

INSPECTION REPORT

HORBURY SCHOOL

Horbury

LEA area: West Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 108280

Headteacher: Mrs D Duncan

Lead inspector: Mr A Henderson

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 3 March 2005

Inspection number: 273293

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1095

School address: Wakefield Road
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West Yorkshire
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Telephone number: 01924 303065
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mr R Dennett LLB
governors:

Date of previous November 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Horbury School is a community comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16, situated to the western fringe of Wakefield in central Yorkshire. It is average in size; at present there are 1095 pupils on roll with more boys than girls, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils are mostly drawn from the immediate suburban locality, with around one third from urban wards towards the centre of the city of Wakefield. The school serves a diverse area which includes areas both of socio-economic affluence and disadvantage. Attainment on entry is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is lower than average. The vast majority of pupils are indigenous white, with the remainder representing a wide range of other backgrounds including four asylum seekers. There are five pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Since the last inspection, the school has gained specialist language college status. In addition to Sportsmark, Investors in People, and a School Curriculum Award, the school has gained recognition for its positive progress with successive Schools Achievement Awards in 2001, 2002, and 2003. A major capital building programme to improve the school's ageing accommodation is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2005.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Mathematics
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English
33187	P Barker	Team inspector	Science
27803	J Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
23418	R Yates	Team inspector	Art and design
10308	J Paddick	Team inspector	Design and technology Work related learning
32340	P McKay	Team inspector	Geography
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	History Physical education
23709	A Powell	Team inspector	Modern languages English as an additional language
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education
32229	M Comer	Team inspector	Citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a successful and improving school that is providing a good education for its pupils. Standards are rising and pupils are achieving well in response to good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The school is providing good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching and effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well as they move through the school.
- Relationships are a strength of the school; the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils support their progress well.
- Provision is very good in geography, history, and modern foreign languages, where both teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards in mathematics and science, although improved, are still not high enough.
- Improvements in the curriculum, particularly for pupils aged 14-16, and strong links with the local community enhance learning and provide good opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- Despite improvements, accommodation and resources remain unsatisfactory overall, with particular weaknesses in design technology.
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- In Years 7 to 9, standards in design technology require improvement.
- The monitoring of the work of the school, and the quality of teaching and learning in departments, are inconsistent.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen, with GCSE results improving at a faster rate than the national picture. The response to the key issues from 1999 has been generally good, although improvements to accommodation are not yet fully resolved, and statutory weaknesses in the prospectus and provision for collective worship remain.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	C	C	B	B

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

Currently, the overall achievement of pupils in the school is good. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2004 were average, but below those of similar schools, reflecting some underachievement. GCSE examination results in 2004 were above average both nationally and for similar schools, representing good achievement. Standards seen in the inspection are average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11; they are higher than recent results reflecting action taken to tackle underachievement and a more stable staffing situation. In Year 9, standards are well above average in geography. Elsewhere, standards are average or better, apart from design technology, music, and citizenship, where they are below average. Overall, pupils' achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory. In Year 11, progress quickens and standards improve and are well above average in art, ICT, geography, history, and graphics. They are average or better in all other subjects, apart from

citizenship where standards are below average at this point. Overall, pupils' achievement by Year 11 is good. Throughout Years 7 to 11, boys and girls, including those with special educational needs (SEN) or particular talents and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL), are achieving well, and there are no significant differences in their progress.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils' attitudes to school are positive, and are reflected in the above average attendance rates. The behaviour of most pupils is good, although some are less considerate, and the good quality of relationships throughout the school is a significant strength.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall; they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11; they are responsible for the good achievement and improving standards. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school in geography, history, and modern foreign languages; elsewhere they are good apart from mathematics, science, design technology and religious education, where they are weaker but satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with SEN and EAL is good, and enables them to make the same good progress as other pupils. The curriculum is good and is developing well. There is a good variety of academic and work-related courses matched well to pupils' aspirations and capabilities, together with a good range of extra-curricular opportunities to extend their learning. The school supports pupils' personal development well through its programme of help and guidance. The strong relationship with the local community together with good links with other schools benefit the learning experiences of pupils across the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good interim leadership and together set a clear and positive direction for the school's improvement. Support from the senior leadership team is good; rigorous action is being taken to tackle weaknesses and raise standards, with good support from the LEA. Management is satisfactory overall and ensures that the school is well ordered, calm and purposeful. Subject leadership and management are of the highest order in modern foreign languages and geography. However, greater consistency is needed in ensuring that systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are more effective; for example, checking on the quality of teaching and learning by subject heads is uneven at present as is the implementation of whole school policies such as those relating to literacy, ICT, or health and safety. Governors are keen for the school to succeed, and do a satisfactory job overall, but the school does not meet requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship, and there are omissions in the information provided for parents.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school values its partnership with parents and is seeking to involve them more in supporting their children's learning. Both parents and pupils are supportive of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with arrangements for helping their children to settle in, and the way the school encourages them to become mature and responsible. Parents feel teaching is good, and that pupils are expected to work hard, and they are confident about the good progress their children make. Pupils feel safe and like the school, and they also feel they are taught well and expected to work hard. Behaviour in some lessons raised concern with parents and pupils; inspectors found that whilst a small minority of pupils are not well behaved, the school manages the problem well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve teaching and learning in mathematics and science to match the good provision found in other subjects;

- Raise standards in Years 7 to 9 in design technology, and improve accommodation and resources for the subject;
- Ensure consistent management systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of work of teachers by subject heads, and for the implementation of agreed whole school policies and initiatives;
- Continue to seek improvements in accommodation and resources, including the library. and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Improve provision for citizenship;
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;
- Meet all requirements in providing information to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Given their average standards on entry to the school in Year 7, pupils' overall achievement is good. Results are improving in both National Curriculum tests and more quickly at GCSE. In 2004, GCSE results were above average and represented good achievement. Current standards in Year 9 are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory; in Year 11 standards are above average, reflecting good achievement through Years 10 to 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above average and are improving faster than the national trend.
- Throughout the school, pupils do particularly well in geography, history and modern foreign languages because they are very well taught and are keen to learn.
- In Years 10 and 11, progress quickens in most subjects and pupils achieve very well in art, ICT, and music at this stage.
- Standards and achievement in science and mathematics by Year 9 are not as high as those in English, and could be improved further.
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory and there is too little opportunity for pupils to do well.
- Literacy and ICT skills are above average, but numeracy skills require more attention.

Commentary

1. When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 7, their standards are broadly average. The school administers further standardised tests in Year 7 which confirm this picture, and that it receives pupils from the full range of ability. In the current Year 7, there is a broadly average distribution of pupils across the full range of capability.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (36.2)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	35.3 (34.1)	35.5 (35.4)
Science	32.3 (33.0)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 207 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Overall results in the 2003 national tests taken in Year 9 were average; results in English were well above average, in science were average, and in mathematics were below average. Pupils did very much better than predicted in English given their Year 6 test scores in 2000, but far less well in science and mathematics. For 2004, no national comparative figures are available for English; the test results dipped sharply from the previous year, continuing the subject's fluctuating pattern over time as a result of considerable staffing disruption. Results in science also dipped from those of 2003, whilst in mathematics there was an upturn in performance. For mathematics, results were average nationally, but below average in comparison with similar schools (i.e. those with pupils achieving similar results in their Year 6 tests in 2001). Results in science were below average nationally, and well below average compared with similar schools. Since the last inspection, the trend in overall national test results broadly matches the national rate of improvement. For 2004, the school achieved its targets in English and mathematics, but fell short in science.
3. Current standards seen in lessons, whilst average overall, are higher than the previous test results would suggest because of the school's focused drive to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. In addition, being a pilot school in the introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, from 2003 there has been a rigorous emphasis on improving mathematics and science, with strong support from the LEA. This work is successfully leading to improvement.
4. By Year 9, standards are average and represent satisfactory overall achievement. In English standards are above average and pupils are achieving well. Standards in mathematics and science are average, and pupils are making satisfactory progress. Nevertheless, standards could be raised further in both these subjects. Standards seen in most other subjects are average or better by Year 9, with pupils making at least good progress and generally achieving well. Although standards are below average in music, pupils of all abilities are achieving well in response to good, challenging teaching. Standards are also lower than average in design technology; pupils' achievement here is satisfactory and is slowed by previous staffing problems, now resolved, and by weaknesses in accommodation and resources for the subject. The impact of past staffing disruption can also be seen in religious education where pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are achieving well in almost all other subjects, apart from geography, history, and modern foreign languages where very good teaching ensures very good pupil response and progress. However, their achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship where weaknesses in provision result in standards that are lower than expected.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55 (50)	53 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (90)	87 (86)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37 (34)	35 (35)

There were 217 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Since the last inspection, GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have improved at a faster rate than the national picture, and are above average. Whilst girls do better

than boys generally at GCSE, both groups are ahead of their respective national averages, and the gap is similar to the national difference.

6. In 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was average. Results for those gaining five or more GCSE passes across the full range of A*-G grades, for those gaining one or more GCSE A*-G grades, and pupils' average points score were above average. In all these measures, the school's performance in 2004 improved from the previous year. When results are compared with those of similar schools (i.e. where pupils achieved similar scores in their Year 9 national tests), the outcomes are identical. Few pupils fail to achieve GCSE passes in at least five subjects, and pupils with special educational needs do well in examinations. Despite this improvement, the school fell short of its very ambitious targets for GCSE performance.
7. GCSE results for subjects in 2004 were well above average in history and geography, and were above average in ICT (GNVQ). Results were broadly average in most other subjects, but were below average in science, mathematics, design technology, and ICT (GCSE), and pupils performed less well in these than in their other GCSE subjects. They did significantly better in art, French, Spanish, and in history where a third of the passes were A* or A grades (well above the national proportion).

8. Overall, the improving GCSE results are testimony to pupils' positive response to good quality teaching in Years 10 and 11. They also reflect the effectiveness of the school's procedures for tracking pupils' progress and supporting them individually. Further strategies to help raise standards further include broadening of the curriculum to give wider choice, including increased vocational opportunities, and a closer match of courses to pupils' capabilities.
9. Current standards seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall, and further consolidate the performance of the school. In subjects, standards are well above average in geography, history, graphics, art, and ICT, and are above average in English, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education. Standards are average in science, mathematics, and most other subjects, including work-related learning, but are below average in citizenship. Achievement is predominantly good, and is very good in art, ICT, history, music, and notably in both geography and modern foreign languages, where teaching is at times inspired. Pupils are achieving well in the work related courses, but their achievement in citizenship is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in provision for the subject.
10. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good quality of teaching and support that they receive in whole class lessons and in the specialist base. Well-planned classroom support, small group withdrawal sessions and effective intervention programmes enable pupils to make good progress towards their target grades at GCSE. Examination results in 2004 showed that pupils with special educational needs gained accreditation in a wide range of subjects. This represents good achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school. The progress made by these pupils, and by those for whom English is not their first language, and those identified as gifted and talented is consistently good throughout the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good. Attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy school and want to attend.
- Pupils get on well together.
- The number of exclusions is high, as a result of the inappropriate behaviour of a very small number of pupils.
- Rare incidences of bullying are dealt with effectively.
- Moral guidance is strong, and there are good opportunities for supporting pupils' social and cultural development.

Commentary

11. Pupils appreciate almost all of their experiences in school and show a good level of interest in their work and try to do well. They participate well and in good numbers in the range of activities arranged for them. Their positive attitudes are reflected in attendance that is above the average. Whilst the large majority of pupils arrive on time for the start of school and most lessons, some pupils return late to classes after the very short lunch break.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.8
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	1.1

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

12. Behaviour in most lessons is good and conduct around the school is usually orderly. The number of exclusions is high owing to the amount and nature of the offences and the school's rigorous application of policy. More than two thirds of all exclusion days awarded are attributable to a very small minority of pupils, almost all of whom receive support in order to help them improve their behaviour. The arrangements for removing a pupil from a class are not always efficient in terms of minimising disruption.
13. Pupils and members of staff confirm that very few incidents of bullying or other forms of anti-social behaviour occur and they are effectively dealt with. Pupils relate very well to each other and are tolerant and mutually supportive yet suitably competitive.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1051	191	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	0	0

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

14. Pupils with special educational needs usually have good attitudes towards their work. Pupils are fully integrated in classes and generally behave well. They value the welcoming atmosphere of the Base and the help of the support staff; the good relationships developed over time have a significant impact on pupils' personal and social development.
15. Pupils respond well to the good opportunities that the school offers for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils benefit most from what they learn in lessons and from the contributions of youth worker from the local church communities. Pupils gain self-knowledge and spiritual

awareness by taking part in activities such as dance and drama, creative writing, music making and discussions. They also appreciate the spiritual dimension to life through, for example, exploring different styles of art, analysing relationships in the books they read, reflecting on soldiers' experiences in battle, and finding out about different religious beliefs. However, year assemblies and tutor sessions provide few opportunities for quiet reflection and rarely include an act of collective worship.

16. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' moral development. It emphasises the importance of showing respect for others and there is a clear code of conduct that pupils understand and accept. Moral issues are explored in subjects such as history, geography, religious education and in ICT where there is good teaching on the use and misuse of the internet. Pupils receive strong moral messages in PSHE (PSHE) and in behaviour support.
17. Opportunities for social development are good and most pupils are well aware of their personal responsibility for the welfare of others. This is especially evident in movement around the school and in lunchtime activities and lessons in the Base. In science and PSHE pupils learn about the social implications of health. Pupils work well together in groups and teams, particularly in art, drama, modern foreign languages and physical education. The school raises impressive sums for a wide range of charities, both local and further afield, and older pupils have shown initiative in suggesting imaginative ways of exploring the reasons for charitable giving, in the wake of the tsunami disaster. Pupils take an active interest in decision making by standing for election as form representatives, members of the School Council and the United Kingdom Youth Parliament.
18. Opportunities for cultural development are good. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of languages now in the curriculum and they learn how to appreciate the richness of their own and other cultures through studying the works of artists, musicians, writers and religious leaders from different areas of the world and different centuries and discussing different customs and ways of life. Extra-curricular activities such as clubs, concerts, dance and drama competitions, local trips and visits abroad make an important contribution to the development of pupils' cultural awareness, and they are prepared well for the cultural diversity that is part of modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good overall. The curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are inadequate. The school has a very strong community identity, is developing an effective partnership with parents, and has good links with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall; they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The assessment of pupils' progress and its use to support their learning are also good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high proportion of very good or better teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Work to improve teaching and learning is having positive impact, particularly in the use of the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school in geography, history, and modern foreign languages.

- Assessment procedures are improving and are good overall.
- Current stable staffing provision is ensuring effective learning and progress, following a period of considerable turbulence.
- Where work is challenging and teachers' expectations are high, pupils respond very well by working hard and trying their best.
- Insufficient attention is given to the application of pupils' numeracy skills and to the coordination of ICT across the curriculum.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching where pupils' misbehaviour is not effectively dealt with.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (5%)	33 (25%)	49 (38%)	36 (28%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	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.

19. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection, teaching in over two-thirds of lessons seen was at least good; approaching one-third of lessons seen were very good or excellent. Four in ten lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 were very good or better, double the proportion seen in Years 7 to 9. Both parents and pupils recognise the good quality of teaching throughout the school. Teaching is at least good in most subjects, including the work-related courses. Throughout the school it is very good in geography, history, and modern foreign languages; it is also very good in art, ICT, music, and graphics in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school in science, mathematics and religious education; they are also satisfactory in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
20. The school has done well to sustain the quality of teaching and learning throughout a period of substantial staffing turbulence since the last inspection. Severe budget constraints and high staff turnover have been considerable barriers to progress; in the last two years, one third of teachers have left the school; since the last inspection new subject leaders have been appointed in nine curriculum areas, and pupils' learning has been affected by the high proportion of temporary and supply teachers in the school. The budget is now under control and staffing is resolved. The positive impact of this stability and continuity in pupils' learning is clearly seen in the good quality of teaching during the inspection.
21. Throughout these difficulties, the school has worked hard to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning. Raising standards through more effective and consistent teaching has been the paramount priority in the school's development planning. Particular emphasis has been given to techniques adapted from the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9, and working closely with LEA specialist advisors. Indications are that this work is successful, and progress is being made in tackling identified weaknesses.
22. Characteristics of good teaching across the school are the thorough planning and preparation of lessons, and the variety of activities that pupils experience in a growing number of subjects. Teachers know their subjects and requirements for examination success very well, and their enthusiasm, even passion for some, motivates pupils effectively and creates an atmosphere of confident enquiry in many lessons. Teachers are effectively setting the scene, organising the aims of the lesson and ensuring that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and why. This positive feature of the National Strategy is clearly impacting in many subjects, not only in Years 7 to 9 but increasingly in Years 10 and 11 also. Pupils' progress and understanding are regularly checked in lessons, and drawn together in effective summaries. Homework is used well to extend learning in many subjects, although is a weakness in science. Marking is helpful and ensures pupils know how well they are doing. As a result, pupils make good gains in their learning. A strength of

the teaching is the encouragement and confidence teachers give to pupils of all capabilities, ensuring very good relationships and good levels of response.

23. Some teachers successfully create very purposeful and challenging learning environments, with high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Their very skilful classroom management is a feature of much of the strongest teaching and ensures that all pupils, including the more reluctant learners, are sensitively and well handled. It is the high expectations of what pupils can achieve and their total engagement in their learning that characterises this most effective teaching. A high level of challenge matched well to pupils' capabilities ensures their very successful learning and progress. This is particularly true of teaching in geography, history, and modern foreign languages, and in some lessons in English, art, music, and ICT.
24. Not all teaching is as successful. In lessons where teaching and learning are less effective, and sometimes unsatisfactory, teachers fail to control behaviour well enough. There are some challenging boys and girls in the school whose attitudes and behaviour demand much of their teachers. When this combines with teaching that lacks clarity and challenge and expects too little from pupils, learning and progress are unsatisfactory.
25. All teachers are aware of the need to promote basic literacy skills in their subjects, and most are successful in this. Examples of very good practice can be seen in history and geography, although provision is not consistent, and is less secure in science and design technology. Numeracy features less strongly in subjects, and has not yet been the focus of rigorous attention across the school. The use and application of ICT in subjects lacks coordination and, as a result, provision lacks consistency and varies widely between subjects.
26. Pupils with special educational needs, including those for whom English is not their first language, usually learn well because they are keen to succeed and are skilfully supported. Subject teachers are usually well aware of pupils' needs and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Support staff work closely with teachers to ensure that their pupils know exactly what is required of them, and what they have to do in order to improve. Good support for learning was seen for example, in science, ICT, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. A cohort of gifted and talented pupils are identified, and learn well in most lessons because teachers provide suitably challenging work that meets their needs. A range of extension activities outside lessons also support their learning well.
27. Assessment of pupils' performance is used well to inform teaching and learning and to monitor pupils' progress. The school has built up a very comprehensive bank of assessment data, comprising attainment data from primary schools and standardised tests taken in Years 7 and 9, which it uses effectively to set appropriately challenging individual pupil targets in each subject, departmental and whole school targets. Pupil progress is monitored twice a year by recording levels of attainment together with grades for effort, conduct and homework for each subject, followed individual pupil reviews conducted by the form tutor. Target grades and interim assessment grades, using National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, are recorded in pupils' planners, so pupils know how well they are doing in each subject and what they need to do to improve.
28. The senior team receives excellent analysis of examination and test results from the LEA, which it uses well to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning within subject areas. The school has recently introduced the use of Fischer Family Trust data to enable subject areas to predict and measure performance more accurately. Assessment is used very well in ICT, geography and music; it is used well in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and physical education. In design technology assessment is unreliable in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. It is unsatisfactory in citizenship, because no assessment takes place.

29. The school places strong emphasis on assessment for learning with a focus on clear learning outcomes which are shared with pupils and an effective plenary session at the end of each lesson to check understanding and consolidate learning. Each subject area has an assessment for learning development target for the current year.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and ensures progression by catering well for the different needs and aspirations of the pupils. Opportunities for enrichment of learning are good. The provision of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is unsatisfactory overall because of weakness in accommodation and resources, including the inadequate number of books in the library.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the curriculum is very innovative, especially with regard to developing a range of courses in Years 10-11 that meet the needs of all pupils.
- The overall breadth of opportunities is good.
- There is a good range of enrichment opportunities, particularly in modern foreign languages and art.
- The quality of careers development in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- The number of books in the library is considerably lower than it should be for a school of this size.

Commentary

30. The school's curriculum provision is good. The leadership of the curriculum has ensured thoughtful and innovative developments since the previous inspection. These encompass initiatives that reflect the school's status as a specialist modern foreign language college. Innovative thinking is leading to a curriculum for Years 10 and 11 that suits the needs of differing groups of students. Arrangements for citizenship are unsatisfactory as is its assessment. Departments plan their curriculum well and very well in history, geography and modern foreign languages.
31. Provision is good in Years 7-9. All students have access to the full range of subjects of the National Curriculum. PSHE lessons are timetabled for all pupils. In keeping with the school's specialist status pupils take courses in French and Spanish. All pupils take drama and a separately taught course in ICT.
32. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils in Years 10-11 and curriculum innovation has been very good. The range of courses for average and below average pupils has expanded significantly since the previous inspection. This has established a closer match between the courses available and the needs of all pupils. Pupils choose from a menu of courses within three different 'pathways': academic; vocational; enhanced vocational. All take GCSE courses in English, English literature, mathematics and single or double award science. All take accredited courses in religious education and ICT, together with PSHE and citizenship. The range of courses in modern foreign languages (French, Spanish and German at GCSE and accredited courses in business French, Spanish and German) reflects the school's status as a specialist college for modern foreign languages. There are vocational courses in manufacturing; health and social care; leisure and tourism; and ICT. A small number of lower attaining pupils follow individual timetables that include study support periods to enable them to keep up with the demands of their courses.
33. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils have good opportunities for representative and competitive sport. There is a good number of visits abroad, supporting the school's status as a specialist college for modern foreign languages. There is also a range of language clubs including Italian, German, Japanese and Chinese. Other subjects such as geography and history provide a good range of visits. In art a visit to a mining museum inspired high quality print work. Many subjects such as English, geography and modern foreign languages provide out of school learning opportunities. There are good opportunities to take part in music and drama activities.
34. Careers education is good. It is taught throughout the school starting in Years 7 and 8. A good programme that focuses on self-assessment underpins preparation for option choices during Year 9. There is a two-week work experience at the start of Year 11 and further modules on rights and responsibilities at work. Pupils receive

good advice and guidance provided by Connexions personnel, teachers within the school and personnel from schools and colleges in the surrounding area.

35. Curricular programmes ensure good equality of opportunity. The proportion of pupils that is successfully entered for examinations is high. Effective steps have been taken to match the curriculum to pupils' needs, for example, through the wide range of vocational courses on offer. There are extra study programmes for underachieving pupils throughout the school, in order to raise their attainment. There is no significant difference in the relative performance of boys and girls.
36. The match of the teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good and the school is well staffed by teachers who have an appropriate range of relevant experience and subject expertise. Staffing turbulence has been relatively high in recent years particularly affecting design technology, English, and mathematics but the position is now more stable. Staffing in modern foreign languages is particularly strong because most teachers are dual or triple linguists and both the department and school generally are benefiting from improved funding through its Language College status. Teaching and learning are supported by satisfactory numbers of special needs support staff and technicians.
37. There have been substantial improvements in the school's accommodation since the last inspection, most notably in the provision made for ICT, modern foreign languages and special educational needs; all three areas provide very effective teaching accommodation that contrasts sharply with other, less satisfactory provision. Provision for design technology is poor and restricts pupils' opportunities and access to the curriculum; other shortcomings include extensive problems with leaking flat roofs, classrooms that are too small, acoustic problems in music, dilapidated temporary buildings, and inadequate outdoor facilities for physical education. The refurbishment undertaken by the school has positive impact, for example, in science, geography, and history and the standard of display in rooms and around the school makes a positive contribution to improving the learning environment. In spite of the school's best efforts to improve and maintain good decorative order, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. At present the school is difficult to clean, expensive to maintain, and has substantial weaknesses in the fabric and condition of the building and its surrounds. The planned capital replacement programme, due to start in 2005/6, is overdue.
38. The provision of resources for learning is unsatisfactory because of deficiencies in design technology and because the library, which has only half the recommended numbers of books, has severely restricted access for pupils because it is being used as a classroom. Otherwise most curriculum areas are relatively well off for learning resources and the school now has a better than average ratio of computers to pupils than most schools.
39. Pupils with special educational needs are taught almost entirely in classes with other pupils. They are well provided for through effective grouping arrangements and good classroom support. Provision in the Base is very good. Well-focused small group sessions help students to get to grips with literacy problems, behavioural difficulties and assignments for GCSE. There is a good match of support staff to the curriculum. Accommodation and resources are good. The Base offers a welcoming area in which pupils feel secure, and younger pupils make good use of the specialist ICT programs to improve their literacy skills.

Care, guidance and support

The standard of care is satisfactory. Pupils receive good guidance and support. The school seeks pupils' opinions effectively and acts upon them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and constructive.
- Induction arrangements are very good.
- Some procedures relating to health and safety are not carried out with sufficient diligence.

Commentary

40. Inspectors mainly agree with the pupils' views that they feel safe, valued and well supported because of the way their teachers and helpers treat them. Pupils join the school confidently and in a well-informed manner because of the very good arrangements for transfer and induction that parents are so impressed with. Since then, they have found the school to be a friendly place and they have no hesitation approaching teachers for academic and personal advice and help. Form tutors move on with the pupils each year and get to know them well, providing a continuum of good pastoral care.
41. Supervision at break times is good and student services, including medical help and first aid, are accessible. Specialist agencies provide relevant services to the school and several participate in the curriculum. Procedures are well implemented regarding child protection and children who are in public care. However, some of the procedures for health and safety are not carried out rigorously enough, and control is not in place to ensure that valid, up to date risk assessments are carried out in all relevant instances.
42. The use of academic assessment to provide pupils with guidance and support is good in most subjects. Pupils understand what levels or grades they are working at and their targets. Their understanding about how to improve is good overall but is less secure in some subjects. Planners and progress files are used satisfactorily and progress reviews usefully help pupils to focus on appropriate areas of their work. Extra tuition is available to pupils in the form of one to one help, booster and revision classes and homework clubs. In Year 11 mentoring is also available. Specialist staff provide very good support for pupils who have learning and behavioural difficulties.
43. The school provides good information and impartial advice about subjects that are available in Years 10 and 11 and about opportunities beyond school. Colleges of further education give talks and arrange for taster visits to sample post-16 courses. Pupils' views are taken account of through specific surveys and a very effective school council. Pupils take an increasing role in evaluating their own work and progress and determining their own targets to achieve. They contribute to their own community through prefect responsibility and, for example, by organising charitable support. Large numbers of pupils take part in open days and playing hosts to visitors.
44. The school gives good guidance and support to pupils with special educational needs. The work of the behaviour mentor is proving successful in helping pupils with behaviour difficulties to come to terms with their problems and develop positive

attitudes towards their teachers and their fellow pupils. There are effective systems for identifying and monitoring pupils in need of extra help, and the individual and group learning plans that are in place give clear information on particular needs and support arrangements. However, the department has identified the need for an improved record keeping system for pupils in the Base. The school's very good partnership with a wide range of local support services enables pupils to benefit from specialised help when necessary, for example, pupils new to English are well supported by the Equality and Diversity Service.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents. Its links with other schools are good and with the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school serves the community very well as a result of its specialist status.
- Liaison with primary schools is very good for the purpose of transition.
- Parents' involvement is good.
- Information for parents does not comply with statutory requirements.

Commentary

45. Parents are pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They are impressed with the standard of teaching and that pupils are expected to work hard. They consider that their children transfer from primary school and settle in very well. Their children are given good opportunities to become mature and responsible. Those who express concern about behaviour are right because exclusions are numerous and some disruption to lessons occurs.
46. The school keeps parents well informed about pupils' progress and the life of the school through reports, newsletters, meetings and opportunities for consultation. The impressive website is very well developed and helpful. The prospectus and governors' annual report for parents do not comply with requirements because they omit several important items of information.
47. Parental involvement is good. Parents are consulted through surveys and a monthly meeting of a large group of parents and others. PSHE lessons and extensive language classes are arranged for parents. Some parents help pupils with reading during school hours and a weekend club is open for parents whose children have special education needs. Large numbers of pupils participate in an impressive open day for parents. The school acknowledges the need to extend its provision of education so that parents might more ably support their own children. Communications regarding pastoral matters are good.
48. The school works closely with its partner primary schools to ensure a smooth transition for the pupils. Much work is undertaken with the staff and pupils of the schools to promote learning in modern foreign languages and physical education. Students from a nearby secondary school attend post-16 lessons in Spanish. Colleges of further education offer information and taster visits to help develop pupils' awareness of opportunities beyond the school. Arrangements are not yet in place for older pupils to undertake vocational courses at colleges as an alternative to the National Curriculum.

49. Links with the community are very well developed and are excellent in connection with language outreach through which the school and community benefit considerably. Links extend internationally including schools and organisations throughout Europe and Japan. Language tuition is provided to businesses locally, to senior citizens through the library, other colleges, the public and parents. The school employs a specialist community language worker. The number and quality of out of school visits have increased in several subject areas, enriching the quality of pupils' learning experiences overall. Business contacts are strong. The school works closely with the Youth Service. An externally run Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is based at the school. Considerable sums are raised by the pupils to support charities.

50. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs and parents express their appreciation of the work done in the Base with their children, particularly those with medical problems, school phobia and literacy difficulties. There is an effective system of communication between parents and school, and parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress. Transitional arrangements are very good, so most pupils settle confidently into new routines when they move from one phase of education to another. Younger pupils who lack fluency in reading benefit from the help of trained volunteer readers from the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership. Governance and overall management of the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the acting headteacher and deputy head ensures that pupils continue to receive a good quality education.
- The monitoring of the work of the school is ineffective in some areas.
- In modern foreign languages and geography leadership and management are excellent; however, in citizenship they are unsatisfactory.
- Strategic planning for improvement is good.
- The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Governance, whilst satisfactory, does not ensure that the school fully meets its statutory requirements.

Commentary

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher, ably supported by an experienced and effective deputy, is providing good leadership in ensuring that the school continues to progress whilst waiting for the newly appointed headteacher to take up post. These interim arrangements are working well; pupils are receiving a good quality education and their achievement and personal development are good. Although no major initiatives have been undertaken, the school's development plan has been kept up to date and effectively modified for the current year. Essential priorities, such as the implementation of new legislation, for example, in Transforming the Workforce, have been identified and vigorously tackled. New sources of funding, particularly through Excellence in Cities and Aim Higher have been successfully tapped.
52. Management is satisfactory. The senior leadership team provides effective support but has experienced a reduction in numbers as a consequence of which each member has had to take on new areas of responsibility. This has led to some disproportionate workloads, particularly for the deputy headteacher, that the acting headteacher has temporarily resolved through a restructuring of roles together with external consultancy for timetabling. In the meantime, some gaps, particularly in monitoring the work of the school at all levels, have appeared. Whilst the senior team is effectively checking on the quality of teaching in subjects, there is no monitoring of how well subjects are using ICT in their teaching and its unsatisfactory use in mathematics, citizenship and design technology is not being tackled.

Similarly, risk assessments are not being monitored, and in design technology they are not being done. In some areas, for example, provision for citizenship and a daily act of collective worship, statutory requirements are not being met.

53. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and the school is working successfully with the local education authority in developing a new process of school review. Arrangements for performance management are well established. Development planning is good; it is linked to subject priorities that in turn are linked to whole school priorities.
54. The quality of curriculum and pastoral leadership is good overall. Leadership and management in modern foreign languages and geography are outstanding, being both inspirational and innovative. In English, ICT, art, and history, leadership is very good; in these subjects leadership is raising standards and providing pupils with very good opportunities to achieve. In music and physical education leadership is good and in mathematics, science, and design technology it is satisfactory. Management is very good in ICT, history and art. In these subjects management processes are very effective in raising standards. Management is good elsewhere, apart from in mathematics, science and design technology where it is satisfactory. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in citizenship because the subject requirements are not fully met, and subject responsibility is not in place. The responsibility for managing ICT across the curriculum is also a weakness. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by subject leaders are too inconsistent and are not guided by systems that ensure regularity and rigour in the process. As a result, other than in the strongest subjects, the best practice in the school is not shared sufficiently.
55. The quality of the leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. There is a very clear sense of purpose and a total commitment to the well-being of all pupils facing difficulties. Very effective teams have been created to cater for the different areas of need. Statutory requirements in relation to students with statements of special educational need are met, and the specific grant is well used for its designated purposes. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The weaknesses identified in the report have been rectified and overall provision is now good.
56. The school has effective arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and those who are new to the school, including middle managers, who benefit from peer support. During a period of severe financial difficulty the school has provided an effective programme of in-service training by making good use of the existing expertise within the staff in order to provide an appropriate programme of opportunities for professional development. Good relationships with local training institutions ensure that the school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training.
57. Governance is satisfactory. Many members of the present board have been recently appointed and have yet to fully appreciate the school's circumstances. They have the school's best interests at heart and are concerned for it to be financially viable. Governors are playing an increasing role in the school's planning processes. Further training is needed for some governors so that they are well informed and more able to evaluate and challenge the school's proposals and practices. Most are aware of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, governors have not ensured that the school meets its statutory requirements with regard to the content of the prospectus and the annual report to parents, the requirements for a daily act of worship, the curriculum for citizenship and some aspects of health and safety.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,678,308
Total expenditure	3,534,853
Expenditure per pupil	3,228

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-275,521
Balance carried forward to the next	-132,066

58. Expenditure is now well planned and controlled. An effective plan is in place to deal with the substantial deficit that had been allowed to accumulate. Alternative sources of supply are considered in order to make savings and secure best value services and purchases. The school is examining ways to improve efficiency and raise standards within the constraints of the budget. In view of the fact that the quality of education provided and the academic and personal progress that the pupils make are achieved at a cost that is broadly in line with the average for secondary schools, the school is deemed to give good value for money.

Work related learning

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a good range of vocational courses for Years 10 and 11.
- Arrangements for providing guidance on careers are good.
- There are no link courses with local colleges.
- Several pupils benefit from extended placements in industry but these cut across their studies in other subjects in school.
- The WRL provision enables many pupils to achieve well.
- There is still more scope to integrate WRL into the teaching of other subjects.

Commentary

59. The school provides WRL in accordance with all statutory requirements. Pupils have good guidance on possible future careers as they move towards choosing their Year 10 and 11 courses through the option system. This enables them to make a properly informed decision about whether to follow vocational courses or not. Pupils have the opportunity to follow a traditional academic course or to spend a good proportion of their time on vocational studies. All pupils benefit from work placements, which most find for themselves. This gives them a clear insight into the expectations of employers.
60. Pupils benefit from a good range of vocational courses, for example, GNVQ leisure and tourism, manufacturing and ICT. There are also GCSE courses in child development and health and social care. Business language courses feature strongly too, and reflect the school's specialist status as a language college. Pupils value the school's provision of vocational courses because they see them as providing a clear pathway to higher qualifications and employment. On these courses, pupils are normally fully engaged, genuinely interested and achieving well.
61. Although there are no link courses with local colleges to enable pupils to learn practical trades and gain qualifications in them, there are extended work placements

with local industry and other training providers for a small number of potentially disaffected pupils. The school is having more success with these placements as it gains in experience of how to manage them successfully. However, the current drawback is that pupils miss their other lessons on the same day every week and this affects their progress in other subjects. There are plans to eliminate this problem next year. Running alongside the extended work placements are valuable lessons in school on topics such as trade unions, health and safety, getting a job, post-16 education, money management and wages.

62. There are many opportunities to discuss and research the world of work in pupils' PSHE course but its connections with the other subjects that they study are not fully explored. Most teachers do not yet plan to explain fully how the world of work interfaces with the subjects that they teach. However, the languages department already leads strongly in this area through its courses in business in German, French and Spanish.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus of the inspection was on French and Spanish. German, introduced into Year 10 for the first time this year as a fast-track GCSE course, was also sampled. One lesson was seen, in which teaching and learning were very good and progress was rapid. The small group of gifted, highly motivated, girls learnt to recognise and form the past tense before working independently on a challenging sentence building task. By the end of the lesson, the girls were talking and writing from memory about their previous weekend activities with growing confidence.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A team of specialists provide good teaching that is leading to good achievement.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and work hard.
- The leadership of the department is very good and securing improved provision.
- Some aspects of the analysis of results, and the use of data to set and monitor targets require improvement and consolidation.
- There is some very good provision for higher attainers but it is less effective for some lower attainers.

Commentary

63. Pupils enter the school with average standards. Results have fluctuated in recent years in national tests at the end of Year 9. They were average in 2004 but well above average in 2003. Over time the trend in results has been rising. By Year 11, GCSE results at grades A*-C in both English and English literature were average in 2004, sustaining the pattern of recent years. However, significantly more pupils enter both examinations than is the case in most schools. In both Years 9 and 11, the pupils' results were as expected given their earlier results in other tests. The department has experienced significant difficulties in the recruitment of staff: the ensuing lack of sustained specialist teaching from 2002-2004 undermined progress.
64. Standards in the current Year 9 and Year 11 are above average and the pupils' achievement is good. The improved levels of achievement are attributable to the full team of specialist teachers that the department now comprises. In Year 9, about eight out of ten pupils are working at the expected level or higher: many pupils have made significant gains in their ability to produce accurate and well sustained extended writing. Almost half are working at the higher level six or above. In Year 11, more than six out of ten are working at levels associated with grades A*-C. The proportion working at the highest grades of A*-A is higher than in recent years because of deliberate targeting of these pupils by the department. A good focus on examination techniques is raising standards of pupils of all attainments. The achievement of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good, especially when teaching methods match their relatively lower levels of

concentration and their need for explicit routines and expectations. This good practice was not always apparent with younger pupils.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some teaching is excellent, especially in terms of challenge that motivates and engrosses higher attaining pupils. Typically teachers apply their secure subject expertise to plan lessons well. This leads to pupils working hard and enjoying a good range of learning methods. In most lessons there is good pace and purpose. Activities are well-matched to learning objectives. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on and consolidate learning at the end of lessons but there are not enough opportunities during lessons. There were some good examples of more open-ended questioning methods challenging the pupils' thinking but there tended to be not enough use of this approach. Regular homework, however, does effectively secure learning. Pupils' attitudes are good and often very good. They collaborate well in groups and pair tasks while readily answering and asking questions during lessons. Occasionally, mainly in lower attaining groups, expectations about routines and presentation were not effective enough. Neither was time managed in a way that ensured a consistently purposeful learning atmosphere. Assessment is good. Marking explicitly records strengths and targets for improvement. Pupils are beginning to develop a more secure understanding of their current levels and grades and the criteria they need to fulfil to reach level and grade targets, but this is not securely embedded as yet.
66. Subject leadership is very good. The recently returned head of department has made a significant and immediate impact resulting in coherent schemes of work; clear policies and procedures; and a systematic series of assessment tasks during Years 7-9. She has a clear vision of where she wants to lead the department; is taking her team with her; and sets an excellent example through her own highly skilled teaching. The management of the department is good. Examination results are reviewed but analysis does not sufficiently make comparisons with all schools or similar schools. The use of data to set and monitor targets is not yet detailed and extensive enough. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and development planning is very good. Teaching and standards are better than at the time of the previous inspection so improvement has been good.

Literacy and language across the curriculum

67. The pupils' enter the school with average standards in literacy skills. In work observed during the inspection standards were above average. This is the outcome of good provision which focuses on the use of key vocabulary and improving standards of writing. Some highly effective practice was observed in history and geography. In both subject teachers stress the development of techniques of extended writing in different forms. They introduce and demonstrate how pupils can use key vocabulary accurately. They also secure the effective use of more general aids to coherent writing such as the use of connectives. Very good practice was observed in art making very good use of guidance from the Key Stage 3 Strategy. In general, good practice stems from whole school initiatives. Provision is less secure in some subjects. In mathematics there is not enough emphasis on oral work; there is not enough correction of spelling errors in science; and inconsistent marking of accuracy in design technology.
68. Support for pupils with difficulties in literacy is good with pupils benefiting from programmes that help them improve reading and spelling. The monitoring and evaluation of literacy provision across subjects is not systematic enough. Key

leaders of the schools literacy provision acknowledge the need to return to literacy training given a large number of changes among teaching personnel. The English department provides opportunities for private reading but the number of books in the library is too small for a school of this size and therefore constrains opportunities for both private reading and the development of independent research skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are above average and show continuing improvement on the most recent GCSE results.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well because teaching and learning are very good.
- Writing is a major strength.
- Leadership and subject management are excellent.
- Curricular provision has improved significantly since the school became a specialist language college, especially for the second language.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- The creative use of electronic whiteboards is a particular strength in teaching and opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning are very good.
- Links with the community and other schools are very good.

Commentary

2004 was the first year that the school entered every pupil in Year 11, including pupils with special educational needs, for a full GCSE in either French or Spanish.

French

69. In 2004, GCSE results were just below average at grades A*-C, marking an improvement on the 2003 results. The proportion gaining A*/A grades and the number of passes at A*-G were both above average. Boys and girls did significantly better in French than pupils nationally, and pupils tended to do better in Spanish and French than in their other GCSE subjects.
70. Standards in Year 9 are above average and represent very good achievement over time because pupils entered the school with average attainment and they have less teaching time than is usually found. Writing is strong because pupils build up their knowledge of grammar over time, and because much time is devoted to developing this skill. High attaining pupils reach well above average standards because they can use a variety of language structures, including tenses, with confidence in their extended pieces. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the well-targeted teaching and the very good support they receive. In Years 8 and 9, where teaching single gender groups is being successfully piloted, boys and girls are achieving even more highly, although the gender gap remains.
71. In Year 11, standards are much higher than the most recent GCSE results. Standards are already above average and still rising because of the excellent well-targeted teaching of pupils at the grade C/D borderline. Boys and girls have very positive attitudes to French and are achieving very well. Writing is a major strength, with some higher attaining pupils producing fluently written coursework assignments that match the criteria for the highest grades.
72. The quality of teaching and learning in French is consistently very good. Planning of lessons and for progression over time is very good. Relationships are very good and pupils are very keen to do well. Teachers employ very effective teaching strategies to present and fix new learning. Carefully sequenced problem solving activities and team games are common features of lessons. Pupils enjoy the competitive element and they learn quickly and effectively because the pace is brisk and they have to

work fast within tight time limits. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson dealing with the protection of the environment, teams vied with each other against the clock in various challenging word - building games that tested and consolidated their learning of key vocabulary. Pupils have regular opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning and the provision of electronic white boards in every classroom, together with their creative use by the teachers to promote learning, is a real strength.

Spanish

73. In 2004, GCSE results were average at A*-C and the proportion gaining A* was above average. Boys and girls did much better in Spanish than pupils nationally. With almost double the number of entries in 2004, results showed good improvement compared with the previous year.
74. In Years 7-9, all pupils now study Spanish as a second language. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average. Pupils make progress in each skill, especially writing, and they achieve well in very limited time.
75. Standards in Year 11 are just above average, which is a little higher than the most recent GCSE results, reflecting the department's strive to raise standards further. Achievement overall is very good. In coursework writing, achievement is high and boys and girls across the ability range make significant progress over time in this skill. In the small group of dual linguists who began Spanish from scratch in Year 10 standards are already above average. These pupils continue to make rapid progress, especially in the development of higher tier skills in speaking and writing.
76. Teaching and learning in Year 9 are good overall. Lessons are well planned and move at a brisk pace but occasionally learning is less effective when pupils are moved on too soon because of time constraints. Teaching and learning are very good in Year 11. Lessons are purposeful and teaching strategies adopted are similar to those used in French. Pupils learn well because they are encouraged to see language patterns and to work things out for themselves. They are thoroughly prepared for all aspects of the GCSE examination and are constantly challenged to aim higher. Pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute significantly to their good rate of learning.

Modern foreign languages

77. Extra curricular provision is very good and contributes very well to pupils' development. Pupils have very good opportunities to explore the language and culture of other people through taster language sessions and after school clubs in a range of languages including Chinese, Japanese, Italian and German. Annual visits to France, Spain and Germany are well supported and pupils can take part in an exchange with the French partner school in Castres.
78. Leadership of the department is excellent. It gives clear vision for the future, promotes very good teamwork and leads by example. The head of department, appointed since the previous inspection, is an inspirational role model for the well-qualified and enthusiastic team of specialist teachers, most of whom have joined the school in the past three years. The sharing of ideas and good practice is well established and actively encouraged. Assessment is sharply focused on raising standards of achievement.

79. Improvement since the previous inspection, and particularly since the school gained language college status, is very good. Curricular provision has improved significantly, especially for the second language. The expanding provision of vocational business language courses is attracting rapidly increasing numbers opting to study a second language in Years 10 and 11. Courses in French, Spanish and German are flourishing and plans are already underway to add Italian to the list next year. The refurbished accommodation and very good resources are having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Good use is made of the foreign language assistants to support pupils' learning in class and in small groups for oral work.

80. The school has established very good links with the local community through its provision of language tuition for local businesses, for parents, and for local residents via the library service. Links with other schools and colleges are also very good. Language teaching is already well established in five feeder primary schools and AS and A2 Spanish teaching is provided for students in the sixth form of another local high school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving, particularly those of higher attainers in Year 11 and lower attainers in Year 9 but there is room for further improvement.
- Pupil behaviour has an adverse effect on learning and progress in some lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good in Year 11, because lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations, which results in good pupil achievement.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough.
- Assessment data is used very well to monitor pupil progress and to inform teaching and learning, but marking often lacks sufficient detail to help pupils improve.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning is insufficient at present.
- Homework is not set regularly enough by all teachers.

Commentary

81. Attainment in mathematics on entry to the school is average. In 2004, pupils' results in statutory tests taken in Year 9 were in line with the national average and showed significant improvement from 2003. Results were below average when compared with schools of similar prior attainment, and few pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Results have improved over the last four years, but at a rate below the national trend. Currently, although standards in Year 9 are improving and they are broadly average overall, too few pupils reach the higher levels. The achievement of both boys and girls is satisfactory; pupils in Year 9 with special educational needs achieve well.
82. Pupils' GCSE results in mathematics in 2004 were close to the national average overall. However, when compared with schools of similar prior attainment, the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades was well below average, and there were too few A* and A grades; these pupils did not do as well as they should and, overall, pupils did less well in mathematics than in their other GCSE subjects. Significantly more girls than boys achieved higher grades. Standards in the current Year 11 are higher, and are average overall. This represents good achievement in response to improved teaching that demands more from pupils; boys and girls achieve equally well.
83. In lessons where teaching is good, pupils are well motivated and cooperative. In these lessons, pupils are articulate and confident in answering questions and explaining their answers. They demonstrate a sound grasp of the basic skills of number and algebra and higher attainers can apply these effectively in higher-level work. Algebra skills are good in Year 11 as a result of good, focused teaching.

Pupils with special educational needs show a good understanding of place value and size. However, in some lessons pupils do not listen attentively, they call out and are reluctant to apply themselves to their work. Presentation skills are variable because there is a lack of emphasis on high standards in the teaching. As a result, drawing, measuring and constructing often lacks precision. Numeracy skills are average.

84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in Year 11. The good teaching in Year 11 is characterised by high teacher expectations together with carefully structured work which builds pupils' confidence and raises their aspirations. In other years, the quality of teaching is less consistent with parallel groups working to different standards. The lower standards occur with inexperienced teachers where expectations are too low and the work lacks depth and progression. This restricts the progress of pupils in a number of higher and middle attaining groups in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. In some lessons teachers struggle to manage pupil behaviour effectively and this slows the lesson pace and hence the rate of learning and progress. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils. The National Strategy to improve teaching and learning is used well overall, and pupils are expected to explain their methods and to use mathematical language accurately. At present, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning of mathematics.
85. Assessment is used well in class to check pupils' learning, but marking is often not detailed enough to help pupils improve, and weaknesses in presentation are not picked up consistently. Teachers use regular tests at the end of each half term to monitor pupil progress and to identify any weaknesses. Work is referenced to the National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and this is shared with pupils so they have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Homework is used to complement classwork and consolidate learning, but some pupils do not receive homework sufficiently regularly for it to contribute effectively to their learning. Relationships are good in the majority of lessons, and attitudes to work satisfactory overall. However, pupils frequently arrive at lessons without pencils, rulers and calculators; this wastes valuable lesson time and restricts progress.
86. Leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. There is a clear sense of purpose focused on raising pupils' attainment and this is shared by a team of hardworking specialist teachers. Teachers give their time to a number of additional activities, including a parents' information evening on revision strategies and extra classes. The department sets appropriate challenging targets which are used very effectively to track the progress of individual pupils and of teaching groups. Test and examination results are analysed topic by topic to inform curriculum planning. The monitoring of teaching and learning includes observing lessons and checking pupils' work; through this the school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and the need for consistent practice to help raise standards further.
87. Improvement since the previous inspection is just satisfactory. Standards in Year 9 and 11 are improving, although pupil progress is still satisfactory overall. The use of assessment has improved significantly. Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are now good. Textbook provision has improved, but there is still a shortage. Use of ICT has not yet improved sufficiently due to lack of resources.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory and they are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics in other subjects with varying degrees of success. For example, in science pupils construct line graphs and pie charts and interpret lines of best fit effectively. They use co-ordinates and analyse data competently in geography, use proportion and scale appropriately in art, and measure and analyse changes in heart rate in physical education. Mathematical skills are used for drawing

and measurement in design and technology and when using spreadsheets in ICT. A comprehensive numeracy policy was drawn up at the beginning of this academic year, followed by a presentation to staff on consistency in teaching data handling. Further sessions, on number and algebra are planned. A whole school approach is in the early stages of implementation and planning for the teaching of mathematics in the majority of subjects of the curriculum is not yet firmly established.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategies for improving teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are effective.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are mostly good, but poor behaviour slows progress in some lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- The development of booster classes in Year 9 is helping to raise standards.
- Meaningful homework is not set regularly, and marking provides too little guidance for improvement.
- Monitoring of the development of formative assessment is inadequate.
- Some accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' literacy skills are promoted well, but numeracy requires more attention.
- The outside science classroom is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

89. Test results at the end of Year 9 based on average points score were well below the national average. Boys and girls performed similarly. Current standards in Year 9 are average and reflect the impact of recent intervention strategies to improve teaching and learning. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
90. Results obtained by all Year 11 pupils in double award science in 2004 were significantly below national average. Pupils tended to do less well in science than in their other GCSE subjects. Boys' and girls' results were both significantly below the national median. Standards in the present Year 11 are higher and are broadly average; they reflect the positive impact of the recent focus, with the support of the LEA, on improving teaching and learning. Boys and girls achieve satisfactorily.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Excellent teaching was seen in a Year 7 class. The positive effect of the recent focus on teaching and learning and the involvement of LEA consultants was evident, particularly in Year 9 classes. Lessons are generally well planned to include all pupils, but some lessons lack pace and fail to stretch them fully, particularly the highest attainers. Teachers often use ICT in their lessons, although pupils do not have ready access to computers in science laboratories; some older pupils use ICT facilities to effectively enhance their independent learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, responding particularly well where teacher expectation is high. Relationships between pupils and staff are mainly good, allowing most lessons to flow without distraction. Some lessons in Years 10 and 11 were marred, however, by the poor behaviour of a few individuals that adversely affected pupils' learning. Targets are set for all pupils and regular testing takes place, although not all pupils were able to recall their targets

and few knew their current level of attainment. Tracking, however, has facilitated intervention designed to boost the standards of Year 9 pupils. The setting of homework and marking of pupils' workbooks is inconsistent, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and there is too little guidance for improvement. Literacy skills are actively promoted in some groups, particularly by encouraging pupils to read out aloud. Less planned effort is made to enhance numeracy. Pupils are adept at practical work, working well in groups, cooperating and supporting each other.

92. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and staff work closely as a team. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Recent initiatives, including target-setting and the provision of structured revision opportunities in Year 9, have helped to raise

standards but further improvement can be made. More rigorous monitoring of assessment procedures and the regular setting of homework are needed to help improve standards further.

93. Despite refurbishment, accommodation is only satisfactory. The outside science classroom is not conducive to learning and the carriage of materials to this location by the technician is potentially unsafe during wet or winter conditions. The department is adequately resourced but much equipment is approaching the end of useful employment. The provision of text books and other learning resources is good. The department is ably serviced by a full time laboratory technician who gives good support to the pupils.
94. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory – standards are now rising as a result of recent supportive initiatives, notably liaison with the LEA Science Adviser, but further improvements can still be made.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how computers can be used in control are well above average.
- In Years 10 and 11 pupils can apply their basic skills very effectively in designing solutions to problems in business organisations.
- Teachers make very good use of ICT in presenting their lessons.
- Leadership and management of the curriculum subject are very effective in raising standards and improving results; however, the monitoring of how well pupils use ICT in their other subjects is unsatisfactory.
- The marking and assessment of pupils' work helps them achieve higher standards.
- In Years 7 to 9, teachers don't always plan their work to take into account the needs of different ability groups in the class.

Commentary

95. Examination results in 2004 were average overall. GNVQ (Intermediate) results were well above average, whilst GCSE results were below average. This was because staffing difficulties, now resolved, adversely affected the results of a significant minority of pupils in three groups. In other groups, results were well above average. Results are improving at a faster rate than results nationally.
96. Standards in Year 9 are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Standards in handling and communicating information are good and pupils can use word processing, databases and spreadsheets to make interesting and effective presentations of text and numerical data. They have a very good understanding of how computers can be used to control machines. They know how different types of sensors, for example, motion and light sensors, are used in theme parks and greenhouses. They understand the process by which an alarm sounds when a locked car door is opened. They can trial and modify sets of instructions to influence outcomes. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. All pupils take either a GNVQ or GCSE course. In both groups pupils are achieving very well now that staffing difficulties have been resolved. They have completed several coursework

assignments to a well above average standard. Their design skills in applying ICT solutions to real world situations, for example, in improving turnover in a restaurant and take away pizza parlour, are of very good quality. Basic skills in communicating, retrieving and analysing information efficiently and reliably are well above average. In all years, pupils with

special educational needs, or who are gifted and talented, achieve as well as other pupils; they are identified in teachers' lesson plans and the work set is nearly always appropriate for their needs.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning, supported by pupils' positive attitudes, are good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes are all very good. In all years, excellent use is made of new technology, not only in the presentation of lessons, where wireless technology is used very effectively, but also in its wider use, for example, in the use of e-mail for submitting work to teachers for marking. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning. In mixed ability groups in Years 7 to 9, insufficient account is sometimes taken of the different ability groupings in the class and although learning in these lessons is still good, with a greater focus on what each group's needs are, it could be very good. Assessment is very good and pupils' progress is carefully monitored as they move through the school. Pupils know the National Curriculum level and GCSE and GNVQ grade they are working at and what their targets are. Marking is helpful in showing them what they have to do to achieve their target. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 because the subject is taught by enthusiastic, specialist teachers whose very good knowledge of the subject ensures that what is taught is interesting and relevant and pitched in ways that help pupils learn very effectively.
98. This is a very good department that is very well led and managed. However, the monitoring of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory, and the responsibility for this requires confirmation. There is a strong focus on raising standards, for example, through the development of GCSE and GNVQ courses for all Year 10 and 11 pupils. Data is used well both for setting targets and in analysing results, for example, by teaching group. A very strong team ethos has been developed which supports and encourages all members of the department. The excellent school web site, created by a teaching member of the department, is a valuable source of information for parents and pupils. Pupils have good access to computers outside of lesson times. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Significant improvements in teaching and learning have led to higher standards and pupil achievement, and all statutory requirements are now met.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

99. No one in the school has responsibility for ensuring ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning in all subjects and the monitoring of this aspect of the school's work is unsatisfactory. Overall, the development and application of pupils' good skills in ICT is satisfactory. Excellent use is made of computers in geography. Work is e-mailed to teachers via the school web site and digital mapping systems and geographical information systems are widely used. ICT is used very well in modern foreign languages. Pupils develop their skills through e-mailing links with other European schools, for example, in Finland, and the department's excellent resources are utilised to ensure that for every pupil, ICT is an integral part of their learning. Good use is made in history, graphics and leisure and tourism. In history, regular use is made of the Internet for research, and for the presentation of work, and pupils are encouraged to become experienced in the use of other technology, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards. In graphics good use is made of computer aided design software. The use of ICT is an integral part of pupils' learning in leisure and tourism, both for research and presentation. In mathematics, design technology and citizenship its use is unsatisfactory. In design technology resources are poor. In

mathematics, although they have graphical calculators they are rarely used. The use of ICT in citizenship is not planned for and does not happen. The development and application of pupils' ICT skills in other subjects is satisfactory overall.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of stimulating and challenging teaching.
- GCSE results have improved consistently and are now well above average.
- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is outstanding.
- Pupils' have positive attitudes towards the subject.

There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

100. Results of the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are improving faster than those nationally. Those for 2004 were well above average. Standards in the present Year 9 are well above average and represent very good achievement, given that pupils' attainment in geography on entry in Year 7 is broadly average. GCSE results have been improving in line with the national trend and were well above average in 2004. Pupils in the present Year 11 are achieving very well in maintaining similar standards, with the majority on course to attain their challenging target grades.
101. Standards are high for the following reasons: pupils of all abilities are able to describe and explain geographical features and processes, using a good range of presentational techniques; the majority can analyse and select information from a variety of sources to reach and justify conclusions and decisions; above average standards of literacy enable pupils to write and talk fluently about geographical issues, using geographical vocabulary accurately; they make very good use of the frequent opportunities for independent learning and demonstrate good research and ICT skills.
102. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and sometimes excellent. Teachers set very high expectations for both work and behaviour. Demanding tasks and probing questioning consistently challenge pupils at all levels to deploy high-level thinking and reasoning skills. Most lessons have very good pace and momentum with pupils constantly engaged in varied and stimulating activities. Teachers know pupils well and support them with good individual attention and materials matched to their capabilities. ICT is used imaginatively and the full multimedia potential of powerpoint presentation coupled with the interactive whiteboard is used to excellent effect in providing a powerful visual focus to enhance and support learning. Lower-attaining Year 8 pupils, for example, develop a good understanding of the concepts of infiltration and interception by watching a clip from a James Bond film, followed by animated diagrams of the hydrological cycle. Digital mapping software enables pupils to acquire an understanding of landscape topography much more readily than through the interpretation of OS maps alone. The departmental web site provides access to resources, geographical games and useful links, whilst pupils can obtain homework resources and guidance by email. Pupils' enthusiasm, enjoyment, hard work and good behaviour are a significant factor in their achievement. Marking of their assessed work gives very good guidance on the standards attained and on improvement.
103. Leadership and management are excellent. Despite the high standards attained there is a clear determination to improve further, with no sense of complacency. Strategic planning prioritises improvements in teaching and learning, with corresponding developments in curriculum and resources, as the key to higher attainment. The commitment to e learning,

acknowledged within and beyond the school as outstandingly innovative, has engendered a consistency in teaching and a strong element of teamwork through the sharing of ideas and good practice. Teaching is monitored effectively through observation and work scrutiny. Thorough and rigorous review of performance data generates strategies for improvement. Assessment procedures produce accurate information and systems for target setting, and tracking and monitoring pupil progress are well established.

104. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Standards in Year 9 are higher, GCSE results have improved and overall achievement is better. Improvements in accommodation and resources, particularly those for ICT, have enabled developments in teaching and curriculum. Geography is now firmly established as a strong, successful and increasingly popular subject.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning leads to very good achievement throughout the school.
- Recent examination results are well above average, particularly in the range A*-A, and boys in particular achieve very well.
- The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development.
- The curriculum is enhanced with a good range of field trips and educational visits.
- Assessment procedures are used well to improve pupils' performance.
- There are no significant weaknesses that require attention.

Commentary

105. In 2004, GCSE results were well above average in the range A*-C and above average in the range A*-G. The proportion of both boys and girls obtaining the higher A*-A grades was particularly impressive. Pupils' performance in history was better than in most of their other subjects and they achieved very well in comparison with their starting points as measured by their performance in national tests at Year 9.
106. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average and represent very good achievement in relation to pupils' below average starting points in history when they join the school in Year 7. Basic historical skills are quickly established in Year 7 so that by Year 8 most pupils are competently selecting information from their sources of information and use it to write at length, for example, in describing and evaluating events such as the annual "marching season" in Northern Ireland. In Year 9, pupils write their explanations, descriptions and the results of their investigations, for example, in evaluating the fairness of the Treaty of Versailles, to a good length. Higher attainers support their conclusions very effectively with well-chosen evidence. Most other pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical change and key features of the periods studied, such as the life of the Plains Indians, is detailed although the written work of lower attainers is characterised by weak spelling. Nevertheless, oral work indicates that their understanding of technical vocabulary is good. Pupils use a good range of ways of presenting their ideas and information, including the use of poetry to express their feelings about involvement in situations such as trench warfare in the First World War. Pupils who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because learning activities are adapted well for them.

107. In Year 11, pupils who have chosen to follow the full GCSE course in history reach well above average standards and achieve very well. Very few pupils' work is below average. Higher attainers have extensive knowledge and understanding of developments in the history of medicine and use computers well to research information. Other pupils' work is less detailed but accurate and shows a good understanding of changes in medical developments both within and across different historical periods.
108. Teaching and learning overall are very good. A largely very experienced team of teachers have an enthusiasm for the subject that is conveyed very well to pupils. They use a good range of imaginative as well as challenging learning activities to engage pupils very closely in their learning. Informative technology is used very well to make learning interesting and to broaden the range of sources of information available to pupils. Marking is very good. Pupils themselves are involved very well in peer and self-assessment so they gain a clear understanding of examination and National Curriculum grade criteria. The learning makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, for example, through opportunities for pupils to compare their own beliefs and values with those of other cultures that they study.
109. Subject leadership and management are very good. Subject performance is monitored well and the results used very well to effect improvements. There is a good commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum includes an imaginative selection of optional units of work, including local studies, and it is strongly enhanced by a good range of educational trips.
110. Progress since the previous inspection has been very good. Most importantly, overall standards have improved significantly and boys' achievement in examinations is now much better.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lack of stability in staffing is a barrier to achievement in Years 7 to 11.
- There is a good take-up for the full course at GCSE and pupils achieve well because teaching is good.
- Standards in the short course at GCSE are not high enough.
- The new head of department has made a positive start in improving the provision.
- Pupils with low levels of literacy need more effective support with writing.

Commentary

111. The small number of pupils who took the GCSE full course examination in religious studies in 2004 achieved very well, despite the fact that lessons had to take place out of school hours. There were too few pupils to reliably compare with the national average. In the short course examination, taken by the majority of pupils in Year 11, standards were below average and pupils did not achieve as well as expected. These results reflect the severe lack of continuity in the teaching in recent years.
112. Standards in Year 9 are average overall. They meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding

of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world religions. They also make thoughtful comments on the different theories of how the world began and on different ways of helping people in need. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory at this stage. However, although many pupils achieve in a satisfactory way in comparison with their standards on entry to the school, a minority of pupils do not make sufficient progress because there are gaps in their knowledge as a result of instability in staffing in previous years.

113. In Year 11, the pupils who are taking the full course in religious studies achieve well because they are keen to learn and have received a good grounding as a result of specialist teaching. Standards are above average. The quality of written work by higher attaining pupils is excellent and most pupils are adept in demonstrating their knowledge and understanding in discussion and writing. Standards in the short course, taken by the remainder of pupils in Year 11, are just about average overall, but the lack of specialist knowledge and consistency in the quality of teaching experienced by these pupils when they were in Year 10 has led to wide variations in attainment, and achievement is not as good as it should be for a significant proportion of the year group. Overall, in Year 11 standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Good relationships in the classroom are a strength of the teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Teaching is good in the full course at GCSE because all the lessons are taken by specialists whose confident command of the subject and detailed coverage of the syllabus enables pupils not only to gain a good knowledge of the different strands of the course, but also to develop the research skills to find the textual evidence in support of their viewpoints. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in the short course at GCSE. Strengths are evident in a commitment to the subject by all teachers, both specialists and non-specialists, and in pupils' eagerness to take an active part in discussions. Areas for improvement include more effective support in writing tasks for pupils with low levels of literacy, and a greater variety in teaching and learning styles.
115. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is generally monitored and evaluated regularly, but there are examples of inconsistency in expectations of acceptable achievement.
116. The subject is led and managed in a satisfactory way. The strength of the new leadership lies in the determination to improve standards and to ensure that non-specialist teachers are given adequate support and guidance in the delivery of the programmes of study. However, the lack of time available for full staff meetings and for professional development, together with the changeability of teaching responsibilities, have a negative effect on efforts to achieve parity in standards across the year groups.
117. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are average overall in Year 9 and the introduction of the full course at GCSE has improved standards for those pupils who choose to take it. Accommodation and resources, including ICT, have improved. Standards, whilst average overall, are not high enough yet in Year 11, and there is still a considerable amount of non-specialist teaching. The subject benefits from the generous support given by the local church communities and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have declined since the previous inspection as a result of staffing difficulties.
- The decline has been arrested now that the department is fully staffed.
- Current standards in GCSE graphics are well above average and represent good achievement.
- Accommodation and resources are poor, and affect standards.
- Inconsistent marking in the GCSE course.
- In Year 9, pupils' folders are disorganised, but GCSE pupils' coursework folders are well presented.

Commentary

118. The main focus of the inspection was on all aspects of design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE graphics course in Years 10 and 11. Other courses in Years 10 and 11 were sampled. GCSE results in design and technology subjects have declined since the previous inspection. In 2004, results were below average overall. Girls' and boys' results were average and well below average respectively. Although results in food technology were well above average, those in systems and control, graphics and resistant materials were well below average. In the sampled lessons, teaching and learning were satisfactory in Year 10 food technology, Year 11 systems and control, and Year 11 applied manufacturing. However, they were unsatisfactory in Year 10 resistant materials, where the pace was too slow and expectations of the pupils were too low.
119. Current standards in Year 9 are below average and have declined since the previous inspection. This is because the school has encountered many staffing difficulties in design and technology over the last two years, resulting in a dependence on supply teachers. Consequently, pupils' design and making skills are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement over three years. In Year 9, pupils' evaluations of their work are average but drawing skills and the development of designs are below average. Folder work is often disorganised. Making skills are below average in terms of precision and finish. However, it is pleasing to report that there is no slippage now. Settled staffing is improving matters and pupils, including those with special educational needs, in Years 7 to 9 are all now making satisfactory progress.
120. The department has done well to protect the pupils on the GCSE course in graphics products from many of the effects of staffing difficulties. Teaching has been consistent and, as a result, standards are well above average. In the Year 11 groups, all pupils are producing work in the range A*-G. Four-fifths of them are on course to record GCSE successes in the range A*-C. Pupils have well-developed coursework portfolios containing plenty of evidence of good quality design work. Most pupils have a good background knowledge and understanding of the design process, the use of tools and the properties of materials. They use CAD software confidently to produce nets of products with all dimensions. The best products are examples of packaging for perfumes, which are of really good industrial quality. On this course, achievement is good and particularly so for gifted and talented pupils.
121. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with many good features in Years 7 to 9 and good in the GCSE graphics course in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and help to create a good learning atmosphere. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are well planned and explanations are clear so pupils know what is expected of them. Occasionally, teachers' oral presentation skills are less than compelling so pupils become slightly restless and inattentive. The organisation of practical sessions is good and results in an atmosphere of effort and industry. However, the teaching of drawing skills and the general development of design work require attention. Marking is often very helpful to pupils but it is of variable quality and does not always pick up important errors in written work and drawings. Most teachers place an emphasis on the importance of good presentation but there are many instances of untidy work not being adequately challenged. On the GCSE graphics course in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are routinely good. Pupils are really interested in their work and justifiably proud of their good achievements.

Teachers have a very good knowledge of graphics and of the requirements of GCSE. Pupils recognise this and realise that they are getting a really good deal.

122. The leadership and management provided by the very recently appointed head of department are satisfactory. Morale has improved and a good start has been made in arresting the decline in standards in Years 7 to 9. He is introducing a good system of target setting and assessment. However, there are matters that require urgent attention. Resources are poor and affect standards, especially in the aspects of the subject that are dependent upon ICT. Accommodation is also poor. In one room, used for resistant materials, there is not enough space and clearance between benches and machines for the numbers of pupils who use it. The recognition of these deficiencies by the school management is evident in the priority that the subject has been given in the new building programme. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because standards have fallen and the strong CAD/CAM feature now no longer exists. Happily, matters are improving and the department now has a strong feeling of determination to raise standards to where they were previously and beyond.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama was sampled. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination at grades A*-C were average. One Year 11 lesson was observed. Good teaching and learning resulted in good achievement. Standards observed were above average. Pupils were secure in performance techniques, applying their knowledge of dramatic conventions well to create effective audience impact despite being at an early stage of the piece they were devising. The subject is popular with around one in five pupils taking it in Years 10-11 and a similar proportion of Year 9 pupils indicating they wish to take it. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' extra curricular opportunities. Curriculum planning is very thorough. Pupils' knowledge is enhanced by a good focus on both practical and written work throughout Years 7-11. One weakness is the accommodation; although there are two teaching spaces in a prefabricated hut there is no blackout or integral lighting and sound system.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- The attitude of the pupils is very good therefore progress is very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject is very effective, promoting clear vision and high expectations.
- Pupils are encouraged to plan their own learning and to research the topics they are studying.
- Use of ICT is not as effective as it could be due to lack of resources.
- Some work needs to be done in assessing the work of younger pupils.

Commentary

123. Standards in art and design are above average in Year 9. In 2004, teacher assessments 72 per cent of the pupils achieved or exceeded the standard expected for their age; standards in the present Year 9 are above average and pupils are

achieving well. In 2004, GCSE results were slightly above average; higher attainers did well with a quarter of pupils achieving A* and A grades and pupils did much better in art than in their other GCSE subjects. Standards in the present Year 11 are well above average and pupils of all abilities are achieving very well.

124. Workbooks are very well used for both class and homework with obvious progress being made from the start of Year 7 through to the end of Year 9. Both drawing and colour handling skills develop well as a result of clearly planned work that develops skills, processes and techniques systematically. Research skills are also developed through well-directed homework. As well as using paint pupils work with an increasing confidence with clay, fabrics, printmaking, pencil and metal. A very good balance is achieved between large and small scale work, sculpture and fine art.
125. By the end of Year 9, pupils have all used a wide range of techniques and processes and materials although some observational drawing shows a lack of rigour. Due to a lack of computers in the studios pupils have not had the opportunity to scan, manipulate and develop images using non-traditional approaches to art and design. They are, however, stimulated by looking at original artefacts on display from a wide range of backgrounds, for example, African sculptures, Indian textiles and Australian Aboriginal didgeridoo's. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and pupils use different kinds of writing when describing pictures and evaluating their own work. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well due to the high expectations of the staff and the personalised learning that has been developed.
126. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7, 8 and 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are always very well planned, teachers have a very clear idea of what they want to teach and why. There is a consistent approach to planning, assessment, classroom and pupil management so no time is wasted in maintaining order. Lessons are prepared in such a way that discussions, demonstrations and course work are very well integrated. Consequently, pupils know what to expect and use the studios in a very mature and responsible way. They use tools and materials with confidence and skill and their attitudes towards staff and the subject is excellent. Behaviour is very good. Teachers use praise and encouragement very well, as in a Year 11 lesson where several less confident pupils were carefully talked through the marking criteria in order to support the estimated grades. Due to this good one-to-one teaching and support pupils manage to complete their sketchbook on time. Pupils' work is monitored and marked regularly, and overall assessment is very good. However, more needs to be done on the standardisation of National Curriculum levels for pupils aged 14.
127. The department follows the school guidelines on feedback and marking and pupils are aware well of expectations and know how to improve their work. Pupils of all ages enjoy very good support, for example, in individual help for Year 11 pupils in presenting and completing their coursework for GCSE. The accommodation for art is good and very good use is made of the school's website to celebrate the work of the department using photographs of pupils and their work. The site is recent and relevant. It also provides a useful guide for parents.
128. Leadership and management are very good. The acting head of department has a clear focus on raising standards. The department consists of enthusiastic teachers, who work very well as a team, demonstrated by the consistent approach to planning, learning and teaching. Although there is still some way to go with resources for ICT

this has not prevented progress. The head of department leads by example and is open to any new initiatives that will improve things for the pupils; as a result, standards have improved, higher attaining pupils are achieving better and improvement since last inspection has been very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 are below average, but pupils achieve satisfactorily.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average and pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching and learning.
- Assessment is very good and helps to improve standards.
- Instrumental lessons, groups, bands and choirs provide good opportunities for personal development.
- New computers, already in place, have not yet been set up for music and this is hampering pupils' progress in composition.

Commentary

129. GCSE results in 2004 were pleasing with five of the six pupils achieving a grade between A* and C and all six pupils achieving a grade between A* and D. Four of the pupil were graded A. There were too few pupils to reliably compare with national averages.
130. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Pupils' have a good sense of how their music should sound but not always the musical skills to put it right when it doesn't work. Some find the music given to them too complex to put together into an ensemble and so become discouraged. However, boys really enjoy singing and are keen to show how good they are at it. This is undoubtedly due to the excellent choice of material used. On entry to the school these pupils' experiences of music were mixed. Most pupils have achieved reasonably between Years 7 and 9, although it is felt that timetabling issues, recently resolved for Year 9, have limited their progress. Pupils agree that the decision to work in tutor groups is a good solution and feel progress has been better and more satisfying since then; standards in the present Year 7 confirm this and are already average, with pupils making good progress since they joined the school.
131. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Pupils perform well. Their playing is competent and stylish with sensitive phrasing and expression, even for those whose technical capability is elementary. In a lesson on Gamelan, pupils quickly composed and rehearsed a convincing and quite complex piece using pitched percussion instruments which they played very well. A celebratory composition by a high attaining pupil using ICT is a beautifully constructed and satisfying piece with breadth and aspiration in the opening and closing section. Unfortunately though, progress with composition has been hampered by delays in commissioning the new computers. Large classes in Years 10 and 11 have had to share five old computers. In spite of these barriers to progress, pupils have achieved very well because of their persistence and determination to succeed as well as very good support from teachers.
132. Most pupils love music. Enjoyment is written on their faces as they enter the room and they prepare for their lesson with palpable anticipation. They remain focused and engaged throughout. This is because the subject is practically based with a very good range of activities and projects and because teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good. Trust and respect is fostered and evident in the way pupils respond to the teachers. Pupils respect the teachers' very good knowledge and skills. Because of very good planning and organisation of the lessons pupils have plenty of time to develop their own practical skills and knowledge. Pupils find the assessment and evaluation of their work in lessons very useful and, as a result, they have a good grasp of how they can improve. Pupils relate their progress to National Curriculum levels and the marking scheme for GCSE. This is a very strong feature of the department which is helping to improve standards. Nevertheless, there is room for fine tuning enabling pupils to reflect more closely on their individual progress with appropriately pitched work for them to do.
133. The department is well led and managed. There is a very good team of teachers including very valued ICT support from the local education authority, and a good team of instrumental teachers. Groups, bands and choirs provide good opportunities for those pupils with talents in music and for pupils' personal development. Results

from assessment are recorded and are beginning to provide useful information on how to plan to raise standards. GCSE results are thoroughly analysed. This department is improving well, particularly since the appointment of the current head of department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and, by Year 11, standards are above average.
- In Years 7 to 9, the accuracy of assessments of pupils' work is inconsistent and in general, the analysis of performance data is not used well enough in curriculum planning.
- The use of ICT to support pupils learning is a developing strength.
- A strong programme of extra-curricular sport contributes well to the overall standards achieved.
- The quality of marking of pupils' written work in examination classes is inconsistent.

Commentary

134. GCSE results in 2004 were close to average overall in the range A*-C and, creditably, all candidates were successful in obtaining at least a pass grade. Boys' results were above average and girls' were below average. However, in general, pupils did better in physical education than in most of their other GCSE subjects.
135. Standards seen in Year 9 do not match the results of the most recent teachers' assessments of pupils' work. These showed that boys reached above average standards and girls below average. The inspection evidence indicates that in Year 9, overall standards reached by both girls and boys are average and that, in relation to their varied experience in physical education on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. Positive attitudes to learning and good working habits are quickly established in Year 7. This underpins the good progress made as pupils move through the school. Pupils' capacity work together to improve their performance, for example in dance or basketball is good and they have good understanding of game principles. However, these aspects of their learning are often better than their level of skilled performance. Knowledge and understanding of health related fitness is good.
136. Overall standards in compulsory physical education lessons in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve well. Standards in girls' basketball are well above average. Boys and girls make good progress in developing advanced skills and tactics in badminton by making effective use of their analysis of video recordings of their performance to make improvements. The key to the good achievement lies in the quality of the teaching and the very positive attitudes to learning displayed by the pupils. For example, participation rates are high; pupils work very well collaboratively and are quick to appreciate each other's success. Standards in examination classes are above average and are better in relation to practical performance than in theory. It was not possible to see the work of pupils following the well-regarded Junior Sports leaders Award (JSLA) course during the inspection. Throughout the school, a very good programme of extra-curricular sport for boys and girls contributes well to the overall standards reached and teams do well in

competition at local level and beyond. This has contributed to the school's success in obtaining the Sportsmark award.

137. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Subject knowledge is used well in explanations, demonstrations and to analyse performance. The use of ICT is a developing strength, particularly in the way in which video modelling is to help pupils to improve their performance. In the best lessons the learning is also adapted very well to enable pupils of all capabilities, including those who have special educational needs, to improve and progress. In most lessons the learning is evaluated well in a concluding discussion which generally leaves pupils well placed to continue to improve; occasionally this is limited to pupils' understanding of skills rather than focussing on how well they have learned. In examination classes, pupils' files are not monitored well enough and the quality of marking is inconsistent
138. Subject leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of direction for, and commitment to, subject improvement that is shared by all teachers. However, performance data is not analysed and used effectively enough in curriculum planning. Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are good but the means of ensuring that there is common agreement between all teachers about expected standards in relation to National Curriculum levels needs improvement. Risk assessments require updating. Productive relationships have been developed with partner schools through involvement in the local School Sports partnership and this is helping to improve standards.
139. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Issues raised then have been largely resolved successfully and standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school provides vocational education in Years 10 and 11. Lessons were sampled in two of these courses: GNVQ Intermediate Leisure and Tourism and GCSE Applied Health and Social Care (Dual Award). The use of ICT is thoroughly incorporated in teaching and learning in both subjects and the previous year's results are above average.

Two lessons, both very well taught, were seen in GNVQ Intermediate Leisure and Tourism. In the Year 10 lesson, lower-attaining pupils were using materials on the school website to research the marketing of a leisure facility for which they were busy preparing a presentation to the rest of the class. Pupils' knowledge of the subject, their ability to apply it, and their ICT skills, were all sound. As a result of the very good teaching and the pupils' own very positive attitudes, they were achieving very well. Pupils with special educational needs received enthusiastic, high quality support from a teaching assistant with ICT skills. Pupils in the Year 11 lesson, who were of average attainment, were using the Internet to complete an interactive fact file on a chosen leisure facility. The pupils' work during the lesson and a thorough scrutiny of their coursework indicated that they are achieving well and reaching slightly above average standards at this stage in the course.

One well-planned and well-taught lesson was seen in GCSE Applied Health and Social Care (Dual Award), in which mainly lower-attaining pupils were preparing posters and leaflets for a targeted health promotion package. These pupils clearly enjoy the subject, and made good use of computers during the lesson for research purposes and to enhance their display materials. The good teaching, and skilful class management of one or two potentially challenging pupils, created a quiet, focused climate for learning in which pupils were achieving well and acquiring sound knowledge and understanding.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides programmes in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Citizenship was inspected in depth. The school's PSHE programme is a good one. It is generously resourced and meets statutory requirements, having particular strengths in sex and drugs education. The key to its effectiveness is the high quality of training received by the form tutors who teach it; and pupils' learning is also enhanced by the well-exploited links the school has with many external agencies. These include the Youth Service, Police, Fire Service, the Driving Standards Agency and the Road Travel Safety Group for the area. Six PSHE lessons were seen during the inspection: three in Year 7, one each in Years 8, 9, and 10. All except one, which was satisfactory, were well planned and taught, and, as a result of the good teaching and their own positive attitudes, pupils were achieving well. Work seen in these lessons and other inspection evidence, including a discussion with pupils, strongly indicate that standards reached are above average by Years 9 and 11. The pupils' generally mature outlook and courteous behaviour suggest that PSHE makes a good contribution to their personal and social development.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' full entitlement to the National Curriculum is not met.
- Pupils' work in citizenship is not properly assessed so that their annual progress, and their attainment by Year 9, can be measured.
- The school's rich tradition of school and community service provides many potential opportunities for active citizenship.
- Standards are below those expected and achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils do not learn the full subject.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the subject is not co-ordinated, and standards, the curriculum, homework and teaching and learning are not effectively monitored.

Commentary

140. Citizenship is taught partly in discrete lessons through PSHE with which it shares a timetable, and partly through other subjects. However, in PSHE, in the first two elements: knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and skills of communication and enquiry, insufficient time has been given to teach them in the detail and depth required of a National Curriculum subject. In the supporting subjects, coverage of the first two elements is still largely implicit, except, occasionally, for passing references to citizenship. Pupils are therefore often unaware that they are studying a distinct subject. As yet, there is no planned programme for the third element that ensures all pupils develop their skills of participation and responsible action and reflect on their experience of active citizenship. Consequently, in Years 7 to 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship is patchy and incomplete. The limited amount of written work seen, which included only one piece of extended writing, further confirmed that standards of pupils' work are below those expected for their age and pupils are underachieving by the end of Years 9 and 11.

141. The school's very busy agenda of school and community initiatives, however, has included good work for charities such as LEPR and Children in Need, a visit by a theatre group who involved pupils in workshops on waste management, the involvement of some geography pupils in design and implementation of a community

questionnaire, and the successful production of a school newspaper. Each year, pupil representatives are elected to a thriving school council, and a Year 9 pupil was successful, last year, in the Youth Parliament elections. The pupil's own illustrated diary graphically records his hectic political schedule and celebrates what was clearly a rich learning experience. All these projects are useful opportunities for selected, and sometimes significant numbers of pupils to exercise responsibility, which should be marked out for development when the school devises its active citizenship programme for all pupils, along with a suitable scheme for assessment and recording. At present, there is no such scheme and pupils' annual progress and their attainment at the end of Year 9 cannot be reported to parents.

142. Judgements cannot be made about teaching and learning since so little teaching in citizenship could be seen. Nevertheless, two presentations by outside speakers during inspection week made helpful contributions to the Year 9 and Year 11 pupils' knowledge and understanding of the laws governing drink and driving and off road motorcycling.
143. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Although the school is committed to citizenship's full implementation and is aware of the steps that need to be taken to do it, insufficient time has been given to teaching and co-ordinating it. As a result, planning has been inadequate and there is no monitoring of what is taught and standards attained. No regular subject meetings take place to standardise work and share good practice. However, a short course in GCSE Citizenship Studies is planned for September 2005, which should ensure the full coverage, in depth, of the programmes of study for Years 7 to 11. The school also plans to appoint a citizenship co-ordinator in the coming year.

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	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
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	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the acting headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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