

INSPECTION REPORT

IFFLEY MEAD

Iffley, Oxfordshire

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123338

Headteacher: Kay Willett

Lead inspector: Dr Mick Megee

Dates of inspection: 6th-9th December 2004

Inspection number: 272046

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 students: 5-16
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 87

School address: Iffley Turn
Oxford
Oxfordshire
Postcode: OX4 4DU

Telephone number: 01865 747606
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr David Humphrey
governors:

Date of previous March 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Iffley Mead School is a special school for students with moderate learning difficulties, situated in an Oxfordshire village on the southern edge of Oxford city. There are currently 87 students: 52 boys and 35 girls. There are no students under the age of 10 currently attending the school. Overall, the students' socio-economic backgrounds are below average, and the number of students claiming free school meals is above average. The majority of students are from white British backgrounds, with small minorities from a number of other ethnic groups; four students speak English as an additional language. The standards of students who enter the school are below average overall. In addition to their learning difficulties, an increasing proportion of students have a history of social and/or behavioural difficulties. The school has featured in reorganisation proposals by Oxfordshire LEA which could have meant the closure of the school. The LEA has decided that the school will remain as part of its provision. In 2003-4, two students joined and two students left the school other than at the usual time, which is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23629	Mick Megee	Lead inspector	Science, art and design, design and technology, history, French, music, religious education
9079	Ann Moss	Lay inspector	
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, English as an additional language, special educational needs, work related learning
4989	Lynn Lewis	Team inspector	English, citizenship, personal, social and health education, physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Iffley Mead is an **effective** and very caring school which has overcome recent serious difficulties and is now effectively achieving almost all of its aims. The school is making rapid improvement under the leadership of its newly appointed headteacher, whose strength of purpose is felt throughout the school. Teaching and learning are good and the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by key staff.
- Teaching is of a good standard overall and enables students to achieve well overall.
- Whilst satisfactory, achievement in mathematics, design and technology, religious education and work related learning is not as good as in other subjects.
- Students are very well supported and cared for.
- Opportunities to teach students basic skills are sometimes missed.
- Students are very proud of their school, attend very well, enjoy their lessons and behave well.
- The school has been unable to make sufficient links with other schools and colleges.
- Parents are very happy with what the school does and feel very well supported.

During the period of difficulties, improvement inevitably stalled. Very few areas of the school's work escaped the impact. However, the new headteacher has brought about a turnaround in the school's fortunes. Of the issues identified in the previous inspection, the school has overcome the weaknesses in students' individual education plans. Assessment procedures are now effective, and teachers' planning routinely includes students' individual personal targets. Lesson observations are regularly undertaken by key staff and most subject coordinators, and financial procedures are now in satisfactory order. Teaching, learning and achievement have improved overall, although achievement in a few subjects - especially mathematics - has improved less. The school has faced significant barriers to its development, and has done well to maintain and in many cases to improve standards. Improvement is therefore judged as good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 6	Good	good
Year 9	Good	good
Year 11	Good	good

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

Achievement is good overall for students of all ages, including those with additional special educational needs. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or students with English as an additional language. Achievement is satisfactory in

mathematics and in work related learning (WRL) because some of the teaching is not as engaging as in other lessons. Achievement in design and technology (DT) is also just satisfactory because there are few opportunities for students to make good progress in food technology. In religious education (RE), achievement is satisfactory but improving. In lessons in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal social and health education (PSHE) students achieve well because of the effective teaching and planning. In physical education, very good teaching and learning lead to high achievement. Students achieve well against their individual targets. Year 11 students achieve well in the range of accredited coursework programmes they follow.

Students' personal qualities are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students' attitudes are very good and behaviour is good. Attendance is well above average and there are very good procedures for checking on and following up absence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good, as are teaching and learning. The teachers know what stimulates the students, what they are capable of, and usually get the right level of challenge. Teaching is particularly good in physical education, and good in English, science, ICT, RE, DT and PSHE. In mathematics and WRL teaching is satisfactory. Students, especially those with additional needs, respond well to the way in which staff maintain and foster very good relationships with them. Planning is also good but as yet opportunities for developing students' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in all subjects are insufficient. Assessment is good overall, and there are recent improvements in the information that students receive on how well they are doing.

The curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. The school provides a good range of support for learning outside the school day, and promotes very well students' participation in sport. However, the range of activities offered does not yet include enough opportunities for students for work experience, or to integrate into mainstream schools and colleges of further education. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but in the case of food technology and art, the lack of suitable facilities prevents students from achieving well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has inspirationally steered staff and students through the huge difficulties of the recent years. The temporary senior managers have given effective and timely support to the task in hand. Management at subject level is more variable but good overall because the commitment and enthusiasm are there. The governance of the school is satisfactory. One statutory requirement is not met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. They welcome the support provided and feel that their children are very happy at the school. Students feel that teachers listen to their ideas and act upon them when appropriate to do so. They are very positive about the school, and talk freely about all the things they like.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement in mathematics, DT, RE and WRL.
- Improve the links with other schools and colleges.
- Ensure that students are given opportunities to develop their basic skills in all subjects.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Fulfil the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects

Standards are below those expected for students of this age, but are similar to those expected for students with moderate learning difficulties. Achievement overall is good, and there are no differences in achievement for boys and girls, students with English as an additional language (EAL), or those with different levels of ability.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) leads to students achieving well in these areas.
- Students make good progress against their individual personal and social targets.
- Students achieve very well in physical education (PE) because of the high quality of teaching.
- Achievement in mathematics, work related learning (WRL), religious education (RE) and design and technology (DT), whilst satisfactory, is weaker because of weaknesses in planning, coordination or teaching.

Commentary

1. The headteacher and the senior staff ensure that there is always a good climate for learning within the school. Effective teaching means that students achieve well in English, science, PSHE and ICT. In PE students achieve very well. This good achievement has taken place despite the very serious personnel issues over the past two years. Achievement overall is judged to be good because achievement in the key subjects of English, science and ICT is now good, achievement in other subjects is no less than satisfactory and fast improving, and in the lessons observed almost all the students were making good and often very good progress.
2. Students entering the school in Years 6 and 7 get off to a good start and this good progress is maintained through to the end of Year 11. Last year students achieved modules in English, science, art and graphic & material studies at 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade in the Welsh Joint Education Committee entry level examinations. Teachers are reviewing the range of accreditation offered and a wider selection will be available as from this year.
3. All students achieve well against their individual social skills targets, and these targets are achieved by most students within the predicted time-scale. Staff consider the targets in advance of the lesson and include them routinely in their planning, and this ensures that all staff pick these up during the teaching. Individual academic targets have clear criteria for success, and are evaluated each term.

4. Students who have additional social, emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress and achieve well because of the good procedures that the headteacher has introduced. Students who have additional communication difficulties or physical problems make good progress too, given the regular effective support they receive from visiting therapists. There are four students identified as having EAL on their statements. The necessary support from the LEA service has arrived and these students are making good progress with their English.
5. In English, students achieve well in communication, speaking and listening, reading and writing, because the very effective coordinator makes sure that the teaching is challenging and activities in lessons move at a good pace. In mathematics, achievement is at present just satisfactory because the activities provided are not always interesting, but should improve quickly under the leadership of a new, enthusiastic coordinator. In science, students achieve well because the teachers skilfully provide the students with stimulating practical challenges. In ICT students are very well motivated by the enjoyable lessons and so make good progress.
6. Achievement in PE is very good, and there are individual examples of excellent achievement in competitive sports. Achievement is satisfactory in DT, RE and WRL. Provision in these subjects has suffered through the setbacks of the last few years, but rapid headway is being made by the new coordinators. The school is optimistic that within the next year students' achievements will be in line with other subjects. The inspection team feels this optimism is justified.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have very good attitudes to school and their behaviour is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and attendance levels are high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attitudes to learning and good behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve well.
- The caring ethos of the school and the very good example set by the staff contribute to the very good relationships between students and between students and staff.
- The moral and social aspects of the students' development are fostered very well.
- Although satisfactory, more could be done to encourage students' spiritual and cultural development.
- The school has very good strategies for monitoring and promoting attendance.

Commentary

7. Last year, the school was categorised by the LEA as a school causing concern because behaviour management was not effective. The new headteacher has good experience and skills in working with students with a history of difficult and challenging behaviour, and she has introduced very effective systems to maintain control throughout the day, while at the same time allowing students a 'voice' in determining how they will be managed. As a consequence, they feel valued and have very good attitudes to their work. They listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and undertake tasks enthusiastically. This is particularly so when teachers plan lessons that students find

interesting and set appropriately challenging tasks that ensure that students of all levels of attainment have the opportunity to achieve well.

8. Standards of behaviour are good in the classroom and around the school, and are sometimes excellent. These high standards of attitudes and behaviour were seen, for example, in a Year 10 physical education lesson where students were highly motivated and totally involved in the activity. At break times students play harmoniously together. All students discuss class and playground rules. Students agree that there is very little bullying or other forms of harassment now and on the very few occasions this does occur it is dealt with very quickly and effectively. They are fully aware of the high standards expected and insisted upon by all staff. They know the strategies followed in the recently introduced, well-structured behaviour policy and they clearly understand their individual behaviour plans. The student support unit is making a major contribution in supporting the development of the good behaviour and self-discipline seen during the inspection. Although there have been three fixed term exclusions during the past academic year, the inspection team judged that the school's action on these occasions had been used as a necessary strategy for managing students with extremely challenging behaviour.

Ethnic background of students***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	78	3	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0

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

9. Students are increasingly encouraged to become more independent and willingly take on a range of responsibilities appropriate to their age and abilities. These responsibilities range from acting as class helpers to finding their own way to their work experience placements. The school council will be in place next term, but meanwhile students discuss subjects of interest to everyone in class debates and this helps them to take their responsibilities of living in a community seriously.
10. The caring ethos of the school and the use of the new behaviour policy help to promote spiritual development and result in students understanding right from wrong. They work well together in pairs and in small groups. They show respect for the feelings of others and enjoy the activities they engage in. For example, students demonstrated their thrill at succeeding in a Year 10 physical education lesson when they had to receive and pass a ball in different ways. Staff give a very positive lead in engendering very good relationships, for example by giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity as well as acting as very good role models. The school ensures that every student is valued. The new personal, social and health education lessons are now being formally timetabled and are beginning to give a much more structured approach in these areas.
11. Participation in school trips, including residential visits, helps to support students' social and moral development very well and staff take every opportunity to discuss any such issues with students in lessons and out in the playground. However, more could be done in assemblies to promote spiritual awareness. Students are learning about their own culture and the school ensures that multi-cultural awareness is satisfactory as students learn about, for example, Hinduism and Islam in religious education lessons and about other countries in geography lessons.
12. Attendance levels at the school have risen recently and are now very good, being well above the national average. The school has made the promotion of better attendance a priority and has developed very effective ways of working with parents to make them more aware of the adverse impact of non-attendance on students' ability to achieve well. They now rigorously follow up any unexplained absences and are

encouraging persistent non-attenders back into school. Students arrive at school punctually, except on some occasions when their transport is late.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.5	School data	4.4
National data	8.2	National data	8.2

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and the school's very good links with parents have a positive impact on what students can achieve. The curriculum is good, but there are presently insufficient links with mainstream schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' individual needs are known and understood thoroughly, and this helps all students to learn well.
- The headteacher has ensured that there are very good relationships in the classroom which help students to make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are good for students with additional difficulties and needs.
- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects inspected, but they are only satisfactory in mathematics, DT and WRL.
- Opportunities to develop students' basic skills, or to use ICT to support students, are often overlooked.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. There is a new-found enthusiasm around the school which staff closely associate with the appointment of the new headteacher, and she has ensured that systems are in place to spread around the good and often very good practice that inspectors observed. Teachers generally understand the need for plenty of engaging practical activities, which keep students on their toes. Teachers generally have good specialist understanding in their subjects, and provide stimulating experiences in their lessons. Teachers and support staff know their students and their individual needs well, and experiences and needs are normally well matched. Teachers and students relate to each other in a very pleasant, friendly and productive way. Students' views are taken into account in the lessons, and any difficulties with behaviour are quickly sorted out through the new behaviour management procedures, which all staff have adopted. As a consequence, students learn well. Teachers' planning is generally effective, especially in the way it reminds staff about students'

individual personal objectives. There is a weakness in that opportunities for improving students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are often overlooked and need to be made more explicit in both planning and practice.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 46 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	12 (27%)	21 (47%)	11 (24%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

14. English, ICT, science, DT, RE and PSHE are taught effectively throughout the school, and so students learn quickly. In PE teaching and learning are very good. Mathematics, although satisfactory, is not taught as well. This is improving as the coordinator has time planned to develop the systems for checking on teachers' practice. In other subjects, teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good for students with EAL and so they achieve well. However teachers do not yet fully exploit all the cultural backgrounds of students within lessons, which would make an additional and valuable contribution to their good learning and achievement.
15. The quality of teaching and learning for students with additional behavioural, physical or communication difficulties is good. Teachers and teaching assistants generally work well as a team with support staff taking responsibility for a group during the lesson's main activity. The team approach also ensures that each student is given the individual support that is required. Most support is good, and some of it is very good. In a small number of lessons, support was less successful when the teaching assistant was passive and did not appear to have a clear role, or did not allow the student to try for himself. Many students have literacy difficulties and some have motor co-ordination difficulties which make writing difficult. Teachers do not use ICT enough to get round these problems. Individual education plans are good and the targets are used well in lesson planning by all the teachers. Students are involved in setting their targets and they are on display in classrooms. The new SEN co-ordinator ensures that they are relevant and specific and they are reviewed regularly. Many students have effective individual support in literacy, numeracy, PSHE and WRL because of their behaviour or learning difficulties.
16. Assessment strategies are good overall and there is good use of 'Performance' levels – a special system of assessing students who have not yet reached Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Most teaching assistants keep good records of students' progress within lessons and teachers use this information in their lesson planning to ensure that all students are fully included. There are regular assessments in English and mathematics each half term, so that a good eye is kept on the development of basic skills. The headteacher is on the lookout for further improvements, and will be introducing a wider range of accreditation this year.
17. An examination of students' past work showed inspectors that there have been weaknesses in the feedback given to students on their work in most subjects. A review by the LEA a year ago came to the same conclusion. However, an analysis by the inspection team of the most recent work shows that the school has responded well to

this criticism and there is great improvement. Most teachers do well in informing students of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This may be through marking or more frequently through verbal feedback. The highest achievement is strongly celebrated in assemblies, and this motivates students to work hard.

18. In the last report teaching and learning were just satisfactory, and procedures for assessment were unsatisfactory. Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection is therefore judged to be good given the uncertainties and difficulties of the past few years. In some subjects, like science, the coordinator has been in a post for a long time, and consequently has been able to maintain the good quality of the teaching. In other subjects, like RE, the coordinator has only recently been appointed and has only had time to identify weaknesses and build a plan, but has not had enough time to sort things out. Teaching and learning in RE are judged to be good, although the gaps in the past mean that students have not achieved as well as they might.
19. All the staff recognise the contribution the new headteacher has made in improving the quality of teaching and learning. She and the governors have made a series of useful appointments of teachers who are committed to improving the school, and from day one they have thrown themselves into the challenge. The headteacher has also brought with her significant experience in managing the increasing number of students with challenging behaviour who are now coming into the school. Many of these had been excluded from other schools, and there was some consternation among parents and staff about the prospect of these admissions. However, the gentle but effective approach which the headteacher has introduced has overcome all these anxieties. During the inspection, no lesson was disrupted by any students, and it would have been hard for a casual observer to pick out students with these additional needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. Enrichment activities are good. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a curriculum that meets the needs of the students well.
- The range of books to encourage and support reading is very good.
- There are presently not enough opportunities for learning experiences in mainstream schools and colleges, or for all students to have work experience.
- The lack of suitable accommodation for art and food technology hinders students' achievement.
- The provision for students is significantly enhanced by involvement in county and area sporting events.

Commentary

20. The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection. The school has been through a difficult period when development stalled and some statutory requirements were not met. But there has been significant progress during the last term and a half and in respect of the curriculum the school now meets statutory requirements fully.

The headteacher has led this work very effectively and she has received full support from the staff. The school recognises that there is still work to be done, particularly in Years 10 and 11, in order to make the curriculum more precisely matched to the wide range of students' needs.

21. The curriculum aims to ensure that all students are fully included irrespective of gender, background or additional needs. However, this aim is undermined to some extent by the poor response by the school to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Had the school done what was required, staff would have had a fresh look at their curriculum and tried to anticipate the varying needs of their students. There is a class of the least able Year 10 and 11 students, which was set up because teachers in the past were not matching work to their ability. They are taught well by a variety of teachers and have a relevant practical curriculum. However, there is no longer any need for them to be a separate class, and there is some discussion as to whether it would be of benefit for them to re-join their peers. The inspection team feel that this is a good idea and would add to their social development, by having them taught in classes alongside their more able friends.
22. The curriculum provides effective personal, social and health education with the introduction of new schemes of work. Through their lessons, students gain a clear understanding of health, hygiene and safety issues such as which foods are healthy to eat and those which need to be eaten in moderation. Again, in PE great emphasis is placed on well-being and exercise. There is good provision for teaching sex education, which is taken in two parts with science dealing with bodily functions and the PSHE schemes covering those areas which require parental consent.
23. Students are being satisfactorily prepared for subsequent stages of education and careers education includes close liaison with Connexions. Work experience is developing and well supported by external agencies and friends of the school, although this is not yet available to all students. A lack of links with mainstream schools and colleges of further education is a significant weakness. It is not for want of trying that there is this gap, but other schools and local colleges have been very reluctant to engage with Iffley Mead and arrange successful partnerships. The range of activities being experienced within the wider community is impressive. Many students join clubs in the locality and an increasing number undertake fund raising for those less fortunate than themselves. One student swam thirty lengths at a local swimming baths in half an hour and helped raise £100 for needy children.
24. There are good opportunities for enrichment. During the lunch break up to six clubs operate two sessions, one for younger students and another for senior students. Last year there was external funding to provide transportation after evening activities but regrettably this funding has stopped. The school, however, is confident that it can resolve the situation in the near future to enable after-school activities to continue. Students have the opportunity for a residential experience, which offers far more than lying in the sun. They visit Atlantic College in South Wales where they follow a rigorous leadership course. The school has visited twice over the past year. Participation in games is given a very high priority. One boy has been selected to play for the County Under-16s rugby team and there has been great success in inter-schools Kwik Cricket tournaments. The arts are similarly well represented with, for example, visits from a professional dance company, which proved very successful. An

artist in residence has also made a significant impact with the students given very good support to develop their creative sides.

25. Teachers and teaching assistants are well qualified and skilled, especially in behaviour management. Together they ensure that some very challenging students do not disturb the learning of others. Accommodation is satisfactory. The shabby parts of the building are offset by some very high quality classroom displays, which show that teachers try very hard to provide an exciting learning environment. The accommodation for mathematics, science and ICT is good. However, some toilet accommodation is unpleasant. There is no specialist art room because the school has been forced to use this as a general classroom. The school feels that this has impacted on the quality of art that is produced. The lack of a decent food preparation room is also a barrier to achievement. The only small space available for cooking is at the rear of the library and is often used by visiting therapists. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall but they are very good for reading and delivery of the literacy strategy and for ICT, because school's purchasing focus has been on these areas.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of students is very good and supports students' learning very well. The guidance for their personal development is very good and students are becoming very well involved in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students feel very secure and cared for in school. They have very good and trusting relationships with all adults in the school.
- They achieve well because their progress is closely monitored.
- Students are introduced to school life very well.

Commentary

26. The school provides a happy environment that is conducive to learning. Close attention is paid to health and safety issues and child protection procedures are now very good. There is close liaison with other agencies and designated members of staff are fully up to date in aspects of first aid. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and students are very well supervised at break times and at lunchtimes. Students' healthy and safe living is now being promoted in a much more formal and structured way through the personal, social and health education lessons that are being developed. The vast majority of parents confirm that their children love coming to school.
27. The very good relationships that students have with all adults ensure that teachers and support staff know the students very well and provide them with a high level of pastoral support. Students are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. Staff are sensitive to individual needs and are thus able to provide very good support and guidance. Assessment procedures are good overall, and they are very good for supporting the personal development of the students. There is very good practice in the identification and monitoring of their personal development and progress against targets. Students are

well informed of their personal targets, which are discussed with teachers and are communicated to parents. Induction procedures for students newly arrived at the school are very good. A range of therapists visit school regularly. All students who need speech and language therapy or occupational therapy have sessions either with a therapist or an assistant. Staff in the student support unit record student incidents and patterns can be established and followed up. This works very well.

28. Consultation with students is good. A formal school council is to be introduced in January. The careers guidance provided to the older students is good through, for example, the local Connexions service, but there are no opportunities for further education in local colleges.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a very good partnership with parents. Links with the local community are good. Links with other schools and colleges and outreach arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in very high regard and have confidence in the work of the headteacher and staff.
- There are very good procedures to deal with any concerns or complaints.
- Communication with parents is good.
- Links with other schools and colleges and outreach arrangements are insufficient.

Commentary

29. Parents are delighted with the achievement and standards of the school. These views were amply demonstrated by the very positive views expressed in the parents' questionnaires. They feel it is well led and managed and they feel very comfortable about approaching the school with any questions, problems or complaints. Parents are also pleased with the range of support services to help their children. They feel that their children are encouraged to be mature and responsible and they appreciate the good range of activities offered. They also say that their children are very happy at the school.
30. Parents are provided with a good level of information about the school and their child's progress and the very close partnership between parents and teachers ensures concerns and queries can be quickly addressed. Although a small minority of parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of some of the students the inspection team judgement does not support these views. There are some students with very challenging behaviour at the school, but the students spoken to during the inspection confirm that bullying rarely occurs now. Any instances of inappropriate behaviour, if and when they occur, are now dealt with quickly and effectively through the very good behaviour policy.
31. Teachers and parents work together, particularly during the annual reviews, to help students to improve, for example, their behaviour and attitudes towards their learning.

The end of year progress reports are well detailed and provide parents with appropriate levels of information about what their children know and can do. There are home/school diaries, which can be used as a two-way communication device between teachers and parents. The close partnership between the school and parents is well demonstrated by the recent improvement in attendance levels. There are regular parents' consultation evenings and coffee mornings, and these sessions are being used to provide support for parents in areas such as ICT.

32. Parents' views are regularly sought by the headteacher. Questionnaires have been sent out regarding parents' ideas on, for example, the 'vision' for the school and the running of a minibus. Parents are confident that their views are listened to and acted upon when appropriate.
33. The good links with the community are used to the benefit of the students. Many visitors come in to the school, such as the community police officer, theatre companies and the Oxford Association for Young People. The local community is used for many visits to such places as museums, a car plant and an environmental area. The wider community is also well used as an educational resource. For example, the students visit Sulgrave Manor and have two residential visits to Wales each year.
34. Links with other schools and colleges are unsatisfactory. Despite the school's best efforts there are no formal mechanisms for transferring students back into mainstream schools and there are no students at present from the school attending further education courses at local colleges. Due mainly to budgeting constraints there are informal links rather than a planned programme for sharing the expertise of staff with other schools in the area although special needs coordinators from other schools come in regularly and use the school as a language resource base. Students from other schools are readily accepted and are soon made to feel welcome and settled, but no students have recently been transferred from the school back into mainstream schools. Older students, however, gain significant benefits from work experience opportunities, and the Connexions advisor is now in school every week conducting interviews and organising vocational workshops.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the leadership and management of other key staff are good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are not fully met because the school has not yet complied with all the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

The school has been beset by serious difficulties, with staff and governing body changes, over the past few years, but it is rapidly improving under the leadership of the new headteacher.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who motivates both staff and students.
- The temporary senior managers support the headteacher's innovations well.
- Management is already effective overall with inexperienced managers rapidly gaining the necessary skills.
- Governors are providing satisfactory support but need to question and challenge professional and financial matters more thoroughly.

Commentary

35. The inspection team recognises how enormous the task was, and still remains, of reviving the school and bringing it up to full effectiveness. It has meant that not everything could be improved at once. However, the team fully approves the plan of recovery, which is already bearing fruit, especially in terms of students' achievement. The new headteacher has been very successful in getting the school back on track. In doing so she has gained the confidence and loyalty of the staff, students, parents and governors, and fully restored staff morale; the school is now operating effectively in most areas. This has been achieved in a remarkably short period, and without a permanent senior management team yet in place.
36. New effective leadership of special educational needs this year has meant that all statementing and review procedures meet statutory requirements, and individual education plans have been improved and are being used. However, there is still a statutory breach: the governors did not meet the deadline for their response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and have interpreted this as making the school physically accessible, instead of including how the curriculum might be adapted for a variety of needs.
37. The temporary senior management team supports the headteacher well. It has been closely involved in the improvement planning and implementation, and provides valuable moral and professional support to the headteacher. Many of the subject leaders are very new to their positions and have yet to develop full subject expertise but they have fully adopted the enthusiasm, determination and commitment of the leadership at the top of the school. Most of the subject leaders interviewed showed good leadership, with vision and drive to raise standards. The monitoring of students' work is now good in most subjects.
38. The school is managed well, and the inspection team found the day-to-day running of the school smoothly organised. There are effective systems in place for managing the behaviour of students who can occasionally be difficult and hard to reach. The school has a good idea of not only its strengths but more importantly where the gaps are. The programme for development is comprehensive and includes all the areas for development identified by the inspection team. In quite a few areas, it is still too early in the timescale for the plans to have come into full effect. The management and planning throughout the school reflects the organisational strength and determination of the headteacher and her temporary leadership team. The weaknesses in management are mostly due to unfamiliarity or inexperience on the part of staff who are new to the school and sometimes new to teaching.
39. The governors are also on the road to recovery. The new chair is committed to doing whatever he can to make the school a success and in this he is joined by the other governors, who are gaining a clearer idea of where the school is going. In addition to the changes forced upon them, their attention was diverted away from the internal difficulties of the school by the LEA's proposals for school reorganisation, which could have meant the closure of Iffley Mead. The threat has now receded but it has meant that governors still have much to do to put in place a strong corporate culture of challenge and review. The governance of the school is judged satisfactory in spite of the breach of a statutory requirement. This is because the breach is not affecting outcomes for students.
40. The finances are now satisfactorily managed. The difficulties of the last two years resulted in larger than usual amounts carried forward in the last financial year. These amounts arose out of a significant overspend in the supply teaching budget. The new chair of governors has taken rapid action to restore the situation and this year should see the overspend significantly reduced, and no longer a cause for concern. Budget monitoring, though satisfactory, needs to be sharpened so that any future innovations can be accurately judged to see if they give value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	960,320
Total expenditure	1,098,641
Expenditure per student	12,207

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	81,621
Balance carried forward to the next	-56,700

WORK RELATED LEARNING

The provision for work related learning is satisfactory; statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are very committed to providing programmes relevant to the world of work.
- Staff enjoy very good relationships with the students.
- Students are involved increasingly in realistic self-evaluation.
- Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 due to a good range of offsite visits, activities and work experience.
- Achievement is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 due to a lack of suitable resources.
- There are insufficient college links and longer term work placements.
- Work experience is not provided for all students.
- Teaching is not monitored sufficiently.

Commentary

41. Provision is in an early stage of development, with a newly appointed co-ordinator who has yet to develop specialist knowledge of the area. However, there are good plans and a good start has been made on meeting the areas of weakness, for example, in searching for appropriate materials for students in Years 7 to 9 and for work experience placements for some older students. There will be accreditation for Year 11 students this year.
42. There are good contacts made with a range of external agencies and Connexions play a collaborative role in delivering the WRL. A retired headteacher is the Connexions advisor and she attends all transitional reviews from Years 9 and 11 and attends any difficult reviews at Year 10. Group interviews have been completed with Year 9 and individual sessions are to begin shortly. Staff are very supportive of the Connexions involvement. Careers education and students' preparation for working life are to be accredited by the National Open College Award at Level 1 and 2.
43. Staff have very good relationships with students and know them well. This is particularly useful when students come to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses, where staff can encourage any students who lack confidence or whose self-esteem is low. Younger students typically have unrealistic work aspirations, but sensitive teaching allows them to match their abilities to their widening knowledge of work.
44. Good relationships have been established with some local companies for work experience, and it is chosen to suit students' interests and abilities. There are visits to local companies such as a supermarket and a car factory to see the variety of jobs on

offer and to introduce students to a real working environment. Visitors also come into school to talk about their jobs. The field study centre, used by Year 10 and 11 students for one afternoon a week, makes a very good contribution to their understanding of jobs in the countryside. It provides a well organised and supervised range of classroom and outdoor activities such as animal husbandry, planting and coppicing trees, which the students are so enthusiastic about that they do not mind the mud. There is good attention to health and safety.

45. A new scheme of work based on a mini-enterprise is appropriate. While a small number of students follow college courses, there are no courses leading to vocational qualifications in local colleges this year. This is unsatisfactory. There is no follow-up from the Countryside Stewardship course that could lead to employment. The more able students have work experience, and this is successful so that the same employers offer placements each year. However not all students have this opportunity, and there is a need for more sheltered placements for the less able.
46. The teaching is satisfactory overall. However, some lessons are not well paced and do not offer enough of a variety of activities. For younger students this means that they find it difficult to maintain concentration. The coordinator has not yet put into place a programme for monitoring the teaching where weaknesses like these could be picked up and remedied. Leadership and management of WRL are satisfactory and will improve once the coordinator has had time to implement her action plan.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The school teaches French, but this was not inspected. English was inspected in full.

ENGLISH

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good.
- Students' interest and attitudes are very good and so they make good progress.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership.
- Assessment and its use in planning are good.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to promote learning.
- The teaching of literacy through other subjects is satisfactory but not always routine.

Commentary

47. Students of all ages achieve well in English. Achievement in literacy skills for students with greater difficulties is good because of teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and the very special needs of the students. The small number of students in Year 6 get off to a good start in their literacy skills, working alongside the lower attaining Year 7 students. By Year 9 all students are making good progress. Year 9 students who are more capable are ready to move into accredited schemes and the remainder are able to follow appropriate accreditation by the time they begin Year 10. Students whose home language is not English make good progress now that the LEA has provided the necessary support to the school.
48. Students achieve well in reading. In Year 7, the focus is on short passages which can be read quickly by most. In one lesson, a very good reading by the teacher of the fable "The dog and the bone" created the interest. Students were quick to see the hidden meaning of the reflection of the dog holding the bone firmly in his jaws and laughed when he leapt into the water to get the second bone. They were also able to give some thought as to why the dog had jumped into the stream and felt he was greedy, selfish and aggressive. In Year 11, students were reading the Big Book of Macbeth and assessing his character. One student firmly said she thought "He's a nasty piece of work". The higher achievers were able to compare and contrast the characters of Macbeth and Andy of East Enders and were similarly forthright with their opinions. The daily session of guided reading is a great help to the students. Often it covers the language that will be required in the following lessons so that students go into the lessons already understanding some of the difficult technical terms.

49. Students generally achieve well in writing. However in one or two cases, written work may be characterised by weak letter formation and poor spelling and ICT support is not given where it could be. For example, a Year 11 boy was able to understand what he had read and heard in the lesson but found it difficult to write up his views and feelings. This would have been easier had he been given the use of a laptop to aid his presentation and spelling.
50. Students achieve well in speaking and listening. They are happy to put forward their views, and answer questions freely. This is because they know that teachers value their opinions and because there are very good relationships in the classroom which gives students self-assurance and confidence. The co-ordinator recognises the need to concentrate on speaking and listening with the younger year groups and this will be the next focus for the subject. Some of the lessons observed with the older year groups had examples of students answering in complete sentences and showing some of the early skills of debate. Students are sufficiently confident to ask for clarification if they are uncertain about the set task.
51. Both teaching and learning are good overall and there are times when they can be very good. In the best lessons the activities move along at a speed which suits the needs of the students. Students at every level are challenged in their own way. The planning details how the support staff are to be used and this makes for very high quality, challenging work and ensures that all students are fully involved all the way through. Teachers begin with a crisp introduction, which sets out the expectations and gets students involved in the tasks. The plenary sessions at the end are of high quality. Teachers show confidence in delivering good quality literacy experiences across the school. They are mindful of individual targets in their planning and meet the needs of the students very well. The management of challenging behaviour is of high quality and is well planned in advance. There were no incidents that disrupted the learning of others during the inspection. In a lively Year 7 class at the end of a tiring day, the teaching team struggled to keep students focused on their learning. One student found it difficult to work alongside his peers and the teacher offered him some 'time out', which he accepted and left with a teaching assistant. Within four minutes he was able to rejoin the lesson without further incident.
52. Leadership of the subject is very good. The coordinator is very committed and enthusiastic and determined to improve the opportunities for high achievement. Good assessment strategies yield precise information for staff to use to ensure that they teach to every student's strengths and needs. Monitoring of teaching and learning in English across the school has started with an analysis of lesson plans and classroom observation. The co-ordinator recognises the importance of this and is making it a priority in her planning. Management of the subject is very good. A large amount of money has been spent on getting reading resources to a very good standard. There will now be a planned focus on resources for speaking and listening. The co-ordinator has created a room to inspire would-be writers and when entering the students are aroused by the creative atmosphere and show a real desire to work. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection, when the provision was satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, and not all teachers remember to give students opportunities to develop their basic literacy in other subjects. However, there are examples of good practice. For example, in a PSHE lesson taught in the ICT suite the teacher encouraged students to use their reading skills to follow instructions in the program to complete the learning task. Other examples were seen in science where subject specific vocabulary was made understandable using everyday words. So 'natural' was explained as 'it comes from the earth'. Similarly, in mathematics, subject specific language such as 'cuboid', 'cube' and 'tapers' was introduced. A student explained the latter as "it goes to a point". This approach means that students freely use quite rare technical terms like 'vertex' with accuracy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new co-ordinator has a clear vision and is working hard to improve the subject.
- Students' application and attitudes are good.
- The National Numeracy Strategy has made an impact on lesson planning but in a minority of lessons, teaching is dull and assessment is weak.
- Teachers do not always ensure that students progress on to new work from year to year.
- Monitoring of teaching does not always lead to improvements in practice.
- The use of numeracy across the curriculum is an area for development.

Commentary

54. The co-ordinator has been in post for only this term but has clear plans and has monitored the teaching of mathematics across the school. She has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of her subject area, and her leadership and management are good. Mathematics is taught by form tutors and some of these are not subject specialists, but the coordinator has made a good start by ensuring that at least teachers' planning is effective.
55. Students work well in mathematics lessons. They collaborate well and most can work independently once shown what to do. They ask questions and enjoy being involved in board work, especially if it is an interactive whiteboard. Students concentrate well but really come to life in practical activities or when ICT is used to further understanding, rather than learning a mathematical technique.
56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with teachers being guided by the good planning. All staff follow the nationally recommended three-part lesson structure and this works well, giving a clear focus to the lessons and allowing teachers to check on how well students are learning. In the best lessons, ICT is used to good effect and the students may be reluctant to leave at the end. In a lesson for the least able students in Year 10, practical activities brought mathematics to life. The teacher used cards with clues written on them to have a quiz about three-dimensional shapes, and students had to guess the shape of a model that they could not see, but the rest of

the class could. In some lessons, especially for younger students, the pace is pedestrian and there is too much emphasis on drills and worksheets. Assessment is satisfactory. It is sometimes not recorded frequently enough, or dated, to show the small steps in students' progress.

57. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Some students will gain a Certificate of Achievement at the end of Year 11 due to the good teaching this year in Years 10 and 11 compensating for staffing problems over the last two or three years. A scrutiny of students' books shows that there has been weak planning, which has not ensured that students make progress from year to year. The new co-ordinator has recognised this and is working to improve the situation. Although she has been monitoring other teachers' mathematics lessons, there are some instances where recommendations have not been put into practice. Improvement since the last inspection is judged to be satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. During the inspection very few examples were seen of where numeracy is made explicit in other subjects or where links are made across subjects. Exceptions were in a Year 7 geography lesson using coordinates, and measuring the strength of fibres using weights in a science lesson. This is a weakness and opportunities to use numeracy to support learning in other subjects are missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of practical experimental and investigative work.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good overall.
- The provision is enhanced by the good accommodation and resources.
- Teaching and learning in a few lessons are less successful because of gaps in teachers' knowledge of the subject.

Commentary

59. Students come into the school with relatively little prior understanding of science. Teachers work proficiently to increase students' knowledge, understanding and skills from this low start by concentrating on 'hands-on' activities, especially those involving practical experiments and investigations. This strategy engages the students, and they become increasingly capable of understanding scientific terms and ideas. Work in students' books shows good coverage of all aspects.
60. Overall students in Years 6 to 9 achieve well in all aspects of science. Teachers are enthusiastic and arrange exciting practical challenges for the students which encourage them to explore scientific theories. For example, in a very good lesson, the teacher told a group of Year 9 students that they had to design and build a model boat, which could float and carry a load, from a single sheet of tin foil. This suggestion was greeted with disbelief by the students. They said it would sink, and asked the

teacher if she had been watching Blue Peter. The teacher got the class to consider what qualities the boat would need to have, and gradually introduced the students to the concept of balancing the forces. Other topics that students of this age research include: electricity, magnetism, the solar system, friction, and the reactivity of metals. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, cover a wide range of topics and produce well-presented coursework. Topics recently covered include sports science, ballistics, and ecology. Tests at the end of modules provide evidence of good progress. Last year 11 out of 11 students achieved an entry level certificate in science.

61. Teaching and learning are good overall. The work set is appropriate for the full ability range and teachers intervene well during experiments to check that students have a true understanding or to give specific teaching points. The teachers and support assistants make effective use of questions and prompts to encourage students to extend their learning. Well-managed discussions at the end of the lesson allow staff to check students' understanding and provide opportunities for them to use their newly acquired knowledge. In one or two lessons, when science is being taught by non-specialist teachers, the teaching and learning are less effective. The teacher misses opportunities for students to predict what will happen in advance of the investigation and has gaps in knowledge and cannot give students the full information they require.
62. Leadership and management of science are good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the resources and opportunities for students of all abilities to make good progress. The coordinator has established an enterprising link with the school next door and both schools share their resources to mutual benefit. He supports teaching and learning by evaluating students' work and teachers' planning, and observing the teaching of science. There is good use of ICT for constructing a results table, or for research. Links with literacy are effective, and scientific language is systematically taught in lessons. While teachers include a few opportunities for developing numeracy skills, these opportunities are not in the planning and rely too heavily on teachers making on the spot decisions. This means that often they are missed. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There is now a good purpose-built science room and regular procedures for monitoring and evaluating teachers' and students' work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in ICT lessons is good and as a result, students achieve well.
- Students are very well motivated, and are eager to make progress.
- Resources for ICT are very good and still developing.
- Leadership is good, although the coordinator is not yet monitoring the teaching of cross-curricular ICT.
- ICT is not always being used to help students compensate for their literacy difficulties, or to support other subject areas.

Commentary

63. All students have ICT lessons taught by the co-ordinator in the ICT suite. This means that all have access to top quality equipment and a specialist teacher. Lessons are well structured and there is a range of age-appropriate activities that cover the different aspects of ICT. All students have experience of using ICT for control and modelling as well as word processing, graphics and using the Internet for research. Record keeping is good. The teacher and support staff have good subject knowledge and very good relationships with the students.
64. Students achieve well in lessons, and occasionally very well. This is due to the good teaching and their very good attitudes. They enjoy their lessons, are persistent and keen to progress. Many attend a lunchtime club three times a week, and many are on track to get the Certificate of Achievement in ICT this year.
65. Resources for ICT have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. The school has a pleasant ICT suite, computers in each classroom and a number of interactive whiteboards in classrooms. When the whiteboards are used they result in dynamic lessons that grab the students' attention. This happened, for example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on 3D shapes, with the students sorting and moving the shapes into sets on the virtual board. There is a wide range of well-chosen software, for example students are introduced to databases by using a simple program before they move on to the standard program.
66. The new co-ordinator has made a good start. The scheme of work is interesting, varied, suits the students and leads to examinations. There are evening sessions to introduce parents and students to new software and equipment. The ICT co-ordinator has a clear vision and is making an impact on the teaching of ICT across the curriculum, but it is early days. There are plans for monitoring ICT teaching across the curriculum, but this has still to be done.
67. Most students have literacy difficulties and some have motor co-ordination difficulties. The possibilities have not been explored to use word processors, prediction and screen readers to enable students to present their ideas, and to prepare them for how technology might help them once they have left school. This is an area for development. At the previous inspection it was satisfactory, and improvement since then has been good.

ICT across the curriculum

68. ICT is presently not being written into all other subjects' planning and not all subject co-ordinators are aware of how ICT can enhance their subject. It is used well in some mathematics and science lessons and is used in PSHE, RE and geography, but it is under-used in English and DT.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Work was sampled in geography and history.

69. Two lessons of **geography** were seen: one of these was judged to be good and the other unsatisfactory. During the inspection only students in Years 7 and 8 had geography lessons; Year 9 students have geography for one term later in the year. In the good lesson, students in Year 7 learned how a developing country is changing

through tourism. Achievement was good as a result of work being matched to students' ability and good use of resources. The class was divided into ability groups. The computer was used to find out more information and there was a variety of artefacts and books as well as a video to engage students.

70. In another lesson in Year 7 on settlements, achievement was unsatisfactory. This was because the class was divided unnecessarily for the main activity, leading to less able students missing out on an important geographical skill, using co-ordinates. Instead they had poor resources and their task, of recognising types and origins of settlements, was unsuitable and lacked relevance. Some parts of the scheme of work do not relate to the ability and interests of the students.
71. One lesson was seen in **history** for Year 9 students. This was a very good lesson, which examined the idea of 'evidence' and related this to the Fire of London. The teacher had a very good grasp of her subject, and her planning was detailed and thorough. The students enjoyed investigating maps and photographs and then discussing why the fire spread so quickly. Very good links were made in this lesson to literacy by the teacher reinforcing key words like 'evacuate' and by the challenging written work that was demanded. At the end of the lesson a very effective plenary session showed that the students had made very good progress in determining the nature of historical evidence. Displays around the school show really good work by students about the Tudors.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education (RE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students now achieve satisfactorily, following a period when there was a gap in the provision.
- The recently appointed coordinator has made a good start in bringing the subject up to the mark.
- Teaching and learning in lessons are now good, but opportunities to develop students' basic skills are sometimes missed.

Commentary

72. Up until summer 2004, there was a gap in the provision for RE and an analysis of students' work confirms that coverage has been incomplete. However, a new and enthusiastic coordinator has been appointed recently and, although not a specialist, he has made a good start in identifying weaknesses and in producing a plan that will establish priority areas for action. He is updating his own skills and has visited other schools to see good practice and to learn from more experienced practitioners.
73. In RE lessons, the inspection team saw some good teaching and learning and some that was satisfactory. Although overall teaching and learning are now judged to be good, students' achievement is judged to be satisfactory because of the significant gaps in learning up until now. However, achievement is beginning to improve across all year groups. Teachers' planning shows that they understand students' learning needs well and the needs of the subject. Teachers adapt their lessons well to allow students to learn about difficult concepts.

74. By Year 9, students are gaining an understanding of the purpose of festivals and symbols associated with Christianity and other religions. They are beginning to develop their understanding about the different perspectives in religion and the broader moral questions, such as the issues of right and wrong. The teachers successfully encourage students to debate and discuss these issues from a factual as well as spiritual perspective. By Year 11, students examine the lives of key religious figures, and explore topics that lead them to extend their thinking and question their own beliefs such as 'Stewardship of the world' and 'Equality of Humankind'. Visits and visitors further support students' learning, and this term students have visited the local church and a mosque. The vicar of the local church is a governor and visits the school to help celebrate Christian festivals. The teachers also take the opportunity to find out about the Muslim way of life from the many Muslim students within the school.
75. There are satisfactory though developing links between RE and personal and social education, and with assemblies. At the moment these links primarily encourage reflection and thoughtfulness about others. Students are assisted in relating what they learn to their own lives and to celebrate all forms of success. In their lessons, teachers incorporate opportunities for students to develop their ICT and literacy skills, but they do not do this for numeracy.
76. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management of the subject, which will improve as his own specialist knowledge improves and as the action plan is implemented in full. The curriculum has been completely reviewed and is based on the locally agreed syllabus adapted to meet the needs of all students. Although a full audit has not yet taken place, there is a satisfactory range of resources including a range of artefacts related to different religions to support the programmes of work. Given the barriers facing the school over the last two years, improvement in the subject has been satisfactory since the previous inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music was sampled. Art and design was not inspected. DT and PE were inspected in full.

77. One lesson was seen in **music**. This was a good lesson on singing and playing non-pitched percussion instruments for lower ability Year 10 students taught by a non-specialist teacher. The planning was very detailed, with objectives for each student laid out clearly. Activities moved at a good pace, and the teacher neatly included video clips to enliven the work. The music chosen grabbed the attention of the students, like a rhythmic chant called 'A boom-chicka-boom' which was a great hit with everybody. Students did well in repeating the chant using different dynamics, like loud/soft, and fast/slow. They also joined in, choosing their instruments to accompany 'Bugsy Malone'. Students made good progress in tapping the pulse.

Physical Education

The provision for physical education (PE) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.

- Leadership of the subject and the promotion of exercise are very good.
- Many students achieve very well in sport and there is some excellent individual achievement.
- Dance is under-developed in the curriculum.

Commentary

78. Achievement in PE is very good across the school and for some individuals it is excellent. The school makes a conscious decision to include sports that are enjoyed by students from different cultural backgrounds, such as cricket and hockey. The students' achievement is reflected in their prowess in competitions against other schools. Kwik Cricket is a good example where the 'A' team gained first place and the 'B' team were runners-up in games against four other schools. Excellent individual successes in a range of activities include a boy being selected to play rugby for Oxfordshire schools and a girl swimming 3000 metres. The school sports day is a fun event but the competition is serious. The essence of the games programme is enjoyment and this was evident in all of the lessons seen. All games are characterised by a sense of team spirit and fair play.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is very good across the school with students experiencing a wide range of games, gymnastics, athletics, swimming and dance. Staff know the students well and are able to get the best out of them. They exercise good control within lessons and manage behaviour very well. The coaching of games is of high quality and students are taught a range of basketball skills, including push and bounce passing and finding space when attacking. In hockey lessons, students are taught how to carry the stick correctly and the difficult skill of how and when to turn it when dribbling. Students wore shin pads and gum shields to protect against injury. Teachers do well to make sure that students understand the link between PE lessons and what they have learned in the PSHE topic on hygiene and keeping healthy. All lessons begin with very good warm-up strategies, and end with gentle warming-down and slow deep breathing.
80. Leadership and general management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator is very well organised and keeps meticulous records of students' performances in a wide range of activities. The schemes of work are based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study but the minimal coverage of a dance element especially for boys is a weakness, and this has been recognised. Resources are good and well managed.
81. Since the last inspection when achievement was only satisfactory, there has been very good improvement. The school hall remains the main accommodation for indoor activities and although it is a thoroughfare, staff and students now use alternative routes to avoid unnecessary disruption. The setting of tables for lunch at the end of period 3 does not conflict with teaching and for lessons taken immediately following lunch the co-ordinator and catering staff make strenuous efforts to ensure its cleanliness. The school has fully addressed the criticism in the last inspection that assessment was inconsistent and not used for all students.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology (DT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Food technology is not sufficiently covered and this hinders students' achievement.
- Teachers have good expectations of students and this assists their learning.
- Students make good progress in the lessons provided, work hard and find them fun.
- Too few opportunities are provided for students to develop skills in numeracy and ICT.

Commentary

82. The school no longer has the use of a food technology room, and there are insufficient resources in the classrooms to cover this aspect. This limits the opportunities for students to make good progress in this element of the subject, and achievement overall is therefore no better than satisfactory. However, the school does well in what it provides for students, especially in terms of work with resistant materials. Photographic records and teachers' planning show a good range of well-presented designs for their completed and ongoing projects. Year 11 students work towards appropriate accreditation - entry level certificates in materials and graphical studies.
83. Within the limited curriculum on offer, teaching and learning are good. Teachers, whether specialist or non-specialist, have good expectations of what can be achieved and these are reflected in the high quality products that they turn out. These include attractive heart-shaped bookshelves, knife blocks, and bedside cabinets. Many activities are and in lessons observed there was a relaxed but workmanlike atmosphere, in which students worked well, both independently and in cooperation with each other. Teachers have established effective and clear routines and rules for safe working practices in classrooms and the workshop. Students are encouraged to judge their work and that of others and to suggest what could be improved.
84. Students enjoy their DT lessons and they learn well. During the inspection, Year 7 students were hard at work designing their own Christmas stocking, and learning new sewing techniques. Year 9 students were engrossed in the traditional games they were making like chess, wooden mazes, or a buzzer game. They were becoming increasingly proficient in using hand tools, and the more confident were using machinery like a belt sander.
85. Teachers do well in assisting students to improve their literacy through, for example, the learning and writing of key words and lists of materials. They also have plenty of chances to improve their skills in speaking and listening. They listen closely to their teacher's instructions and respond well to the questions which teachers use both during the lesson and in the plenary at the end. Numeracy is not systematically covered in the subject, although some informal mathematical activities take place. This is a gap in the planning. ICT is not sufficiently used to research, describe and present the design aspects of the projects.
86. Given the gaps in the provision, leadership and management are judged to be satisfactory. The coordinator is very experienced and knows what needs to be done, and there is an action plan to remedy most of the weaknesses. Accommodation and resources are also judged to be no better than satisfactory. There are good resources provided for resistant materials in the specialist workshop and around the school, but

resources for food technology are not sufficient within the classrooms. The overall quality of the provision has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision for PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Teaching and learning are good and so students achieve well.
- Schemes for rewarding good behaviour work very well.
- Schemes of work require some further development.

Commentary

87. Students coming into the school at Years 6 and 7 develop their ability to work co-operatively with their peers and those who have challenging behaviour are well managed by teaching staff. There are good examples of students listening and turn-taking in subjects such as PE and the special sessions planned by the occupational therapist. In many lessons students show their appreciation of the achievement of their peers. This was a particular strength in lessons designed to build confidence in those with greatest need.
88. The current schemes of work are a recent introduction. Although satisfactory, they need to be further broadened and extended. The co-ordinator has worked hard to get the subject moving after recent difficulties and although there is little in the way of students' work to scrutinize, the achievement and progress seen in lessons and about the school are good. Already there are clear indications that lessons based on personal hygiene are being practised in PE, with students being required to shower. During the development of the schemes of work, parents' views have been sought on drugs and sex education. As a result, the intention to deliver part of sex education in science lessons is good and the area of the subject that requires parental consent taught within PSHE is very appropriate. Outside support agencies speak highly of the excellent liaison and they feel very welcome at the school. This was very evident in a lesson taken by the speech and language therapist.
89. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good. In a Year 9 lesson the concentration was on healthy living and the importance of hygiene. This lesson was delivered in the ICT suite using the software 'Visit to Planet Clean'. Students were able to use the computer to stroke a virtual dog and following that to wash their hands before doing anything else. This exercise gave a number of similar hygiene prompts and students scored well and felt successful. Teachers followed this by introducing students to a wide range of soaps, shampoos and body fresheners, making the point that one does not need to buy the most expensive to get the best results. In another lesson with Year 11 students the theme was leisure. All students were involved and gave a range of things that they did in their leisure. It was interesting that there was a good mixture of games and exercise and reading. The amount of television viewing was very well down their lists of priorities. This lesson was full of good quality speaking and listening with the teacher asking probing questions about what enjoyment and satisfaction their leisure time gave them. The relationships were excellent between students and students and teachers. It was revealing during this lesson to hear of the number

of students who were members of clubs outside of school, which included the local cycle speedway team and swimming club.

90. The lunch-time activities run during the first and second lunch sittings and are popular. The leisure use of computers is an attraction for students and well used. There are also good opportunities offered via the Countryside Stewardship Course, where students experience rural life and their work can be evaluated through the Open College Network at entry level. This contributes well to students' experience of work where they learn how to coppice and sheep dipping. School assemblies offer very good opportunities for celebrating success. The star system works very well and those receiving their awards at a weekly assembly strive throughout the week to be a star student.
91. The leadership and management are good with the co-ordinator anxious to broaden the range of the subject. The subject has started the year well and the very positive ethos evident in and around the school is testimony of the success of this important element of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. This follows a difficult period in the life of the school, which is now moving positively forward again.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). In a special school such as this standards achieved are judged against individual targets and not national standards.

