



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Smith's Wood School

Solihull Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 24 and 25 November 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Smith's Wood School
Type of school:	Comprehensive
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Headteacher:	Mr R Hawkins
Address of school:	Windward Way Smith's Wood Birmingham B36 0UE
Telephone:	0121 770 6811
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Cllr H Hendry
Local education authority area:	Solihull
Unique reference number:	104118
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs C A Bolton HMI
Dates of inspection:	24 and 25 November 2004

Introduction

1. Smith's Wood School is a relatively large comprehensive school, situated in a northern area of Solihull in which there are significant levels of deprivation. Most of the pupils live within the local community but some travel from further afield. The proportion of the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally below the national average and many have very low standards in literacy. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is above average, although the proportion of the school population for whom a Statement of Special Educational Need is maintained is low. Few of the school's pupils speak English as an additional language. In recent years, the school has experienced considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of suitably qualified teachers. However, the situation has stabilised in the present academic year and at the time of this inspection the school was fully staffed.

2. The school was inspected in May 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of May 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In November 2004, four HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- in 2003, standards in the GCSE examinations in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at A* to C grades were well below the national average and below the average for schools which operate in similar contexts. In the 2004 examinations, the percentage of higher grade passes rose from 21 to 24 per cent, meeting the school's target. In 2003, the proportion of the pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to G grades was well below the average for all schools but in line with that for similar schools. In 2004, attainment by this measure declined, in part because of the involvement of a number of the lower attaining Year 11 pupils in alternative work-related programmes based away from the school site;
- in the 2003 statutory tests at Key Stage 3, attainment was very low in comparison with national figures. In English and mathematics, standards were well below those achieved in similar schools nationally and below in science. In 2004, there was a marked rise in the proportions of pupils reaching the

expected level for their age in English and mathematics and the school's targets were exceeded in both subjects. In science, attainment in 2004 was similar to that of 2003 and the target was missed;

- the teaching was satisfactory or better in just below nine out of ten lessons, and in over six in ten it was good or very good. The proportion of good and very good teaching has risen significantly since the last inspection in May 2003. In the most successful lessons, the staff identified clear objectives for learning, drew upon assessment information to plan work which was well matched to the pupils' needs and used a range of methods and resources to enable the pupils to develop their general learning skills, as well as to make progress in the knowledge and skills specific to the subject. These effective lessons were orderly and conducted at a brisk and challenging pace. The learning support assistants in the core subjects made a positive contribution to the pupils' learning;
- there were some weaknesses in the teaching, including some in lessons where the teaching was satisfactory overall. Expectations of the pupils' progress and attainment were unduly low in some instances. The use of lesson time was sometimes ineffective and the pace of learning was too slow. The teachers were sometimes unaware that the pupils were not making the expected gains in learning. There were weaknesses in some of the lesson planning. The management of behaviour was unsatisfactory in three lessons. There has been considerable turbulence in staffing in the mathematics department and the provision in the subject remains fragile and heavily dependent upon external support;
- the quality of the pupils' learning was similar to that of the teaching. It was satisfactory or better in just under nine out of ten lessons, and in over half it was good. The learning was most successful in lessons in which there were clear objectives, the work was well matched to the pupils' differing needs and the activities were planned to promote the pupils' active participation and their levels of independence. At times, weaknesses in the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy limited their progress;
- the progress of the pupils who have special educational needs was generally at least satisfactory, and it was good where there was effective support from teaching assistants. In some larger classes in which no support was available, the progress of these pupils was less secure. The school has developed a broad range of strategies to meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils. The higher attaining pupils made satisfactory or good progress in most lessons but on occasions they could have moved forward more rapidly, with greater challenge and more opportunity for independence;
- the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The school has introduced a good range of work-related programmes for those pupils in Key Stage 4 identified as at risk of becoming disaffected. There are some issues still to be resolved in order to enable the pupils to achieve at GCSE level, and also to ensure continuity in the curriculum for pupils who attend the school site on a part-time basis. The implementation of the literacy strand of the national Key

Stage 3 strategy is developing well in a number of subjects. The school offers a good choice of extracurricular provision;

- there is a good range of assessment data available and the staff analyse rigorously the outcomes of formal assessments to evaluate the work of the school and to identify areas for improvement. The use of individual pupil targets is developing well. The quality of the marking is uneven across the school;
- the leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. There are systematic arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the provision and good arrangements for the professional development of the staff. The quality of subject leadership is variable but has improved considerably since the last inspection and is at least satisfactory in most departments;
- the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were usually satisfactory or good and were closely related to the quality of the teaching. They were at least satisfactory in over nine out of ten of lessons and in seven in ten they were good. Relationships between adults and pupils were good. Movement in corridors and around the site was generally orderly and there was a high level of staff supervision at lesson changes and at the beginnings and ends of sessions;
- the school has a range of strategies to promote good attendance and an active relationship with the education welfare service of the local education authority (LEA). Nevertheless, attendance is well below the national figure, although it has risen since the last inspection. There was some variation in the promptness with which pupils arrived for lessons but punctuality to classes was satisfactory overall;
- the role of the governors has developed well since the last inspection. They are committed and supportive of the school and are provided with detailed information about its progress. They are closely involved in monitoring its work and are prepared to be critical when necessary.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- raise standards and achievement at both key stages;
- continue to improve the quality of the teaching;
- improve the provision in mathematics;
- improve the pupils' levels of attendance.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the pupils' attainment in terms of the proportion achieving five or more passes at A* to C grades was well below the national average and below the average for schools nationally which operate in similar contexts. In the 2004 examinations, there was a rise in the percentage of higher grade passes from 21 to 24 per cent and the school met its target. In 2003, the proportion of the school's pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to G grades was well below the average for all schools but in line with that for similar schools nationally. In 2004 attainment by this measure fell by ten per cent and the school's target was missed by a margin of five per cent, in part because of the involvement of a number of the lower attaining Year 11 pupils in alternative work-related programmes based away from the school site.

8. There was some variation between achievement in the 2004 GCSE examinations in different subjects. The proportion of the pupils awarded passes at A* to C grades was significantly higher in English than in mathematics and science. In relation to the targets set by the school for higher grade passes in each subject, the pupils' performance in English literature, Spanish, French, music and geography was stronger than in other subjects, while it was weakest in food technology, resistant materials, drama and history. Targets for the percentage of passes at A* to G grades were missed in the great majority of subjects.

9. In the 2003 statutory tests at Key Stage 3, the performance of the school's pupils was very low in comparison with national figures. In English and mathematics, standards were well below those achieved in similar schools nationally and they were below in science. However, in 2004, there was a significant rise in the proportions of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in English and mathematics, and the school's Key Stage 3 targets were exceeded in both subjects. In science, attainment in 2004 was similar to that of 2003 and the school's target for the subject was missed.

10. In English, standards in lessons were well below average. Many pupils enter the school with low attainment in English but they make satisfactory progress in the subject in both key stages. In English lessons, they usually listened attentively and improved their understanding through discussion with others, responding with interest to their reading. The higher attaining pupils in both key stages gave clear and sustained spoken responses to questions, using appropriate technical language when they talked about the literature they were studying. In a Year 9 class, for example, the pupils identified a variety of kinds of texts by recognising features of the vocabulary, style and format. A group of Year 11 pupils knowledgeably explored the plot and characters of two short stories and the highest attainers examined more challenging aspects of the texts, such as the setting and the effects of the writer's choice of language.

11. However, the pupils were often less successful in setting out in writing their responses to texts than they were in discussion. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, the pupils engaged enthusiastically in a thoughtful oral analysis of three poems but the quality of their discussion was not fully reflected in their written responses. Many pupils struggled with basic skills of handwriting, punctuation and the planning and organisation of extended writing.

12. Across the curriculum, standards in oracy and literacy are well below national expectations. Many pupils were willing to answer questions in lessons but their contributions were often brief and factual in content. In effective lessons the staff provided good models of spoken language, including standard English, and used open and targeted questioning to encourage the pupils to reflect and to share their ideas and opinions through extended responses. Discussion in pairs and groups was used well at times to develop the pupils' skills in oracy. In written work across a range of subjects, the weaknesses in the pupils' skills in literacy, including handwriting, spelling and the use of punctuation, often limited their progress and attainment. The school has rightly focused upon improving standards in literacy and some good practice was seen in this area, for example in the use of technical vocabulary in science. However, while some teachers provided the pupils with good models of written English, this was not consistently the case and there were instances of mistakes in the use of grammar and punctuation on whiteboards and in displays.

13. In mathematics, attainment in lessons was generally well below national expectations and the progress made by the pupils varied with the quality of the teaching. In a Year 9 higher attaining set, the pupils were working at levels above those expected for their ages and, in a few cases, well above. The work in books showed that the pupils had solved equations using inverse operations and effectively tackled simultaneous equations, while in the lesson they identified similar triangles and knew that corresponding angles are equal and that corresponding sides are in the same ratio. They were making satisfactory or good progress, in the lesson and over time. However, in another and lower attaining set, also in Year 9, the pupils had poor knowledge and recall of basic number operations. Many were unable to make use of multiplication tables when finding the area of shapes. Some pupils were unsure of the meanings of basic terms, such as 'parallel', and were unable to define the properties of the two-dimensional shapes such as parallelograms. They were making unsatisfactory progress because of weaknesses in the quality of the teaching. At Key Stage 4, the pupils in a middle attaining set showed relatively good understanding and plotted and drew quadratic equations, interpreting them with understanding. However, the pupils in a Year 10 class showed poor basic understanding of concepts and again were making unsatisfactory progress because of weaknesses in the teaching. Many were unable to work independently with any success and were struggling to apply the concept of space diagrams to the probability problems they had been set.

14. Across the curriculum, weaknesses in the pupils' skills in numeracy hinder their progress in subjects other than mathematics. In a Year 10 class in information and communication technology, for example, one able pupil was unable to recall how to find percentages even though she had devised a formula in a spreadsheet to do this.

15. Standards in science are generally well below nationally expected levels and some pupils in lower attaining classes had poor recall of basic scientific facts and vocabulary. There was considerable variation in the standards of presentation of work, including diagrams, in the pupils' books and the progress of some of the lower attaining pupils was inhibited by a lack of confidence. In lessons the pupils made satisfactory or good progress. The teachers' explanations of scientific concepts were clear and there was a range of learning activities in use, including investigations and tasks involving the use of information and communication technology. In one very effective lesson in Key Stage 3, although no practical work was seen, the teaching methods enabled the pupils to be consistently active in their learning through dynamic use of discussion and questioning, which fostered well their scientific curiosity. Although many pupils had limited prior attainment, they made good

progress through the progressive and sequential building of skills and the systematic modelling of scientific vocabulary, with an insistence by the teacher that the pupils followed suit. In a well-organised practical lesson in Year 7, clear instructions were given by the teacher about the importance of health and safety in practical areas and the great majority of the pupils responded readily and behaved with consideration for others.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in over nine out of ten of the lessons and they were good or very good in seven in ten. The pupils' responses in lessons were closely related to the quality of the provision. Where the teaching was good, the pupils were usually attentive, well motivated and keen to contribute to oral work. They became disengaged when the teaching lacked challenge and the pace of the lessons was pedestrian. Around the site, there was a high level of staff supervision at the beginnings and ends of sessions and at lesson changes. The pupils' movement and behaviour on corridors and staircases were generally orderly and considerate and many went out of their way to be welcoming and helpful to the visitors.

17. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils are given clear guidance about right and wrong behaviour and adults provide good role models in their interactions with the pupils and with colleagues. Relationships between the staff and pupils are good for the most part and based upon mutual respect and courtesy. The pupils generally collaborate harmoniously and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. The school provides a good variety of extracurricular activities to develop the pupils' cultural and sporting interests, as well as to foster their social skills and confidence.

18. The school has a range of strategies aimed at promoting good attendance. The pupils' attendance is carefully monitored and, in individual cases in which it falls below 90 per cent, the parents or carers are contacted by a mentor. There is close contact between the school staff and the education welfare service of the LEA and there are regular meetings with the LEA's consultant for behaviour and attendance. The school encourages good attendance through reward schemes and through the tutorial system; for example, in one guidance session, the tutor took time to pursue attendance matters effectively. In spite of these measures, attendance for the school year 2003-4 was 89.3 per cent, with 0.3 per cent unauthorised absence. Although this represents an improvement upon the corresponding figures for the previous year and on the figure reported at the inspection of May 2003, attendance to school remains well below the national average. The figure for this term to date is 88.8 per cent. The school's target for attendance is 90 per cent by the end of the current school year, with a further target of 92 per cent by 2006.

19. There are appropriate measures in place to promote good standards of punctuality to school. Latecomers for the morning session are challenged by a learning mentor, while a senior member of staff undertakes this role in the afternoons. Patterns of punctuality and lateness are monitored and there are sanctions and rewards to promote good standards. There was some variation in the promptness with which pupils arrived for lessons but, given the extensive nature of the school site, punctuality to classes was satisfactory overall.

The quality of education

20. In just under nine in ten of the lessons the teaching was at least satisfactory, and in over six in ten it was good or very good. The quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection and the proportion of good and very good provision has risen significantly. In the most successful lessons, the teachers made use of well-organised and challenging learning activities, recognising the differing attainment, needs and aptitudes of the pupils. They used a variety of methods and well prepared resources which were calculated to enable the pupils to improve their learning skills in general, as well as to make incremental progress in the knowledge and skills specific to the subject. These effective lessons were well planned, with clearly identified learning objectives and reference to assessment information. The time was well managed so the lessons moved briskly along and adequate weight was given to plenary discussions to review key learning points before the pupils left. The teachers of these lessons had secure subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for their subjects which they were able to impart to their pupils. They managed behaviour well, following school procedures and using praise and encouragement, as well as sanctions where they were needed. In one science lesson, for instance, the teacher was confronted by very challenging behaviour on the part of a few pupils but made use of strategies which enabled her to remain in control of the situation. The learning support assistants in the core subjects made a positive contribution to the pupils' learning. The school is pursuing initiatives to develop the role of learning mentors, to enable them to play a fuller part in support for the pupils' learning and behaviour.

21. There were some weaknesses in the teaching, including some in lessons where the teaching was satisfactory overall. Too little was expected of the pupils' progress and attainment in some instances and the pace of the learning was too slow. The teachers made inadequate use of assessment as the lessons progressed and so were unaware that a number of the pupils were not learning what was expected. The planning of some lessons was weak and the management of time was ineffective; in some cases, the closing plenary session was rushed, while one lesson ended well before the scheduled time. The management of the pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory in three lessons. There has been considerable turbulence in staffing in the mathematics department and the provision in the subject remains fragile and heavily dependent upon external support.

22. The quality of the pupils' learning was similar to that of the teaching in that it was satisfactory or better in just under nine in ten lessons; it was good in over half. The learning was most successful in lessons in which the planning identified clear objectives and the work was well matched to the pupils' differing levels of attainment and needs. Many pupils have limited learning skills and made the best progress when the methods and resources were conducive to the development of their levels of independence and involved them actively in the lessons. At times, weaknesses in the pupils' prior attainment in literacy and numeracy hindered their progress. There were too many gaps in some of the pupils' homework planners, indicating either that it had not been set consistently or that the staff had not ensured that the pupils recorded their homework properly.

23. The higher attaining pupils made satisfactory or good progress in most lessons. In a number of higher sets there were good examples of challenging questioning and other activities which were conducted at a suitably demanding pace. In some cases, however, the higher attainers could have made more rapid progress had the work been more specifically matched to their needs, with an emphasis upon independent learning and more

encouragement for them to share ideas, questions and hypotheses through extended contributions to discussion.

24. The progress of the pupils who have special educational needs was generally at least satisfactory and it was good where there was effective support from teaching assistants. In some larger classes in which no additional support was available, the progress of these pupils was less secure. The school has developed a broad range of strategies to meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils. All pupils are assessed at the beginning of Key Stage 3 to identify those who would benefit from extra support. Those with the weakest reading skills are taught during Years 7 and 8 in a transition group, which has similarities to the primary school structure with which they are familiar. There is an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Pupils with low reading ages but who are not placed in the transition group are given extra support by teaching assistants, in withdrawal groups and in mainstream lessons. There has been training for all staff in meeting the needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment. Although the learning support department is presently coping with the absence of two senior members of staff, the lead teaching assistant is managing day-to-day affairs extremely well. Considerable work has gone into rewriting the pupils' individual education plans to make the targets more precise and understandable to non-specialist staff. All the individual education plans are accessible to the staff through the school's computer network.

25. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The staff are well aware of the importance of improving the pupils' attainment in literacy, and the implementation of the literacy strand of the national strategy for Key Stage 3 is developing well in a number of subjects. At Key Stage 4, the school has rightly sought to meet the needs of those pupils at risk of disaffection by introducing greater flexibility, including a broad range of work-related programmes. The school reports that this provision has been beneficial in meeting the needs of the target group. There are, however, some issues still to be resolved in terms of enabling these pupils to achieve appropriately at GCSE level, and also ensure continuity in the curriculum for those pupils whose programmes involve a mixture of attendance at school and at off-site placements.

26. The school has available a good range of assessment data and there is rigorous analysis of information from formal assessments, to evaluate the work of the school and to identify areas for improvement. The use of assessment for learning has been a major focus for the school. Good use has been made of information about attainment and progress to provide teachers with relevant data, including prior attainment and target grades. The use of individual targets for pupils is developing well; all the pupils questioned during the inspection were aware of their personal targets. Many classrooms contain displays showing the performance necessary to achieve each level in the relevant subject and much of the teaching made explicit reference to this information. The subject departments have developed their own ways of ensuring that the pupils understand their targets; in English for instance, there are cards which show the targets phrased in language readily accessible to the pupils.

27. The emphasis on improving marking began last year and was heavily promoted. The senior staff defined what made for good quality marking and then monitored each department against these principles. It is reported that there were significant improvements in this aspect of assessment, although in the course of this inspection, the quality of the marking varied considerably. Basic errors, for example in the spelling of subject-specific vocabulary and in punctuating sentences, were too often ignored so that opportunities were missed to improve attainment in literacy as well as in the relevant subject.

Leadership and management

28. The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. He is well supported by a large senior team and there are clear lines of accountability and of line-management responsibility between senior and middle managers. The management structure has an appropriate focus upon raising levels of achievement. The quality of subject leadership is variable but has improved considerably since the last inspection and is at least satisfactory for the most part. The school has made available a good range of professional development opportunities for managers.

29. There are systematic arrangements for the monitoring of the work of the school, for example, through the analysis of performance data and regular observation and evaluation of classroom practice. Reviews of examination results identify areas of underperformance and require subject leaders to explain how they will be addressed. All teachers are observed on a termly basis by the line managers and, where a pattern of unsatisfactory teaching is revealed, the school arranges for the member of staff to receive support and for progress to be checked. The outcomes of this sound monitoring system are collated each term and a picture of the overall quality of teaching is compiled. The senior managers have a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. However, the form which is used to record judgements made on the lessons observed focuses on teaching competences, rather than requiring the observer to give full consideration to the impact of the teaching on the pupils' learning.

30. The governors are committed and supportive of the school and are provided with detailed information about its progress. Records of their meetings and other activities indicate that they are prepared to be critical of specific aspects of the work of the school and to raise challenging questions where appropriate. They are involved in strategic planning for the longer term development of the school. Overall, their role has developed well since the last inspection.

31. In the recent past, the school has experienced considerable difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff. The situation is more stable in the current academic year but absences are disrupting the continuity of learning for several classes. A number of important posts are to be filled from January but the mathematics department in particular is struggling to establish consistency of practice because of the continuing need for temporary appointments.

32. The staff have access to a good range of professional development activities. The school has benefited from the training and support for individual teachers and departments provided by several advanced skills teachers. Induction arrangements are well considered and the newly qualified teachers are appreciative of the high level of support they have received since joining the school. Considerable emphasis is given to peer assessment by the teaching staff and to support through a system of 'coaching partners', involving pairs of teachers planning together and evaluating each other's lessons. There is a healthy culture in the school of encouraging teachers to observe each other and share practice.

33. The LEA has provided support for the school across a range of issues related to improvement. Officers have taken part in monitoring activities, in subject-specific training and guidance and there has been close collaboration between school staff and the education

welfare service to promote better attendance. The school reports that the LEA's support has generally been valuable and that the work of the consultants for the Key Stage 3 strategy and the adviser for design and technology has had a beneficial impact. Work on literacy across the curriculum, led by an assistant headteacher in conjunction with the literacy co-ordinator, has met with a positive response from most departments. However, there has been much less advisory support in Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics, the two subjects in which raising attainment was identified as a key issue by the last inspection.

Implementation of the action plan

34. The inspection report of May 2003 required the school to address eight key issues. These were concerned with: raising standards, especially for middle and lower attaining pupils in English and mathematics; improving the quality of teaching, particularly in a number of specified subjects; raising the pupils' levels of attendance; improving the school's leadership by dealing with issues of staff recruitment and retention; and putting in place more rigorous arrangements for improving the pupils' learning as well as checking the effectiveness of the school's initiatives for raising standards. Key issues 6, 7 and 8 required the school to meet statutory requirements in several specified areas.

35. Attainment in English and mathematics remains well below national standards. However, the pupils' performance in the 2004 national tests and examinations was stronger at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 in both subjects. The results of the Key Stage 3 tests showed a marked improvement on the position in 2003 in English and mathematics. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, the target for the proportion of pupils achieving higher grade passes was missed by four percentage points in English but exceeded by 11 points in English Literature. In mathematics, the target was missed by five per cent. The teaching and learning during this inspection were significantly more secure in English than in mathematics but progress overall has been reasonable on this key issue.

36. The school has taken a broad range of measures to improve the quality of the teaching. There is close monitoring of the provision and a good range of professional development opportunities for the staff. The proportion of the teaching which is satisfactory or better has risen since the last inspection and there has been a significant increase in the percentage which is good or better. There remains some unsatisfactory teaching but progress has been reasonable overall on this key issue.

37. The school has a suitable range of strategies to monitor and improve the pupils' attendance and there has been a modest improvement on the figure reported at the last inspection. However, the pupils' rate of attendance remains well below the national average and progress has been limited on this key issue.

38. The school has experienced considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff. As a result of the considerable efforts made by the managers, the staffing situation is now much more stable and there has been a strong emphasis upon professional development, including induction arrangements. The school has introduced a performance-management system for non-teaching staff which is being used as a model of good practice by the LEA. A recent assessment in connection with the Investors in People scheme identified many strengths in the school's practices. There has been good progress on this key issue.

39. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are securely in place. The senior managers and the governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have taken appropriate action where necessary to improve the quality of the provision. Progress has been good on this key issue.

40. The school has taken action in relation to each of the issues of compliance with statutory requirements which were raised by the last inspection. Discrete lessons in religious education and citizenship have been scheduled for all pupils and the school reports that procedures for the disapplication of pupils from National Curriculum requirements are now properly in place. The next annual report to parents from the governing body is in draft form and is to include an invitation to attend the annual meeting for parents and carers, which is scheduled to take place in January 2005. Arrangements to provide a daily act of collective worship involve a combination of assemblies and the system of guidance time provided by tutors. However, the guidance sessions seen were not consistently compliant in giving the pupils an opportunity to take part in an act of collective worship. Progress has been reasonable overall on this group of key issues.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected in May 2003 under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by HMI. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in December 2003, March 2004 and July 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of May 2003.

In November 2004, four HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Forty lessons or parts of lessons, an assembly and three guidance sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, a group of heads of subjects, the chair of the governing board and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.