrangements for first-aid are good with several trained staff, records kept of treatment and letters for parents after minor accidents.
32. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff show good concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage development. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where staff are approachable if there are any problems. In particular, parents agreed that their children were well supported when they first come into the school. For the pupils with autism, the school has good links with primary special schools to enable the pupils to spend some time in the school before they start. Pupils have the opportunity to express their views about school life in circle-time, completing 'have your say' booklets and at meetings of the school council.
33. The teachers assess pupils' progress in each subject termly, to set individual targets in English and mathematics and group targets in science. This also enables the teachers to group pupils appropriately. In the other subjects the assessment identifies pupils' learning but rarely leads to any target-setting and does not inform the next stage of learning. The annual reviews of the individual education plans have a good summary of the pupil's knowledge and understanding in each subject. Pupils' level of self-esteem is also monitored. Where necessary, pupils are provided with targets on their individual behaviour plans, which are monitored each week.
34. The general care and welfare of pupils with special needs is of a high order. Pupils are well included in all aspects of school life and no one is disenfranchised on the grounds of his or her condition. Some pupils are, however, not well cared for especially in the LEC. Teachers do not always know where particular pupils are, for example, whether they in college, at other lessons or formally or informally excluded.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY**

Links with parents are **satisfactory** overall. Links with the local community and other schools are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents hold the school in high regard and are supportive of what the school provides.
- The annual reports provide good information about pupils' progress.
- The involvement of a range of organisations and people in the community extends experiences for pupils' personal, social and academic development.
- Links with primary schools and colleges are good.

### **Commentary**

35. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and at the meeting, parents showed that they are pleased with what the school provides. Their children like school, the staff expect their children to work hard and they make good progress. These comments are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. A few expressed some concerns about behaviour, which the inspectors agree could be better supported for some pupils.
36. The school sends home newsletters every half-term about general matters. An important and useful source of information is the weekly letter from each class teacher, outlining what has happened during the week including details of outings and visitors. It also includes comments about how well the pupil has been working. The main summary about progress is in the review of the individual education plan and provides a good summary of what the pupils know and can do in each subject. The formal meetings between parents and teachers include a discussion about targets for improvement. The school welcomes parents into the school and parents confirm that they are comfortable talking to the staff.
37. Links with the community are good. Older pupils do voluntary work in the community each week, tidying up gardens, and working in charity shops and older people's homes. Local firms are helpful in providing work experience. Pupils make a range of visits to such places as a country park and a motor centre. The good links with colleges enable Year 10 pupils to have a taster week of different courses, which they can take the following year for half a day or longer each week. Some pupils also attend a secondary school for English and mathematics as part of an integration programme. Pupils with special needs and the involvement of parents, carers and outside agencies are well established in the review and production of their educational provision.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management is unsatisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The Governing Body does not fulfil its statutory obligations.
- The school budget is insufficiently monitored.

- The Governing Body fails to act as a critical friend.
- The role of subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped.
- The specialist skills of some staff are not used effectively.
- There is no consistent approach to behaviour management.
- Staff induction procedures are underdeveloped.
- Commitment to inclusion and equality is good.

## Commentary

38. The leadership and management strategies used by the school have been unsatisfactory in improving the school since the last inspection, and in achieving stability. The school has been through a difficult time and has experienced four headteachers in four years. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2004, and therefore it is too early to judge the impact of her work. Nevertheless, her vision for the school is good and staff morale is high, which is reflected in the standard of teaching and learning.
39. The deputy headteacher has worked hard since January 2004 to manage the school and to bring the budget under control. This has now stabilised. Until recently, there was no finance committee and the Governing Body failed to monitor spending. Their annual report to parents does not include budget details. Performance management has lapsed, and the new headteacher recognises this as one of the priority areas for improvement.
40. The role of subject co-ordinators is badly defined and few staff have job descriptions. Whilst some co-ordinators have partial responsibility for their subjects, others are overloaded. This leads to inconsistencies in some subjects and their assessment. All staff have received training in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and this is developing satisfactorily across the school. However, mathematics and English are not co-ordinated by specialist teachers, although there are specialists in the school.
41. The Governing Body has a poor understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has failed to ensure that staff job descriptions and performance management systems are in place. It has no knowledge of the school's finances and does not keep a register of pecuniary interests. It has not monitored the curriculum and a number of school policies are out of date. The Governing Body have received limited training and are not aware of the need to challenge the school's senior management team and therefore do not provide any checks or balances to the schools work.
42. The school does not have an appointed special needs co-ordinator and it is unclear where the overall management of the teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs lies, and this is unsatisfactory. The unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is well managed by the unqualified teacher in charge and the management of pupils with hearing impairment is competently undertaken by a dedicated teaching assistant. The management of the learning support centre and that of pupils with challenging behaviour appears to be the responsibility of the assistant headteacher. During the week of the inspection, the role of head of the learning support centre was vested in an unqualified teacher but he found this task difficult due, in part, to the lack of any clear plan or reference as to the centre's brief. Inspectors were made aware of the draft (fifth) specifications for the centre but this is not yet in place or ratified by the governors. Staff in this area do not have appropriate qualifications and there is a

lack of direction in both teaching and the deployment of staff. (During the inspection four adults were delivering a lesson to one student). This area of the school's work, therefore, remains poor.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	950,000	Balance from previous year	10,000
Total expenditure	947,000	Balance carried forward to the next year	13,000
Expenditure per student	9,500		

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

The overall provision for English is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of work is below average throughout the school.
- The role of the non-specialist co-ordinator is unsatisfactory.
- There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.
- Too few pupils in Year 9 are entered for national tests in English.
- Standards of pupil's handwriting are too low.

#### Commentary

43. **Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.** Too many pupils are still at the stage of tracing words and the formation of letters is uneven, unjoined and sometimes illegible. Higher achieving pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. For example, in one lesson, a Year 10 pupil, capable of writing four independent sentences neatly and with a

developing style, was given a task of tracing four letter phonics words. This work lacked challenge and was poor.

44. Only three Year 9 pupils were entered for the National Assessment Tests in 2004 in comparison with many more in mathematics and science. This is unsatisfactory, as pupils are not being given the teaching and learning they deserve. The standard of work in reading, writing and speaking and listening overall by Year 9 is below average.
45. All pupils are entered for certificate of achievement tests in Year 11 and the number of passes in literacy is in line with other subjects. The school has very recently introduced GCSE accreditation opportunities for Year 11 in September 2004. Higher achieving 15-year-olds have begun GCSE coursework and some express themselves well in writing short stories and poems, but these are in the minority.
46. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening in the lessons observed was satisfactory. They are given plenty of opportunities during structured and unstructured lessons to exchange ideas and develop their oral communication skills. For example, during a drama session, pupils in Year 9 took turns at questioning and answering in the role of their chosen character. In an excellent drama session, pupils improvised a play to produce an emotive dialogue with a strong moral message.
47. Pupils with special needs make good progress in their speech and language sessions. Many pupils improve their speaking and listening, with gains in confidence due to the improving quality of teaching and learning. This represents good progress in these lessons.
48. Although the standard of reading and spelling is below average, the pupils' reading and spelling ages improve significantly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have worked hard to raise standards in reading and spelling, and 'Big Books', computers and whiteboards are used well to promote these skills. Pupils in the Autistic spectrum make very good progress, demonstrating their retained knowledge and comprehension of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.
49. Pupils' standard of handwriting is well below average. Many pupils are still at the stage of tracing words and the formation of letters is uneven, unjoined and sometimes illegible. Higher achieving pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Conversely, dyslexic pupils are provided with individual word-processors. Higher achieving 15-year-olds have begun GCSE coursework and some pupils express themselves well in writing short stories and poems, but these are in the minority.
50. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was satisfactory overall. Five lessons were observed during the inspection. Of these, two were good or better, with drama being excellent. One lesson was unsatisfactory because the level of challenge was too low and little learning took place. Lessons are well balanced to include elements of speaking, reading, spelling and writing, which provide variety and retains pupils' interest. Resources are used well to capture pupils' attention and good use is made of computer spelling programs. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' abilities, and take these into account when planning their lessons. Consequently, the needs of all pupils are met. In the best lessons, pupils engage enthusiastically and within the teacher's expectations of good behaviour. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils chat and



squabble amongst themselves. Individual teachers keep satisfactory records of their pupils' achievements, submitting this information to the school senior management team as required.

51. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory; results are not as good as they should be and there is no qualified co-ordinator. The subject co-ordinator is not a specialist in English. Nevertheless, with advisory support, she has worked hard to produce a good whole-school scheme of work for English and literacy across the curriculum. However, because her role does not include monitoring the subject, its teaching or assessment, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in assessing pupils' progress. There are significant differences between teacher assessment and actual pupil achievement.
52. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. There have been a few improvements since the last inspection, however these are very recent, and there is a marked lack of clarity in the co-ordinator's role leading to inconsistencies in the monitoring and management of English. National Literacy Strategies have been introduced but not yet fully embedded across the curriculum. The level of achievement is unsatisfactory.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

53. The recent introduction of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory, but there has been insufficient time for its impact to be felt. Although speaking and listening skills are used well, the use of handwriting to improve literacy skills is underdeveloped.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The provision for modern foreign languages was sampled so no overall judgement can be made. French is taught to pupils in all years. A sample lesson was observed and the pupils' written work was examined during the inspection. The standard of this lesson was good and on a par with their mainstream counterparts. Amongst older pupils, the overall standard of work is below national averages for their ages because the expectation of reading and writing is lower than the standard of their oral abilities.

### **Commentary**

54. Pupils aged 11 are new to French, make good oral progress. Within a few weeks of starting at the school they share greetings and respond well to everyday phrases. The count to 15 and match numbers and colours to vocabulary cards as an initial introduction to written French. By age 14, they have a basic knowledge of vocabulary linked to school, food and drink and everyday life. They begin to write verbs and adjectives correctly. They make good progress. Fifteen-year-olds use their learned vocabulary to respond well to spoken French in different contexts such as at the school council meeting or when asking for a vacuum cleaner. However, their written work is limited to word matching, dictionary work and cloze exercises and there is little evidence of computer links to further their cultural awareness. Nevertheless, their work is neat and well presented and indicates a steady progression in their acquisition of French grammar. Use of handwriting to improve literacy skills is underdeveloped.

# MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in most lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 is good and occasionally very good and as a result, learning and achievement in those lessons is at least good.
- Results are steadily improving and the school has extended the range of accreditation for pupils in Year 11.
- Teaching staff are skilled particularly in using more structured approaches for pupils with autism and complex learning needs.
- Teachers are beginning to use ICT to support teaching but at present this is not consistent.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is sensitively adapted and is taught well.
- Development in planning and organisation has enabled teachers to widen pupils' mathematical skills and understanding.
- There is no permanent mathematics co-ordinator, nor a subject specialist leading the area and this leads to lack of continuation in the provision.

## Commentary

55. Standards of achievement of pupils in mathematics are satisfactory throughout the school. Results in national examinations are steadily improving and despite a dip in results in 2002, the trend is upward overall. Pupils leaving school in Year 11 have a good range of accreditation possibilities.
56. Pupils achieve well in lessons in Years 9, 10 and they achieve very well in lessons in Year 11 because of the strong teaching and effective planning. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 make satisfactory achievement in lessons. However achievements over time throughout the school are depressed by the high level of exclusions and absences, which leads a minority to underachieve.
57. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well and teachers' planning is strong with good attention to structured and differentiated work. This enables teachers to meet the wide range of complex needs in the school and support pupils to develop to their full capacity.
58. Most teachers and teaching assistants are skilled particularly in using more structured approaches for pupils with autism and complex learning needs. For example, the good planning and routines enable pupils with autism to begin, with support, to manage their own behaviour. Most are able to mix, settle and work in groups for longer and longer periods of time. Pupils with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties generally make good progress in their attitudes, behaviour and self-control. However, a minority of pupils with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties are not managed well because of inconsistencies in the way some teachers apply the behaviour management policy. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
59. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of decimals and fractions and can write and order both. They understand place value in numbers up to 1,000.

60. Younger pupils reinforce their learning of numbers and name and sort two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils can label clock times on the hour, half-hour and each quarter independently. Most pupils make significant progress towards their individual targets through careful and skilful support. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good and occasionally very good progress in lessons, because teaching is expert and exciting. A strong feature of these lessons is the fast and challenging beginnings of lessons. For example, one teacher began each day with a logic problem which pupils solved through a perceptive and fast-moving discussion. They were delighted when, through lateral thinking, they discovered the solution. The lesson which followed was lively and challenging which motivated the pupils to make very good progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are learning to work independently with increasing self-confidence and staff cultivate this by regular opportunities and routines in lessons. Higher attaining pupils become increasingly more capable of working independently without intervention or interaction. A strength in Year 11 lessons is the well-focused questioning techniques and prompts, which are carefully matched to pupils' individual learning needs. In multiplication and division exercises, pupils respond quickly with enthusiasm. In one lesson, they all remembered techniques they had learnt to multiply and chanted with enthusiasm, "add a zero be a hero", when multiplying by 10. Lower attaining pupils enjoy counting together in 2s and 5s and they count on or back in 10s. In a very good lesson with lower attaining pupils in Year 11, the teacher used resources well to teach the measurement of time. Pupils used an electronic whiteboard to learn how to write and tell the time. They made very good progress in reinforcing their understanding of time and in developing skills in ICT.
61. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good with some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 where there was a fast pace and effective level of challenge. Teachers are secure in using the numeracy strategy lesson format which means pupils understand the routine and settle quickly to the lesson. Teachers work sensitively with pupils with autism, using structured and sensory stimuli and generally ensuring the learning environment is meaningful and calm. Behaviour plans are generally carefully tailored to pupils' individual needs and interests. Most lessons have a clear ending session, which reinforces and celebrates pupils' learning. Teachers generally target the work well to the stage the pupil is at with the result that learning is good or in some cases, very good, and most pupils move on at an appropriate rate in their understanding. Occasionally, planning is not linked clearly enough to what individual pupils are expected to learn, with teaching pitched at the wrong level for some pupils and they make slower progress. Relationships in class are good and most pupils, even those with more complex learning needs, behave well. Pupils respect and trust their teachers and teaching assistants and know they are valued, and the work they produce is appreciated. Although ICT is used well in some lessons for pupils with the most complex difficulties and higher attaining pupils, the school recognises that more regular use is needed to boost and support learning in mathematics lessons. The improvements in planning, assessment and evaluation ensure that teachers develop more fully the breadth of pupils' mathematical skills and understanding. The school is working towards a situation where data can be analysed more carefully and pupils' performance can be precisely tracked and individual targets can be more precisely set. However, there remain inconsistencies in some teacher assessments, particularly for younger pupils.

62. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The deputy headteacher, who has had a significant impact on the good development of the department, has taken over the role until a new leader can be appointed. The lack of continuity over the last two years has been a detrimental factor to the development of mathematics in the school but the school is aware of this and has plans to redress the situation. The deputy headteacher has a clear focus on whole-school development and improvement, and monitors and evaluates the provision for the subject adequately. Resources have improved in quantity and quality, and are good. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers are more confident in delivering the numeracy strategy to the pupils' wide range of learning needs and there is an increased range of accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

63. This is satisfactory. All pupils have individual targets for numeracy, which they work towards with teachers' support. Opportunities are used well in ICT, and science, to measure, count, and match shapes and numbers.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High quality teaching and support by other staff in the classrooms results in pupils being well motivated and wanting to learn.
- Programmes of work and individual lessons are well planned and promote good achievements especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The subject is well led.
- There is some "slippage" in the time allocated to science with some pupils being disenfranchised from participating in the full curriculum offered and this impacts on achievement.

### **Commentary**

64. Pupil achievements in the lower part of the school (Years 7 to 9) are satisfactory, and in the rest of the school (Years 10 and 11), are good and improving. As at the last inspection, standards in science remain higher than those of mathematics and English. This is due mainly to the high standard of classroom teaching and the teacher's planning of lessons. Achievements at the end of Year 9, however, are hindered by weakness in managing behaviour, when pupils miss out on aspects of the curriculum. The long-term planning does not ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum with too little emphasis being placed on scientific investigation or method. Lessons do provide for considerable "hands on" experimental experiences for pupils, and this results in them being excited and enthusiastic about their work and, consequently, achieving well. Although the standards that most pupils attain are below the nationally expected level, some pupils in

the upper part of the school are approaching the levels of attainment reached by their peers in mainstream schools.

65. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The standard of teaching in individual lessons seen during the week of the inspection was good. Lessons were well planned with a wide range of carefully selected “hands on” scientific experiences that allowed pupils to make choices from the observations and data they collected. The teacher is confident in her knowledge of science and how to help pupils of varying ability learn. The support given to pupils with more complex or specific needs by teaching and science assistants is good, and enables pupils to access the full curriculum. The quality of questioning, the provision of a scientific vocabulary and ethos, results in a sound pace of learning in the classes.
66. The leadership and management of science are good, with all science being taught by a single, skilled, dedicated, specialist teacher. However, the school recognises the need for further development in the mid-term planning of courses of study and in the setting of targets to cover the full range of attainment targets in science, and to ensure that pupil progress informs the next stage of learning. The subject leader monitors work and progress well and keeps pupils’ work in such a way as to ensure she has a clear picture of individual progress. The provision of a dedicated science room is a considerable improvement since the last inspection and has a marked effect on learning. Towards the end of their time in school, pupils follow courses that lead to entry-level accreditation. More able pupils however, have been so well taught and attained so well in the subject, that the higher-level accredited course of GCSE is appropriate for them.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The development of ICT has been enhanced by good staff training, new equipment and improved facilities, all of which are having an impact on pupils’ learning and achievement.
- Effective improvement in planning and organisation has led to a more systematic approach to teaching and recording achievement. This has enabled teachers to develop a greater breadth of pupils’ ICT skills and understanding.
- The use of ICT in subject areas is developing, with useful local education authority support, but there remains inconsistency of practice.

### **Commentary**

67. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when provision for ICT was considered underdeveloped. This improvement is due to effective planning and organisation, good staff training, new equipment and improved facilities. This has had a positive impact on pupils’ achievement.
68. Overall, pupils’ learning and achievements are good.
69. Pupils in Year 9 were seen using ICT to gather information to prepare a multimedia presentation about themselves and their school. In one lesson seen, pupils were quick to

recognise poorly designed features that make information difficult to find or read and poor sequencing of information which made a presentation difficult to follow. Good resources, including effective use of the electronic whiteboard, facilitated an effective discussion on the features of successful presentations. Higher attaining pupils made perceptive comments about the design of slides and the teacher's skilful intervention and effective use of humour enabled those with potentially very challenging behaviour to attend well and make good progress in modifying their presentations. Most pupils load applications independently, make appropriate choices from menus on the screen and change options, to select new programs. They use the keyboard and mouse accurately, and competently change styles, word-process carefully and design charts. Pupils with more complex needs use a radio mouse and skilled and patient support from the teachers and teaching assistants enables them to use and present information. They make good progress in controlling the mouse and selecting a program from icons on the screen. The school also uses a writing program to enable pupils to develop communication and write in symbols, which they then read. Pupils use digital cameras to record work in class.

70. Pupils in Year 11 make good progress in their examination modules and are able to open, and run many applications with growing confidence and proficiency. Pupils achieve well because the teacher plans their accredited courses thoroughly and chooses appropriate teaching methods and resources. They search for information on the Internet and use e-mail and word processing with growing independence. In one lesson seen, Year 11 pupils were completing a final review of a poster from a design brief for their examination coursework. They had imported pictures and information from the Internet and edited them competently. They were careful to stick to their design brief but showed imagination and creativity in the styles they chose. They were careful to choose eye-catching colours and scripts and had a thoughtful discussion on the attractiveness and clarity of their finished posters. Pupils were highly involved in their work and helped each other with constructive comments. They were eager to improve, showing a willingness to modify their designs. Higher attaining pupils understand and use a good range of subject-specific vocabulary and their skills are developing rapidly. Most pupils have a good understanding about which everyday items incorporate a microprocessor and how ICT can be used to improve our everyday lives. The very good relationships adults have with pupils, enable them to have confidence in their support and try their hardest. They grow in self-esteem and their responses are more consistent, meaningful and positive.
71. Teaching is consistently good. Staff have a good understanding of the individual needs and levels pupils are reaching through clear and detailed assessment procedures. This enables them to build securely on what pupils already know. Teaching is skilled and motivating. Pupils enjoy working on computers and they are generally eager to complete their work. Their behaviour is usually good. Even pupils with more complex needs respond well and make a good effort to fulfil their targets.
72. The purposely designed computer suite, together with a high level of resources, such as new PCs, laptops, electronic whiteboards, digital cameras and radio mice have enabled more extensive and exciting skills work in ICT and resulted in pupils making great strides in achievement. The department is well supported by LEA training and a school ICT technician. Although at early stages, these developments are beginning to have an impact on the development of ICT throughout the school. The quality and number of

computers in the school has improved and the range of training and software available to support this work is good.

73. Leadership and management are satisfactory with many good features. The subject leader has a good insight into the needs of the department. New planning ensures a broader coverage of the programmes of study and includes a more systematic approach to teaching and recording achievement, thus enabling teachers to develop a greater breadth of pupils' ICT skills and understanding. However, monitoring of teachers' plans and pupils' work in ICT is limited. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in teacher training, planning and resources and this has raised the level of teaching and learning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by exciting and motivating them, and developing in them a positive self-concept.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

74. Provision is satisfactory. Although some departments have made a good start in using ICT to support learning, its use is not consistent. The school is aware of this and is working hard with the local education authority to ensure ICT is prominent in all teachers' planning. Training opportunities to use such resources as the electronic whiteboards in subject areas, are well taken.

### **HUMANITIES**

75. History and geography were sampled. One lesson was seen in history. Work, displays and planning documents were scrutinised and discussions were held with teachers. Geography is not taught in Years 10 and 11. There is insufficient evidence to make judgements in either subject.
76. Pupils learn about different places and locations through a range of practical activities, for example, orienteering exercises that help them to understand their environment. Younger pupils study volcanoes as part of their learning in physical geography. They are able to recognise the various stages of volcanic activity and demonstrate this with clear diagrams. They are developing sound mapping skills and complete carefully drawn weather maps. Pupils study floods and disasters and the reasons for them. They recognise the effective links made by their teachers to local flooding and the 1998 Northampton floods and its consequences. They showed obvious enjoyment in completing a unit, which compared shopping in the past and present day.
77. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study both World Wars and know about the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. They know how the Second World War started and write clearly about Hitler's private army and how opposition was dealt with. Pupils draw well-labelled maps showing the alliance system in 1914. They understand the causes of the First World War and recognise the events leading up to it. Most pupils' work shows a sound understanding of the importance of the trenches with good illustrations and understanding of the barrages and barrage warfare. Pupils draw clear maps of the triple alliance showing a good understanding of the allies in the war. They are aware of the consequences of war and the work of such agencies as the British Legion.
78. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an examination option course, covering units on the *Black Peoples of America*, *World War 2*, and *Weapons of World War 1*. As part of a

topic on slavery, pupils watched a talk on personal possessions and recognised how a slave, kidnapped and transported from his own country, became a possession of his owner and discussed the moral implications in an ethos of tolerance and respect.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good teaching and learning overall. The recording of pupils' attainment and progress is unsatisfactory.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development and provides strong links with the personal, social and health education and citizenship aspects of the curriculum.
- Resources for religious education are good but there is a marked lack of contributions from local religious leaders or places of worship.

### **Commentary**

79. **Scrutiny of work and discussions with teachers and pupils provide good evidence to indicate that provision and achievement in the subject has improved since the last inspection and is no longer unsatisfactory. This is due to the good teaching and planning by the subject leader who provides pupils with a range of thought-provoking experiences across a broad spectrum of religious beliefs.**
80. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory and, on occasions, good. Teachers plan the work well and provide entertaining cameos to illustrate moral or religious dilemmas exemplified in the teacher's role-play during a lesson about Martin Luther King and the difficulties associated with racial prejudice. Pupils behave sensibly, respond well to questions, and take a pride in their work and the quality of their debate. Where the teaching is less successful, teachers do not match the length of the lesson to the time available accurately, so pupils have to "mark time" or listen to "what we are going to do next week".
81. The school follows a modified version of the Northamptonshire agreed syllabus, but this is under review as a new syllabus has been produced this academic year. This programme of work is supported by a range of ASDAN modules where pupils can express their views on a range of moral topics. The school does not, however, make sufficient use of the local community with visits to local places of worship or from local clerics thus limiting pupils' experiences of religious and cultural diversity.
82. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The religious education subject leader is enthusiastic and bases her work on a modified version of the locally agreed syllabus on religious education. This scheme actively promotes the pupils' moral, spiritual social and cultural development as well contributing to personal social and health education and citizenship. The school is planning to revise its schemes of work in the light of the very recently revised locally agreed syllabus.



## **CREATIVE AESTHETIC PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL**

83. **Work was sampled in art and design; design and technology, music and physical education and so no overall judgements can be made.** Only one lesson of food technology was observed and this was good. However, there is a failure to deliver aspects of the National Curriculum and statutory requirements are not met.
84. Observations of records, and discussions with pupils and teachers shows that provision in music, which is enmeshed within the whole of performing arts, is at least satisfactory. Pupils are able to make their own music incorporating both rhythm and pitch and sing well in school and class productions. The enthusiastic subject leader provides a wide range of musical experiences for pupils, incorporating both their own and outside performances.
85. Two lessons were observed in art and design and the pupils' work was examined during the inspection. Standards of work range from very good to satisfactory. However, pupils enjoy art and are proud of their achievements. The standard of work by pupils in Year 9 is below average, with a small number of pupils achieving at a higher than average level. The school does not offer national accreditation in art, but two higher achieving pupils attended art classes and gained A\* grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations at a nearby college.
86. Pupils in Year 7 experiment with primary colours, making leaf prints and colour charts. By Year 9, they use a range of media, using sketchbooks to create their own composition before developing it further. This encourages their independence and is an improvement since the last inspection. For example, some pupils use art straws or natural products for 3-D effects, whilst others draw or paint in the style of old masters. By Year 11, they have a basic knowledge of artistic vocabulary and discuss the work of, for example, Maupassant, Van Gogh and Lowry. They compare the influences, which have shaped an artist's life, which encourages their cultural development.
87. In physical education, the school is successful in competitive sport with other schools and the provision of a purpose-built sports hall is appropriate. Only a few lessons were observed and achievement was satisfactory as a result of teaching by subject specialists. The co-ordinator is clear about the direction of the subject.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

88. **PROVISION FOR WORK-RELATED LEARNING WAS SAMPLED AND INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO MAKE A JUDGEMENT. SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN PLACE FOR WORK EXPERIENCE IN YEARS 10 AND 11.**

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

89. **No lessons of direct teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship were seen during the inspection. There is an appropriate**

amount of time allocated to each class to the teaching of PSHE. The benefits of this can be seen in the good personal development, attitudes and values shown by most pupils during their time at school.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
How inclusive the school is	5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	4

<b>Pupil's' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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