

INSPECTION REPORT

DOWNLAND SCHOOL

Devizes

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126550

Acting Headteacher: Mr W P Spear

Lead inspector: Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 4 – 6 July 2005

Inspection number: 275439

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Male
Number on roll: 63

School address: Downlands Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
Postcode: SN10 5EF

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Lt Col J Sharp

Date of previous inspection: 31 January 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Downland School is a day and residential school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have additional learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome. A large number of pupils also take medication to alleviate behaviour problems. Many experience difficulty in acquiring language and literacy skills. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is below average.

There are 64 places at the school and 63 pupils were on roll during the inspection. Sixteen pupils board at the school during the week. Hardly any pupils are admitted or leave school other than at the beginning and end of the school year. Pupils are of White British background and they all speak English as their first language. Pupils' homes are in socially and economically diverse parts of Wiltshire and some are in deprived areas. Around one third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals.

The school has a Sportsmark award and provides a small outreach service, teaching at home pupils who are unable to attend school for various reasons. A special support class, Uplands, was recently set up to provide for the small number of pupils with very challenging behaviour who might otherwise be excluded.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Modern Foreign Language English Religious education Art and design Physical education
9756	Kenneth Parsons	Lay inspector	
16747	Alan Jones	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education Citizenship Mathematics Information and communication technology Special educational needs
27243	Ian Tatchell	Team inspector	Science Geography History Design and technology Music English as an additional language

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of Downland School is good. The school provides good value for money. The acting headteacher's very good leadership and the combined efforts of staff have brought rapid improvement to educational provision. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Pupils develop good attitudes to learning and their achievement is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The acting headteacher has ensured the school maintains its strengths and improves on these.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to achieve very well in GCSE courses.
- There is very good support for pupils who have difficulty with language and literacy.
- The provision for information and communication technology is very good, which is an excellent improvement.
- The provision for pupils boarding at the school is very good.
- Pupils form very good relationships with adults and are very well cared for by them.
- Pupils unable to attend school or who have been excluded and those whose place is at risk are well supported through outreach provision and the Uplands class.
- Statutory requirements in relation to religious education are not met.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. Although the school has been through a difficult period many of the key issues have been resolved effectively. There has been excellent improvement in information and communication technology and good improvement regarding assessment. Most areas of educational provision have been improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well because they are serious about success in their GCSE courses. GCSE results far out-perform those of similar schools. While pupils in Years 7 to 9 are more likely to misbehave and disrupt learning their achievement is generally good because ultimately teaching and learning are effective. In English, mathematics and science achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Very good support for pupils who find language and literacy difficult to learn means they achieve as well as other pupils. The high level of well focused support for pupils in Uplands ensures they make good progress. All pupils like using information and communication technology and approach learning in this subject more positively than in others. It is a very well resourced subject, especially in terms of the expertise in teaching. As a result, achievement in this subject throughout the school is very good.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory and attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good, overall; good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Much teaching is expert and well planned. Most lessons are engaging and challenging for pupils. Learning is sometimes affected adversely in Years 7 to 9 by pupils' negative responses. In a few instances, teachers do not manage this effectively. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are better behaved and concerned to do well in their GCSE courses; their application and productivity are very good. Very good relationships develop and pupils respond constructively to teachers' high expectations, learning very well as a result. Throughout the school, teachers use assessment well to keep pupils aware of their progress. Marking is often of high quality, giving pupils continual strong advice on how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and is well adapted to pupils' needs, especially those who have language and literacy difficulties. The new initiatives in Uplands and outreach support make good provision for keeping the most challenging pupils in school and excluded pupils involved in education. However, Uplands pupils are not taught religious education, which is a requirement. There is a very good range of successful GCSE courses. Many additional activities enrich the curriculum well, especially very good opportunities for sports.

Pupils are very well cared for and are given good support and guidance, all of which contributes to building their self-esteem and encouraging a desire to learn. This is particularly so for pupils who board at the school. Provision for them is very good. More is required to help younger pupils in particular to see the need to behave well and not rely always on staff controlling their outbursts.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher is giving very clear direction following a long period of uncertain leadership. The school is well managed despite many recent adjustments to staff responsibilities. The whole staff have responded well to expectations and operate as an effective team providing much good leadership and management throughout the school. Residential provision is very well led and managed. The outreach service is well led and managed. There is a strong drive improving the school and developing new successful initiatives.

The work of the governing body is satisfactory. While governors are committed to the success of the school they are not playing a sufficient part in developing its aims and direction. Governors have not ensured the school does everything that is required of it. There is non-compliance with statutory requirements in relation to provision of religious education.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

There is insufficient evidence to judge how pleased parents are with the school. Few returned a questionnaire and just two parents could attend the parents' meeting both of who are governors. Pupils have positive views and express appreciation for the fairness and support of staff, practical subjects and GCSE courses.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure all adults are effective in managing pupils' behaviour and develop pupils' capacity to manage their behaviour and always behave well.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Include religious education in the timetable for teaching Uplands pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good, overall. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well and pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has done well to maintain a long tradition of very good results in tests and examinations despite some difficult circumstances.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve more than pupils in Years 7 to 9 because being more settled they take advantage of the good learning opportunities.
- Achievement in English, mathematics and science is very good in Years 10 and 11 and all pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology.

Commentary

1. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have more consistent and positive learning habits, which lead to their very good rates of progress. This is clearly demonstrated by their commitment to achieving success in GCSE courses. They have the self-confidence and work sufficiently hard to manage successfully five or more subjects at GCSE level, which is exceptional considering pupils' learning difficulties and their disrupted educational experiences. On average, by the end of Year 11, most gain at least five GCSE pass grades and many up to eight or nine. The highest GCSE standards are achieved on a regular basis in design and technology and art and design. Very good GCSE results have been the pattern over many years and place the school's performance in GCSE well ahead of similar schools.
2. Standards have remained as high as always in Years 10 and 11 and good achievement has also been preserved in Years 7 to 9 despite the school contending with considerable recent upheaval in leadership and management. When the deputy headteacher took charge as acting headteacher just over a year ago, this very effectively stabilised the school and stopped any risk of slide. In national tests in mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the most recent year for comparison, pupils scored at each level above the average for similar schools and the results in 2004 are even higher. A close check is kept on results in the national tests and GCSE examinations, which are compared with previous years and the performance of similar schools. The data is used to set challenging targets which are not always reached, but the progress made by pupils towards them is sufficient to be still ahead of that in similar schools.
3. Pupils in Uplands, who have considerable learning needs, achieve well in relation to their circumstances as a result of a high level of skilled support. An effectively adapted teaching programme gains their interest and co-operation during lessons and leads to pupils, who are mostly in Years 7 to 9, making good progress.
4. In English, mathematics and science, pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, overall. Progress in some of the lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 did not reflect the good achievement by the end of Year 9 because of a few pupils' reluctance to work and their

determination to disrupt learning. In general, staff bring pupils' misbehaviour under control and pupils are well supported by their advice and guidance. Despite the mixed picture of progress in lessons, the work pupils have done shows that over time they make good progress and are well prepared to embark on GCSE courses in Year 10. This is the result of effective, expert teaching in each of these subjects and effective guidance which helps pupils understand what they can do to improve.

5. As pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more settled and focused, the impact of teaching on their progress is greater. They achieve very well in English, mathematics and science. In English, meticulous marking of all pupils' work sets high standards, particularly in writing. It is evident in pupils' written work that they respond positively to teachers' comments and advice. Very effective contributions from well qualified learning support teachers in respect of many pupils' difficulties with language and literacy means they overcome their barriers sufficiently to succeed at GCSE level. The encouragement residential pupils get to read and do homework adds much to their achievement in English and other subjects. In mathematics and science, because teachers often expertly engage pupils with challenging and exciting work they make very good progress. As pupils throughout the school take a natural interest in using information and communication technology, value the skills involved and enjoy the practical nature of learning, they all achieve very well in this subject. This is aided considerably by very effective teaching, the high quality of resources and their availability to pupils in most lessons. In particular, sharing assessments with pupils and writing comments about their work encourages them to strive for higher standards in information and communication technology.
6. Achievement in religious education and personal, social and health education is satisfactory but not as good as in most other subjects, partly because pupils are less prepared to learn and behave well. A contributory factor to this is that provision in both subjects, while satisfactory, has not reached a stage of development found in most other subjects and there is, as a result, less to engage and sustain pupils' interest.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are good overall, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11. All pupils' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory and attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is largely effective in keeping pupils' misbehaviour under control but the encouragement of pupils to take more responsibility for their behaviour is too limited.
- Pupils like school sufficiently and enjoy learning enough to achieve as well as they do.

Commentary

7. Misbehaviour occurred frequently in lessons seen, more so in Years 7 to 9, and this disrupted learning. The presence of inspectors in classrooms and the fact that a number of pupils' medication had been changed recently created extenuating circumstances increasing the likelihood of misbehaviour. As a result of pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties it takes a considerable time for them to acquire positive attitudes to learning. These are consequently more apparent and consolidated in Years 10 and 11, leading to very good achievement. Attitudes and behaviour in

lessons for pupils in Years 7 and 9 were sometimes unsatisfactory, although around the school during breaks, lunch time and after school their attitudes and behaviour were usually good. Where teaching did not succeed in capturing pupils' interest, which was sometimes the case in science, personal, social and health education and music and when a few teachers were not effective in maintaining discipline, pupils' behaviour became unsatisfactory.

8. Many pupils are not skilled in managing their own behaviour and a minority showed often little knowledge of the desirability of good behaviour when in lessons. Staff deal effectively with incidents, but there is not enough emphasis on preventing misbehaviour by helping pupils to help themselves to behave appropriately in the classroom. Pupils can tell the difference between right and wrong but not all pupils are sufficiently strong in their resolve to always act properly in respect of behaving appropriately, while nevertheless exercising good moral values in many other respects. A new behaviour management system, through which pupils build up points for good behaviour, rewards their efforts and is influential to an extent. However, it is not yet a sufficient incentive in Years 7 to 9. Even with the very good care and relationships that pertain, misbehaviour still occurs in lessons and staff have to mount a substantial support system during the day. This additional support means classroom disruption is curbed and effective learning can take place in most lessons.

9. While pupils sometimes displayed reluctance to pay attention and work in lessons, the very good relationships most pupils have with staff count as significant in them sustaining self-confidence and interest in school. There is very little bullying because pupils will report it to staff and know incidents will be dealt with effectively. As a result, pupils have a good respect for others' feelings and points of view. Despite the fact many pupils find application and concentration difficult, the frequently lively, engaging teaching taking place in most lessons often ensures an interested response and a willingness to tackle challenges.

10. Pupils acquire a sound knowledge of other cultures. They learn about different people's customs and beliefs mainly through topics in religious education, history and geography. There are many opportunities for pupils' moral and social development. Pupils responded well during an assembly to a request on how they might raise money to help children in need. They have also initiated their own schemes for raising money for particular causes, for example a local hospital that had treated someone they knew. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities and visits, which all help to develop their social skills.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	21.9	School data	3.9

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

11. The school's attendance figures are in line with the national average for this type of school. The figures appear low because they include pupils recorded as absent but actually being regularly taught at home by the school's outreach teacher. The school has good procedures to monitor pupils' attendance and encourage them to come to school.

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	60	35	1
White – any other White background	3	0	0

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

12. The school has a clear policy on pupil exclusions which is applied consistently. Although there are many temporary exclusions, analysis of the patterns has enabled the school to identify problem areas and to start to reduce their number. The recent setting up of Uplands is in response to the school's concern to avoid recourse to exclusion.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good, overall. The curriculum is good. Pupils are very well cared for and get good support and guidance.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is more effective in Years 10 and 11 because the majority of pupils have matured and settled to a greater degree than the younger and newer pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Very good or better teaching results from the successful combination of enjoyable, engaging lessons and the effective management of pupils' behaviour.
- In most subjects, teachers' expertise is used effectively to give pupils interesting and challenging activities.
- Teachers' use of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, supports learning especially well.
- Teaching is planned well to meet the needs of pupils in Uplands.

Commentary

13. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved satisfactorily and is now good, overall. This is the result of the recent close attention given to teaching by senior staff. Teaching remains more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 concentrate on achieving success in the GCSE and other certificated courses provided at this stage. Qualifications are a significant incentive to most of these pupils and they are therefore more inclined than pupils in Years 7 to 9 to express positive attitudes to learning and not to misbehave. This meant teaching in Years 10 and 11 usually had scope to reach a higher level of effectiveness without being sometimes frustrated, as it was in Years 7 to 9, by pupils not co-operating and misbehaving. However, the response by staff to misbehaviour was generally effective in halting disruptions so that learning could usually be recovered.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	14 (34%)	13 (32%)	8 (20%)	5 (12%)	0	0

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

14. The most effective teaching rested on the expertise of teachers to present subjects in interesting and challenging ways. Teachers' use of resources was particularly good and this interested and engaged pupils effectively. Their use of interactive whiteboards in many lessons kept pupils well focused and on task. The successful teaching and learning seen also hinged on the success with which teachers had formed positive relationships with pupils based on getting to know them, showing interest and setting high expectations. The very good teaching in English in Years 10 and 11 was the result of establishing a very structured approach to managing pupils' behaviour, which confidently and constantly reinforced positive attitudes to work. This is an effective preventative strategy that pupils are responding to very well and it contributes to productive relationships. In lessons, very good expertise in English teaching, thorough planning and assessment lost none of their impact, which meant pupils learnt very well. They enjoyed work and their writing showed serious application and productivity. The marking of pupils' English work provides them with a detailed assessment, including very helpful comments on achievement and areas for improvement.
15. These strong features of teaching were present in English lessons in Years 7 to 9 but, despite teachers' best efforts, a minority of pupils' unreliable behaviour sometimes detracted from the quality of learning. Disruption also affected learning in science in Years 7 and 8, which was exacerbated in some cases by overlong lesson introductions, failing to hold pupils' attention. Similarly, music and personal, social and health education were not taught with the verve found in many very good lessons in other subjects, which meant pupils were less interested, and they therefore tended to misbehave. As teachers sometimes found difficulty in dealing with serious misbehaviour and relied more on support staff and senior staff intervening, the time taken in dealing with misbehaviour on occasion hindered learning.
16. Similar teaching strengths as those in English were found in mathematics and science, with the most positive impact being felt in Years 10 and 11. Where pupils were enthusiastic and fully involved in their lessons, learning was good and sometimes very good. Pupils are involved in extensive use of information and communication technology as it is included in teaching most subjects. As a result, learning was very good for all pupils. Similarly, as language, literacy and mathematical skills also feature in much of pupils' work across the curriculum, learning in these key skills is good, overall. Practical activities, such as the strong emphasis in most science lessons on pupils conducting experiments, ensured a good engagement in learning. The same effect was seen in art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology. Good lesson planning and very effective use of assessment ensures work is well matched to pupils' capabilities and they are given clear guidance on how to improve. Over time these general strengths of teaching help offset the worst effects any misbehaviour has on learning and the majority make at least good progress as a result. In addition, the contribution of expert learning support teachers is very good in terms of assessing, planning and providing sustained help for the many pupils with greater difficulty in learning language, literacy and mathematics. Also, classroom assistants attend very well to supporting learning and this gives more reinforcement to pupils eventually acquiring positive learning habits.

17. The small Uplands group, made up mostly of pupils in Years 7 to 9 who are the least capable of coping with the demands of school, is taught well. Very positive relationships gain pupils' co-operation and lead to them settling to work and learning well. Teachers have a good knowledge of these pupils' needs and so activities are pitched appropriately to engage pupils purposively in short periods of work.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall and is enriched well with many additional activities. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum now provides a fuller range and quality of opportunities, and they are more closely matched to pupils' needs.
- In the majority of subjects, curriculum innovation, flexibility and diversity are facilitating the engagement of the most disaffected pupils.
- The Uplands class is having a very positive impact on pupils with specific behavioural needs.
- There are extensive opportunities for enriching learning.
- Good accommodation and well resourced subjects enhance learning and achievement.
- Statutory requirements are not met for the teaching of religious education to Uplands pupils.

Commentary

18. The curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection as a result of a recent determined drive by the acting headteacher, supported by staff, to review and update the whole of the curriculum, although work in some areas such as personal, social and health education and citizenship is still in progress. Learning opportunities are good in English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is particularly strengthened by the cross-curricular use of information and communication technology and the regular reference to literacy and numeracy in many subjects. The broad choice of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 remains a long standing strength of the curriculum. Effectively managed GCSE courses lead to many pupils achieving very well and being considerably advantaged concerning further education, training and employment when they leave. The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well, being adaptable to address individual needs, and the timetable is well balanced in comparison to that in place at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' special educational needs are provided for well. The learning support programme is especially effective and very good in detecting and dealing with specific problems many pupils have in language and literacy. Statutory requirements are now met with the exception of religious education, which is not taught to pupils in Uplands.
19. The local authority has recognised the positive impact of the Uplands class, recently established in the school, and is providing extra funding for it. A curriculum based on the core subjects, creativity, social and life skills is providing good opportunities for those pupils who otherwise may be excluded. While it is still early days in the development of Uplands provision, it is currently succeeding in keeping the most challenging pupils on board and engaged positively in learning. Additional funding is

also being provided to extend the outreach service, which focuses on teaching English, mathematics and science to permanently excluded pupils, including some from other schools, at home. Both these projects have yet to be fully evaluated, but it is clear that they are keeping potentially isolated pupils engaged in learning as a result of well planned provision. Linking with another special school is broadening chances to participate in vocational education.

20. All pupils access a wide range of good quality extra-curricular activities. There is strong participation in sport, especially water-sports, with opportunities catering for interests such as archery, fishing and rock climbing. There are ample arts, cultural and other experiences, ranging from African drumming to narrow boat trips, enjoyed by pupils.
21. New and refurbished rooms, as for information and communication technology, and colourful, stimulating and informative curriculum displays, including a multitude of celebratory photographs of pupils' activities, help create a positive learning environment. Every subject is well resourced to ensure the range of pupils' learning needs can be met.

Care, guidance and support

There are very good arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides pupils with good support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is effective in supporting pupils, who develop very good relationships with staff.
- The adults in the school know the pupils well and have well-informed knowledge of the boys as individuals.
- The residential provision is used very well to support the pupils who board.
- The school provides a very safe environment for staff and pupils.

Commentary

22. Pastoral care of pupils is very good as it is a key aim of the school, which has been achieved through effective leadership and management. Teachers and other staff know their pupils well and they build productive relations with them. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult to approach and confide in. There are good formal systems to monitor pupils' personal development and staff use this information well to set targets, particularly in the annual review of pupils' statements. Staff track pupils' progress effectively and this helps them to give good guidance and support on how pupils can improve their knowledge and skills. In marking work many teachers take particular care in providing pupils with helpful comments on how to raise standards. Staff are deployed effectively to manage any incidents of misbehaviour, although the attention they pay to pupils learning good classroom habits is insufficient. There are regular multi-agency meetings to support the pupils. The school sees its role as supporting their wider families as well as the pupils themselves. The care of pupils benefits significantly from the contacts the school makes with their homes. The school and its partners provide effective guidance on future pathways for pupils at their transition reviews in Years 9 to 11. Pupils are supported well with guidance on further

study or careers pathways. This resulted last year, for example, in most leavers entering employment or further education.

23. Residential provision contributes very well to the support and guidance of the pupils who board at the school. Boarding is used flexibly to support pupils and their families. Pupils stay on a planned basis which varies from the whole week to occasional overnights. Residential care is very well managed, with staff well briefed on pupils' needs. It provides a well-structured range of worthwhile activities, including, for example, swimming, music-making and walks in the local hills. Boarders have been involved well in the current refurbishment of the residential accommodation. The highlight of last term was when pupils celebrated the Chinese New Year in style with a magnificent dancing dragon and a Chinese meal, with pupils helping in the preparation. There is a residents' council which meets regularly and contributes views on how boarding provision can be improved.
24. The school's child protection procedures fulfil requirements; staff are fully briefed on their responsibilities and the necessary records are kept. The school has appropriate links with agencies such as social services to ensure that pupils get additional help when they need it. The school provides a very safe working environment. There are regular safety audits of the site and their main findings are acted upon. Risk assessments are being completed to cover school trips and other activities. The school reviews medical care plans regularly and has good safeguards for the administration of medicines. Effective First Aid provision and fire safety procedures are in place.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with parents. There is a satisfactory partnership with the wider community and there are good links with other local schools. The school's outreach provision to support pupils educated at home is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided to parents keeps them well informed about how well their son is performing and keeps them in touch with the life of the school.
- There are effective links with nearby schools and new projects are being developed to achieve a greater level of interaction with those further afield.

Commentary

25. Many parents live a long way from the school and hence it is difficult to involve them in its life. Very few parents took the opportunity provided by the inspection to express views about the school. However, there is a good flow of information to parents about their children's well-being and progress. There is an individual weekly report showing how well each pupil has performed in school and in the residence. Staff also telephone parents every week to share successes or difficulties with them. The school holds three parents' evenings a year and makes a considerable effort to help parents attend. Parents are welcome to visit the school at any time and there was a good turnout at last year's sports day. Parents are kept well informed about the school through regular newsletters, including the Residents Rag written each term.
26. The school admits pupils from a number of primary schools widely spread across the local authority, which limits scope to create a high level of interaction between schools. Downland provides useful support to mainstream schools nearby, sharing, for

example, expertise in managing pupils' behaviour. Teachers from other schools pay visits and observe good practice. Collaboration is developing with the local authority's other special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Both schools are working towards sharing one's vocational education provision and the other's outreach service to the advantage of all their pupils. Pupils from Downland School and the nearby junior school worked together to raise funds for the Tsunami Appeal. The school's links with various local organisations provide Year 10 pupils with work experience placements. A number of local agencies are involved in helping pupils and work closely with the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the acting headteacher is very good and that of other key staff is good. Residential provision is led and managed very well. Management of the school is good. Governance is satisfactory but the statutory requirements in relation to religious education are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher has proved very effective in settling the school and giving it a clear sense of direction.
- The role of governors has been limited although they are now becoming more active in managing the school.
- Raising expectations throughout the school has resulted in positive improvements and successful new initiatives.
- New behaviour management procedures are beginning to work effectively for older pupils. They have had less impact on pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Staff are effective managers because they work to clear expectations, especially in planning and developing the curriculum.

Commentary

27. The deputy headteacher, who has been in post for many years, has stood in for the former headteacher during many periods of absence. The school had not been properly settled for a lot of the time since the last inspection, until the deputy headteacher acted as headteacher following the headteacher's resignation. Prior to this, uncertainty in management placed staff under considerable stress, their morale had been low and their level of absence was significant. Since the acting headteacher has been in post they are now in a much happier state and effective despite many having to take on new roles and more responsibilities temporarily until the headteacher post is settled. The school has done well to hold onto the standards pupils achieve and, in more recent moves, to bring about good improvement, overall.
28. The acting headteacher, well supported by senior staff, has worked hard to ensure that many new procedures have been put in place to help the school function well. The majority of these are now supporting most pupils' achievement well. An effective approach across the school to managing pupils' behaviour is having a positive impact in many lessons, notably in English. Senior staff, care staff and others are well deployed to provide reliable and effective support to teachers when they have to deal with any serious misbehaviour. However, the prevention of misbehaviour by teachers

is not always effective and this has an adverse affect in some lessons, particularly those in Years 7 to 9.

29. Governors are closely in touch with the school and are highly committed to its success. They are strong in their external role of protecting the school's interests. However, they have not played a full governing role in supporting and guiding the school's work, partly because they are under strength in numbers, but also because the expectation of a more active role in the past was not sufficiently high. As a result, governors have not been alert to meeting all of their statutory responsibilities. When Uplands was set up there was no check to confirm religious education was being taught. More recently, governance has begun to take on a more effective shape in its working relationship with the school.
30. School improvement processes are recently established although they do not extend beyond planning a year ahead. Although this is partly due to limited development planning in the past, but also the local authority's review of special school provision and the lack of a firm decision on re-organisation proposals make it difficult to plan further ahead. Nevertheless, current decision-making on the use of the school's finances is well managed and includes all staff and governors in agreeing the priorities. This takes good account of local and national initiatives as well as what the school knows it needs to do to improve educational provision and raise standards.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1292306
Total expenditure	1297342
Expenditure per pupil	20592

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	51256
Balance carried forward to the next	46220

31. With his position firmer, the acting headteacher has picked up the pace of improvement considerably. He has given a very good lead to raising expectations regarding the quality of teaching and learning and educational provision. There are noticeable improvements in both areas. Over the past year the entire curriculum has undergone substantial review and much clearer planning of what is taught has emerged. While a consultant guided rebuilding the curriculum, the detailed work was carried out effectively by subject leaders. Some of this work is not yet complete, for example, in personal, social and health education and citizenship. New initiatives responding to the needs of the most challenging pupils have begun. Outreach work in the form of home tuition supports pupils unable or unwilling to attend school. Uplands, a support class for the most disruptive pupils, is succeeding in avoiding excluding these pupils. Both initiatives have won praise from the local authority and have been awarded substantial funding for development. A sister school will buy into outreach provision and give Downland pupils access to its vocational education programme.
32. It is particularly positive that staff have ownership of their areas of responsibility, thereby investing effort and initiative in achieving success. The specialist provision for supporting pupils with language and literacy difficulties benefits in this way. Residential provision is very well led and managed as a result. Performance management has for a long time been in abeyance but is very recently underway with clear links to training and school improvement. An objective for all staff is the development of information and communication technology. Training for staff has been especially successful in

leading to substantial use of information and communication technology by pupils and staff across the school. As a result, there has been a remarkable improvement in information and communication technology and provision is now very good.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

33. **Work-related learning** was not a focus for inspection and it is not possible to make a judgement on provision. Discussions took place with the acting headteacher, careers officer, teachers and pupils, although Year 11 pupils were not attending at the time of the inspection. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work. Careers education is taught as part of personal, social and health education and citizenship and there are good links with local organizations and employers, who provide work experience placements. The school is developing pupils' work-related skills through history, design and technology, personal, social and health education and citizenship. The school is aiming to provide greater opportunities for vocational education and is currently exploring links with other schools and colleges to achieve this. It has a good policy for work-related learning and is developing a clear strategy for implementing it, which is understood by all those involved and meets statutory requirements.
34. Pupils learn through work experience and learn about work by developing their knowledge and understanding through discussion, visits and careers education. In Years 10 and 11, pupils learn about work through developing skills for employability, through contributions from careers lessons and discussions with the visiting careers personnel.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English is reported in full below. French was sampled.

35. One **French** lesson was seen. At the time of the last inspection the subject was not taught and it has only recently been introduced to the timetable for pupils in Years 7 to 9. As a result, provision is at a very early stage of development. The language skills of the Year 9 pupils in the lesson seen were rudimentary and expectations around conversational French were too low. However, lively teaching and the use of a well resourced café scenario made learning enjoyable. Pupils were confident in their attempts to ask for menu items but their teacher did not focus enough on correcting pupils' weak sentence construction and pronunciation.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' assessment and marking of pupils' work sets high expectations and shows pupils clearly how to raise the standard of their work.
- The support for pupils who have great difficulty in learning language and literacy skills is very good.
- The work pupils in Years 7 to 9 have done over time shows they have learnt well and benefited from a broad range of language and literacy topics.
- Very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is the result of the combination of subject expertise and encouraging pupils to behave well.
- Good leadership and new developments in English contribute to maintaining a culture of high expectations.

Commentary

36. Each piece of pupils' work is annotated very carefully with comments written in encouraging terms that are realistic in praising achievement. In what they say, teachers are clear in relation to the standards each pupil should reach in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE in Year 11. The regularity and high quality of teachers' written comments is a measure of high expectations and knowledge of standards in English and of each pupil's capabilities. Comments are taken on board by pupils and lead them to making progress and raising standards. In doing so they demonstrate their development of good attitudes to learning. This is most effective in Years 10 and 11, where teaching and assessment are focused sharply on the demands of GCSE and this leads to very good achievement. Throughout the school, teachers consistently pick up on weak points in pupils' work that would be penalised in tests and examinations, such as untidy handwriting and poor use of punctuation. Such points are developed into targets, which pupils keep inside the front cover of their workbooks, and it is

evident from their work that many pupils steadily improve language and literacy skills. While the grades, overall, are not as high as in other subjects, GCSE results in English are very good, especially when considering the difficulty many pupils experience with language and literacy. Equally, English grades are affected by the fact that pupils are not entitled to the support they have in many other GCSE examinations because of their learning difficulties.

37. Expert teaching for pupils with language and literacy difficulties makes a significant contribution to achievement. A number of pupils have individual lessons with a learning support teacher. These pupils are identified when they first arrive, and through close assessment of their learning difficulties they are supported very effectively in improving their reading, writing and spelling skills.
38. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, although in the lessons seen achievement was often only satisfactory because of some pupils' unsettled behaviour, which affected the quality of learning despite lessons being planned well. Behaviour disrupting teaching was always picked up and dealt with effectively by senior staff and others available to support the teacher although the amount of time taken dealing with this sometimes affected the quality of learning. Pupils have developed the use of language and variety of vocabulary effectively and have made their writing well structured and interesting to readers. While pupils are not accomplished in speaking and listening or reading aloud to an audience, they have read and understood plays such as Macbeth. Written work demonstrates good analysis of the play's storyline and the nature of its characters. As their research progressed, pupils' engagement and enjoyment of Macbeth was very evident in their writing.
39. The small number of pupils taught outside their class groups in Uplands achieve as well as others in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is well planned in matching the needs of each pupil and the expected curriculum requirements. Despite their exceptional difficulties in settling to learning, pupils enjoy lessons. The interaction between pupils and staff is very positive as a result of very good relationships. Teachers are well aware of the necessity to plan work in short, well focused activities in order to support pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are more prepared to co-operate and are amenable to behaving appropriately.
40. Very effective teaching has led to more substantial and mature relationships in Years 10 and 11 than found in Years 7 to 9. In the Year 10 classes seen, pupils had a commitment to the GCSE course and to meeting the teacher's high expectations. As a result, their behaviour was good. Teaching has very effectively encouraged good learning habits such as each pupil working independently and being prepared to help each other. These values are prominently displayed, are at the core of teaching approaches and are constantly reinforced. In feedback to pupils in the course of lessons it is said plainly whether expectations have been met or not. Pupils accept and see the value of this reflection on their performance and it results in their very good achievement. Pupils made full responses to questions on Romeo and Juliet, writing in a clear and understandable manner that shows an in-depth knowledge of the play. They produce long pieces of well-structured written work, which achieve high quality in response to criticism, re-drafting and word processing. They read and understand a wide variety of texts, for example, news and non-fiction, and extract relevant information from these sources.
41. The leadership and management of English have gained impetus from higher expectations set by the acting headteacher. There is a clear picture of the

effectiveness of the subject from monitoring and this is used to shape next year's priorities, which are being developed as well-written action plans. The department is aiming to include all Year 9 pupils in national tests, which will help raise their achievement and self-esteem. An Entry Level Certificate has been introduced this year to allow all pupils the opportunity to gain an appropriate qualification. The co-ordination of promoting language and literacy across the curriculum is gathering momentum but is at an early stage. The provision for English homework and enjoyment of reading is well established for pupils in residence. While good initiatives are now in train these are relatively new so improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. Overall, language and literacy are promoted satisfactorily although informally in other subjects. In general, the good attention to reinforcing subject vocabulary through teaching and displaying key words on the board and around the classroom means pupils are supported effectively to learn and spell new words. Pupils occasionally speak at assemblies. In information and communication technology, pupils learn to organise and improve the presentation of information, and residential pupils are encouraged to read in the evenings.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good and very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well throughout the school.
- Good subject leadership and management have guided significant improvements since the previous inspection.

Commentary

43. Pupils are often effectively engaged, and make good progress, because teachers provide a wide variety of purposeful mental and practical activities designed to match different levels of ability. Able teaching assistants sensitively intervene to challenge and support groups and individuals, helping teachers to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour and to ensure all pupils are inspired to improve their numeracy skills. Detailed, consistent planning, drawing upon informative assessment, regularly features the use of information and communication technology and makes a contribution to extending literacy skills.
44. A very strong determination to nurture learning and positive, encouraging relationships move mathematical thinking forwards. Over time, this acts to increase pupils' interest and confidence in the subject, leading to better attitudes and behaviour, which accounts for good achievement. However, at times, before pupils' good personal qualities were consolidated, learning and achievement were lessened where disruptive behaviour emerged several times in a lesson.
45. In Years 7 to 9, teachers' planning is based on the Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy, well adapted with reference to assessment information to meet individual needs. Good teaching methods and organisation in Year 7 ensure the regular

reinforcement of the understanding of the basic numeracy operations, with topics such as data handling enhanced by pupils using spreadsheets on computers. Booster lessons, using well-selected tasks and resources, motivated pupils in Years 8 and 9 to respond to questions, share ideas and deepen their understanding of a range of topics such as algebra. Good, thoughtful support enabled pupils in Uplands to produce worthwhile work and develop numeracy skills.

46. In Years 10 and 11 a persistent approach of high expectations for good behaviour and growth in learning resulted in very productive lessons and pupils achieved very well as a result. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils often lay out their work carefully, responding well to tasks related to real situations such as percentage discounts in sales. The good use of PowerPoint presentations and interactive computer programs gains pupils attention and extends their mathematical knowledge. A very strong emphasis on achievement leads to Year 11 pupils consistently gaining GCSE results at a higher rate than similar schools.
47. The recently appointed acting co-ordinator has successfully continued the good leadership and management of mathematics, based on a high achievement ethic. Good improvements since the previous inspection include assessment being used effectively to match tasks to needs, increased use of information and communication technology to enhance learning, the consistent use of teaching assistants and an increasing use of mathematics across the curriculum.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Pupils are encouraged to use and develop their mathematics skills in several subjects, supported by the identification of opportunities for numeracy being included as an aspect of the school's common lesson planning format. In design and technology, measuring skills are used with precision. Opportunities are taken in information and communication technology to link spreadsheet numerical information to formulas. Statistics on marriage and divorce in religious education and temperature in geography are used well to deepen understanding.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11.
- A good curriculum gives pupils opportunities to experience a wide range of science.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has a very positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- In Years 7 and 8 the lessons seen were not effective in motivating pupils, who went on to disrupt lessons.
- Good resources support pupils' learning well.
- The subject is well led and managed and improvement has been good since the last inspection.

Commentary

49. By the end of Year 9, pupils are developing good scientific knowledge, skills and understanding. They recognise the need to observe carefully and understand the importance of accurately recording and measuring the results of their investigations. These skills are built upon and developed very well so that by the end of Year 11 most are successful in obtaining a pass grade at GCSE. The highest attaining pupils are frequently awarded the higher C grade.
50. Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching throughout the school is planned in detail, making lessons interesting and challenging. Teachers make good use of practical investigations supported by multimedia presentations, including learning objectives and key words. Lessons are often introduced in such a way that the discovery of new facts is made exciting, which assists in pupils' learning. This is often consolidated with interesting and lucid illustrations of science facts. Some teaching was made unsatisfactory by a slow pace and overlong introductions. This affected lessons in Years 7 and 8 and led pupils to cause disruption. Teaching assistants had to spend time dealing with pupils' misbehaviour and their more usual effectiveness in supporting learning was hindered. In very successful lessons observed in Year 10, pupils enjoyed and understood the investigations, and were keen to be involved. As a result these pupils were able to explain their findings and hypothesise, and enjoyed learning.
51. Resources for lessons are good. The school has a well equipped laboratory and a good range of equipment to support the taught curriculum. This is supported by good use of the school grounds and local wildlife areas where pupils can study life processes. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE syllabus and gain in confidence from the very good support and feedback on their progress from the teacher. The use of information and communication technology is being developed well as a means of presenting scientific knowledge and for pupils to conduct research using the Internet.
52. The science provision is well led and managed and is being developed further by the subject co-ordinator. Despite the challenge of working with pupils with severe behavioural problems and uncertain leadership of the school for a number of years, the department's provision has improved well, as have pupils' achievements in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall and enables pupils to achieve very well throughout the school.
- Very good subject leadership and management has guided outstanding improvement since the previous inspection.
- Investment in resources and accommodation, training and a focus for all teachers has significantly increased confidence in using ICT and access to it for staff and pupils.

Commentary

53. Pupils appreciate the opportunities provided, show care in using ICT equipment and make very good progress. This is because teachers create a positive learning environment with an atmosphere of productivity and respect. As a result, teaching is

never less than good and the majority is very good. Very effective teaching is greatly assisted by the interest all pupils have in using the many applications in ICT. Their attitudes and behaviour are good in lessons. Thorough planning, drawing upon informative assessment shared well with pupils through marking comments, ensures individual needs are met. Literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted. An emphasis is placed on independent learning, with a challenging and supportive team approach expressing expectations of high achievement and good behaviour.

54. In Year 7 very well established positive relationships lead to pupils helping each other and a willingness to respond to good questioning. Teaching assistants are very well deployed in highly interactive lessons delivered at a rapid pace. Strategies ensure all pupils are engaged.
55. Pupils gather information and produce, organise and amend ideas, including the use of digital photography. There were no opportunities to observe lessons in Years 8 and 9, but assessment information and pupils' work demonstrated that they achieve very well. Pupils are able to create web pages and can describe and compare the use of ICT and its effect in everyday life.
56. Year 10 pupils understand the very clear objectives set for them. Very enthusiastic teaching, sensitively applied to bring out the best in the pupils, ensures on-going very good progress. Pupils evaluate their own and others' work, critically and respectfully reflecting on how improvements can be made. Year 11 pupils are capable of combining a range of ICT based and other information for presentation to a variety of audiences, as evidenced in their design and technology portfolios. This attainment is equivalent to a similar age group in a mainstream setting, and the substantial achievement made in ICT shows in pupils' improving GCSE results.
57. The very successful leadership and management of ICT is a significant factor in the immense improvement made since the previous inspection. Key issues for ICT then included raising standards, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and developing the curriculum. Unsatisfactory assessment and the lack of a coordinator were also highlighted. Every previously unsatisfactory aspect has been so thoroughly dealt with to the extent that ICT is now a strength of the school. The coordinator's vision and organisation is ensuring this positive evolution of ICT remains high on the school's agenda.
58. Very strong support to developing ICT is provided by the headteacher. ICT has been given a high profile through whole staff training, a focus in all subjects, resources in every classroom, and two well-equipped rooms for teaching ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

59. Exceptional improvement from previously limited use in other subjects to widespread confident use of ICT across the curriculum has been made. Subject teachers regularly project information and images from their laptops onto whiteboards, and learning is often enhanced through pupils working on computers. Examples include using the Internet to research health issues in personal, social and health education, graphs generated in mathematics and the understanding of statistics in religious education and geography. In all subjects, ICT has aided an improvement in the recording and presentation of pupils' work.

HUMANITIES

Religious education is reported in full below. Geography and history were sampled.

60. No lessons in **geography** were seen. Examination of pupils' work and of teachers' plans and records, however, show that an adequate range of topics are studied by pupils in Years 7 to 9 and that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met.
61. **History** is taught through topics up to the end of Year 9 and follows the history GCSE syllabus in Years 10 and 11. Over several years, GCSE results have been good. Stories and non-fiction work in English and in other subjects such as religious education provide good links to history topics, supporting pupils' achievement. The subject makes good use of ICT for research and the presentation of topics such as World War 2.
62. In the small number of lessons observed, pupils responded well to questions and their work showed understanding of the topics. Their workbooks contain good attention to detail. In both lessons the use of interesting and appropriate source materials was very good. Pupils used them to pick out key facts needed to complete their own report of events such as on the 'blitzkrieg' in World War 2 and how Welsh castles resisted the Norman invasion. In both lessons very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to project images and key words linked to each lesson.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic leadership of religious education has stimulated the development of a curriculum adapted to the interest and relevance of pupils throughout the school.
- Effective approaches to teaching religious education help to overcome pupils' resistance to the subject and engage them positively in learning.
- Statutory requirements for the subject are not met.

Commentary

63. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory and this has resulted in adequate improvement since the last inspection in resolving the shortcoming in learning resources for the subject. The broad range of topics taught to each group connects religious beliefs to the moral and social issues pupils encounter or are likely to face in the future. Topics provide opportunities to study Christianity and other world religions. In this respect religious education is organised well and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, and achievement in knowledge, skills and understanding is satisfactory. Over time, pupils appreciate many subtle and complex points connected, for example, to relationships, the environment and poverty. They are less strong on the relevance of religious teaching to the moral and social dimensions of the topics taught. The subject co-ordinator has taken good advantage of links with the local authority's religious education adviser, local schools and training to develop an attractive programme of teaching. However, at present not all pupils are taught religious education. The subject is not included on the timetable for the small number of pupils in Uplands, the newly formed support class, and therefore statutory requirements are not fully met.

64. Two lessons were available to be seen, both involving Year 10 pupils. In these lessons, teaching was good overall, but pupils at times showed a low level of interest, which restricted the quality of discussion. Teaching attempted to engage pupils' interest with well thought out approaches such as introducing the topic on divorce with an animated excerpt of two penguins in conflict. This caught pupils' attention and the teacher was adept at making pertinent links that elicited several thoughtful contributions on the impact of couples in conflict. Several pupils demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the issues. While teaching involved considerable efforts to maintain challenge, pupils' speaking and listening skills were not matched to the demands. Teaching tackled a wider range of skills well, for example, giving pupils an opportunity to read aloud. A few were prepared to do this and read accurately but not fluently. They were also shown statistical facts on marriage and divorce and most made an accurate interpretation from the figures of trends in marriage, co-habitation and divorce over time.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology was sampled.

65. Only a small number of lessons were seen. The lessons in **resistant materials technology** set high expectations which were reflected in pupils' good attitudes and behaviour in the workshop. In one Year 10 lesson, pupils made good quality toys from wood and their workbooks showed careful planning and development of designs for items such as toy tractors. Scrutiny of Year 10 and 11 pupils' work shows that most are in line to achieve a GCSE pass grade. Past GCSE results in resistant materials technology are among the best in the school. In 2004, most pupils entered gained a Grade C, which no other subject matched. The access for pupils and staff to the use of information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection. In the one lesson of **food technology** seen, teaching did not succeed in capturing pupils' interest sufficiently with the result they were not involved well in learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were sampled.

66. GCSE results in **art and design** are good and have been consistently so over several years. They are among the best examination results achieved in the school. Lessons are well planned, being based on a thorough assessment of pupils' previous work. Teachers' expertise and an effective curriculum ensure pupils know what they have to do in order to achieve well. Computers, including research using the Internet, are used effectively to enhance learning. When pupils show interest and behave well they work productively and with enjoyment despite the limited space in the art room. However, when pupils are less engaged much of the adults' time is spent in trying to encourage positive behaviour and this affects the rate of learning.
67. There is a suitable programme of **music** lessons planned for pupils up to the end of Year 9. In the very small number of lessons seen the teaching did not inspire or motivate pupils. This gave rise to unsatisfactory behaviour had a negative impact on learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education was sampled.

68. One lesson was seen which showed that **games** are taught with good expertise in coaching skills. Year 9 pupils enjoyed taking part in catching practice that demanded the utmost reactions and concentration. Most performed well in dealing with a fast moving ball and made catches that were hard to anticipate. The lesson was well planned with a good variety of exercises building sound cricketing skills. The opportunity to compete as a team towards the end of the lesson meant pupils learnt to follow rules and play together constructively. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can take a GCSE in physical education and those entered gain good results each year.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education is reported in full. Citizenship was sampled.

69. It was not possible to observe any **citizenship** lessons. The citizenship curriculum is at an early stage of development. The school has recently audited the whole curriculum and has already planned for the expansion of opportunities for pupils to learn citizenship.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has some strong features, but pupils' misbehaviour sometimes disrupts learning.
- The leadership of PSHE displays a clear vision to improve the subject.

Commentary

70. Pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory, although there are times such as in a tutor group discussing support for a local charity when achievement is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Individual lesson plans are good, resources are well selected and sensitive issues are dealt with appropriately. However, the misbehaviour of a few pupils in PHSE lessons had sometimes an adverse impact on learning and took away from better overall achievement. Teaching assistants are not always deployed sufficiently well during such episodes, although drawing on the support of senior staff, which is readily available, helps to overcome disruptions when they arise.
71. When they are on task, pupils make worthwhile contributions to discussions, and they are more relaxed and attentive when involved in practical tasks. Opportunities are well taken to use information and communication technology, such as researching on the Internet the risks of poor diet and smoking to health.
72. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 recognise the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol, and gain knowledge and understanding about issues such as bullying, puberty and relationships. By the time pupils leave school they have gained in self-awareness,

understanding that they need to be different in different settings and with a wider variety of people, and they know the issues that may arise in sexual relationships.

73. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator has good vision and is developing the PHSE curriculum. PSHE was judged at the time of the previous inspection as needing improvement. Revitalised leadership and management across the school have provided the impetus to move forward and the improvement made so far is satisfactory. As part of higher expectations, an accredited course is being established and the school is on course to achieve the Healthy Schools award. While records summarising pupils' contributions to lessons are made, no systematic assessment procedures are in place.

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

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

In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not against national standards.

