

INSPECTION REPORT

HEBBURN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Campbell Park Road, Hebburn. NE31 2QU

LEA area: South Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108731

Headteacher: Mr. D.N. Anderson

Reporting inspector: Mr. C.T. Hemsley
1609

Dates of inspection: 12th to 15th May 2003

Inspection number: 251959

Full 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 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Campbell Park Road, Hebburn.
Postcode:	NE31 2QU
Telephone number:	0191 4833199
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. T. Lillico
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1609	Mr. C.T. Hemsley	Registered inspector		Summary of the report. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12503	Mr. M. Cundick	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English	The school's results and achievements.
31550	Mrs. S. Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1547	Mr. G.L. Clarke	Team inspector	Science	
1544	Mr. P. Livsey	Team inspector	History	
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography	
24037	Mr. M. Ashfield	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32333	Mr. R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information technology	
18955	Mrs. C. Earlam	Team inspector	Art	
32087	Mr. J. Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education	
1549	Mr. T. Robshaw	Team inspector	Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
16359	Mr. J. Farrow	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	
8009	Mr. J. Forsythe	Team inspector	Music	
16890	Mrs. M. Potter	Team inspector	Religious education	

17765	Mr. J. McElwee	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hebburn Comprehensive School is of an average size and is currently educating 917 boys and girls aged 11 to 16, a slightly higher number than at the last inspection. The school has the capacity to take more pupils. Year groups vary between 162 and 199. Most pupils come from the Tyneside conurbation town of Hebburn, which contains areas of economic and social deprivation and has high levels of long-term unemployment. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals - 27%, is above average. Most pupils are white, a very small proportion, less than 1%, are from minority or mixed ethnic groups, there are no refugees. The number of pupils entering or leaving the school during each year is above average. Attainment on entry is below average overall but covers a wide range of ability, having been slightly below average at the time of the last inspection. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is extremely small and there are no problems with fluency in English. The number of pupils in school with special educational needs (SEN) - 89, is below average, including 12 with statements, a below average number. The school is a member of the South Tyneside Excellence in Cities (EiC) Partnership, member of an EiC Education Action Zone with 3 primary schools, and is connected to a regional City Learning Centre for Information Technology.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Hebburn Comprehensive School provides a good education for its pupils. Standards in tests and examinations well exceed similar schools; pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and often better. Overall achievements are good and supported by good quality teaching. Very good leadership from the head teacher, good support from governors and satisfactory management are ensuring that the school is increasing its rate of improvement. Taking into account the school's above-average income, the quality of provision and results achieved in pupils' academic and personal development, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Achievement in GCSE examinations is much better than similar schools, with particularly good recent results in English literature, art and design, the systems and control course of design and technology (DT), physical education (PE) and religious education (RE).
- Achievement in national tests for 14 year olds is much better than similar schools, in particular for English.
- Pupils' achievement is currently good across the school in English, mathematics, and RE. Their achievement is very good in art and design for Years 10 and 11. It is good in DT and music for Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils make good progress in literacy.
- Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are expected to work hard.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good, in lessons they are frequently very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers manage pupils very well and there are good and very good relationships.
- Very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Most parents are pleased with most of what the school provides.
- The head teacher provides very good leadership.
- Governors provide good support for the school.

What could be improved

- There is insufficient capacity in the senior leadership team to carry out all leadership and management functions as effectively as the school wishes.
- The standards of 14 year olds in science, art and design and modern foreign languages (MFL) are currently unsatisfactory although achievement in these subjects is satisfactory and better by the time pupils take GCSE examinations. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in science. Leadership is unsatisfactory in art and design. Management is unsatisfactory in MFL.
- Assessment is not being used effectively enough to set targets for learning and raise standards.
- Financial planning needs a better relationship to school improvement planning.
- The management of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 4, is unsatisfactory and does not ensure the quality of curriculum coverage for all pupils.
- Pupils need more opportunities to develop independent learning in lessons and library provision is unsatisfactory for extended study.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. Since then test and examination results have risen broadly in line with national trends. The overall quality of education has improved and pupils' learning is clearly better. Progress in the eight key issues identified at the last inspection has been satisfactory overall although developments in independent learning remain unsatisfactory. The Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme has had a positive effect on the school. Overall, taking into account standards, provision, learning and progress in the key issues, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils start school with standards below average, with few pupils having higher levels of attainment, and they make good progress by the time they leave. Results in 2002 tests at the end of Year 9 were average, rising at a similar rate to the national trend but pupils' achievement is very good when compared to similar schools, particularly for English. Standards seen during inspection show current attainment of Year 9 pupils to be around average. They are above average in RE and below average in science, art and design, geography, history, ICT and MFL. These pupils' achievements are good overall, particularly in English, mathematics, DT, music and RE, although they do not achieve as much as they should be capable of in science, art and MFL. Year 11 results have improved in line with the national trend. Achievement in GCSE examinations is much better than similar schools, with particularly good results in English Literature, art and design, PE, the systems and control course of DT and RE. Standards seen during inspection are around average and pupils show good achievement overall. Standards are above average in art and design and RE, but below average in science, geography, music, MFL and for some pupils in ICT. Very good achievement is evident in the current Year 11 group in art and good achievement in English, mathematics, MFL and RE. Governors have set ambitious targets for attainment and the school was able to reach or exceed two of the three GCSE targets. Across the school pupils make good progress in literacy and use good listening skills and specific subject vocabulary. They make satisfactory progress in numeracy. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress. Boys' results in tests and examinations are below those of girls but closer than in other schools, however, boys and girls are treated with equal opportunities in this school. The progress of pupils from ethnic minority groups matches that of other pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Good involvement in extra-curricular activities, good involvement in year councils, good contribution to the wider community.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons is frequently very good and occasionally excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils understand how their actions affect others and they show respect for others' feelings and beliefs. Good relationships support the good behaviour.
Attendance	Below average. The school has good systems in place to continue improvements already made. Unauthorised absence is below average and one quarter of the national position.

Improvements to the school's provision for moral, social and citizenship education are supportive of learning and the personal development of pupils is significantly improved since the last inspection. Opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning need developing but are showing improvement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Around one-sixth of the teaching is very good or better, there are a few individual examples of outstanding teaching and few unsatisfactory lessons. Across the age ranges, the teaching of English and mathematics is good and of science is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is good and of numeracy is satisfactory. Good and sometimes very good teaching occurs most regularly in English, mathematics, art and design, DT, history, music and RE. Although satisfactory, the weakest teaching overall is in science. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan and prepare well to make good use of time and resources, use effective methods and manage pupils very well with good relationships. As a result pupils' learning is good overall and at least satisfactory in almost all lessons. Pupils work at a good pace, concentrate and show a good level of interest. Learning would be better if teachers provided more opportunities for independent work and made better use of assessment and homework. Teaching meets the needs of the variety of pupils in most cases, for instance those with SEN, although there is some inconsistency between subjects in the difficulty of the work set for higher-attaining pupils, with strengths and some weaknesses.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a good range of learning opportunities, particularly the breadth and balance for Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Teachers take responsibility for and value all of their pupils. There is effective learning support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. No specialist provision is necessary.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Good provision for moral and social development that provides opportunities for pupils to develop personally. Pupils have good respect for others and their environment. Satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Clear care and concern for individuals. Child protection procedures are well thought out. The school actively tackles any oppressive behaviour.

The school's work with parents is satisfactory. Satisfactory and improving information is provided for parents, for instance through school reports and parents' meetings. Parents' involvement in the school is small and so has little impact. Only around one-tenth of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and only ten parents came to give their views to the inspection team. The impact of parents would be greater if the school made more consistent use of its homework diary system.

There is very good provision for extra curricular activities, mainly because of the extra voluntary work of teachers. The school is inclusive in its nature and pupils are treated with equality. Curriculum provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. There are good strategies for developing literacy. Co-ordination and planning for ICT across the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is unsatisfactory. There is no planning and co-ordination of work to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The school has developed systems to co-ordinate academic data on pupils but it is not yet being used effectively enough to set targets for learning and raise standards. The school is right in its intentions to bring together academic and personal information and support for pupils to provide an overall view of each pupil and help them improve.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The school's aims and values are explicit in its work. Very good leadership from the head teacher provides a very good focus for development and good participation in decision-making is encouraged. The senior leadership team is short staffed and lacks the capacity to carry out all leadership and management functions as effectively as governors would wish. Middle leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but vary between very good and unsatisfactory, leadership of subjects is often better than practical management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Good strategic leadership. Governors are committed to the long-term future of the school. They know the school well and have good expectations. They hold the school to account for most of its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The head teacher knows the school well and increasing use is made of lesson observations to improve learning. The school's data system provides a good basis for the analysis of performance and identifying areas for development. The school needs to make more use of self-evaluation to improve the quality of provision.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Good use is made of extra funding, such as that from 'Excellence in Cities'. Grants are appropriately allocated. Strategies to achieve the school's priorities need clearer costings in improvement plans and allocation of funding to support developments in subjects is unclear. Use of resources is mainly good in lessons but access to the school's good number of computers is difficult for some teachers.

Governors have not ensured that requirements on collective worship are met, nor the need to analyse pupils' performance by racial grouping.

Subject leadership is very good in RE and satisfactory or good in most other subjects. Leadership is unsatisfactory in science and art and design. Subject management is very good in RE, good in English, DT and history, and satisfactory in most other subjects. It is unsatisfactory in science, MFL and ICT across the curriculum.

There are sufficient staff, although the lack of recruitment of a new senior leadership team member limits the team's capacity to support the head teacher. Accommodation is good overall, with some very good areas in DT, music, geography, PE and RE. Resources are adequate for most subjects except in aspects of science, art and design, geography and SEN. Library provision is inadequate.

The school satisfactorily follows the principles of best value in its purchasing of goods and services and the head teacher is rightly involving staff in looking at good practice in management, teaching and learning in successful schools.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good and the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best. • Their child likes school, is making good progress and is being helped to become mature and responsible. • They would feel comfortable about approaching the school. • The school is well led and managed and the head teacher is making good improvements. • Behaviour is good. • There is an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for homework. • The quality of information and how well the school works with them. • Behaviour in school.

Inspectors agree with the overall positive views of the school given by parents. Only around 10 to 20 parents expressed any concerns. Inspectors agree that arrangements for homework need improving. They support the view that the quality of information, while not unsatisfactory, can be improved, parents recognised the new successful systems being put in place during this year. Inspectors do not agree that behaviour is a significant issue for the school. Behaviour is good and often better.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in this school. Compared with similar schools their achievement in national tests and examinations is very good by both Years 9 and 11. Despite starting from a below average base, by the end of Year 11 pupils are reaching standards closer to the national average.
2. Attainment is below average when pupils start in Year 7 and although standards vary each year, overall attainment on entry compared to national averages is below that at the time of the last inspection. While the attainment of pupils on entry covers a wide range there is a higher than average proportion of pupils with below average attainment. The school has been faced with an increasingly difficult task of raising attainment to national levels, however, using evidence of pupils moving through the school from Year 7 to Year 11, it is clear that they make good progress and achieve better than might have been expected. The major influences on this good achievement are the good quality teaching and the school's ethos in which pupils are expected to behave well and work hard.
3. Results in national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2002 were overall in line with national averages. At Level 5 and above, results in English were above national averages, mathematics on the average and science below. In comparison with similar schools and with prior attainment, results showed overall achievement to be very good. There is a rising trend in the school's average point score broadly in line with the national trend.
4. Currently, compared with national expectations, overall standards in Year 9 are in line. Pupils' attainment is average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Given that pupils enter the school with attainment that is below average, this represents achievement that is at least good in English and mathematics. These achievements reflect good teaching and leadership of these subjects.
5. Pupils currently in Year 9 are not achieving as much as they should in science, this is because there is unsatisfactory leadership and management of the subject that is not making effective use of the school's arrangements for allocation of groups to teachers. Pupils have a reasonable grasp of basic concepts, but understanding relationships between them is much less secure.

6. In RE, attainment in Year 9 more than meets the expectations of the South Tyneside local Agreed Syllabus and pupils achieve higher standards than might be expected. In DT and music attainment is average, with pupils making good progress. Attainment is average in PE and citizenship, representing satisfactory achievement. In geography, attainment is below average at Key Stage 3, but achievement is satisfactory, as some pupils enter the school with very limited experience of the subject. In history, attainment is below average but moving closer to the national average and achievement is satisfactory. In ICT teachers' assessments for 2002 show attainment to be well below average but current Year 9 pupils are reaching standards around the national average and pupils make satisfactory progress. In French and German, standards are below the national average; this is an unsatisfactory achievement because, despite satisfactory teaching, inconsistencies of focus across the department mean that pupils are not reaching their potential. Speaking and listening in languages work are better than reading and writing. In art and design, attainment is below average and pupils are not achieving as much as they should, despite good teaching, because the curriculum is not planned well enough and leadership is unsatisfactory.
7. GCSE results for Year 11 in 2002 were below the national average. However, this represented good achievement and progress since pupils started school in Year 7 and the average points score was well above that of schools in similar contexts. There was less than an average proportion of pupils who reached the higher grades (A*-C), although the number of pupils gaining at least 1 GCSE or 5 GCSE grades A*-G was average. This reflects the school's intake, which has less than an expected number of higher-attaining pupils. Standards have risen, broadly in line with the national trend in recent years, and the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades (A* and A) has doubled since the last inspection.
8. Results in mathematics at 5 A*-C were close to the national average. They were below in English. They were above in English Literature even though the percentage of pupils entered was slightly higher than the national figure. Results in dual award science were above the national average, but here the entry was much smaller than nationally. More than half the pupils took single award science, and the results attained were below average. Results in other subjects were below national averages, except in art, PE, and the systems and control course in DT, which were well above. Results in the RE short GCSE course were in line with the national figure on a higher entry than nationally, and many pupils exceeded their predictions.
9. The standards of pupils currently in Year 11 range from above to below average. Attainment is above average in art and design and RE. It is below average in science, geography, ICT and MFL. Standards in other subjects are around average. Pupils currently in Year 11 are achieving much better than expected in art and design, where skills in sculpture and photography are particularly good, and better than expected in English, mathematics, MFL and RE. Given their standards at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in other subjects. Overall achievement is good.

10. The school endeavours to be inclusive and uses a variety of approaches to raise attainment for different groups. The support available through the EIC national funding has enabled some focus on pupils identified by the school as gifted and talented. The 2002 GCSE results showed that these pupils gained higher grades than were predicted. A further group of pupils was identified for support from learning mentors and these pupils made more than expected progress. Support for pupils with SEN is in the process of being improved but these pupils are achieving satisfactorily and often better. This is because their teachers know the pupils well, understand what they have already achieved and use this knowledge effectively to set new and relevant learning challenges. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson lower-attaining pupils, including several with significant SEN, were able to draw upon their existing knowledge of symmetrical shapes before using and applying appropriate mathematical language to a new but unrelated model. The school has few pupils who are not categorized as "White British" according to ethnically collected data. At the present the school does not analyse their achievements separately and this should be done to ensure that the school is confident of the progress of all pupils. However, observation shows that these pupils are making progress in line with other pupils in school. The support given by a variety of non-teaching staff including learning mentors and various assistants has a clear influence on progress of different groups of pupils.
11. Nationally, boys do not attain standards as high as girls in tests and examinations. In this school boys' attainment is closer to girls' than nationally. Boys and girls are treated with equality of opportunity in lessons. The school has worked on teaching techniques to improve the attainment of boys although these did not form a significant part of lessons observed during the inspection.
12. Pupils start school with low levels of literacy. The introduction of the national strategy to develop literacy has helped the school to develop approaches that result in pupils making good progress. Pupils make good use of the special vocabulary needed in subjects. They listen carefully to their teachers and each other and show some confidence in their speaking. For instance, pupils in citizenship lessons can argue their case persuasively. Pupils listen carefully in MFL lessons, largely because often the teaching is done in the language being learned. In art, however, pupils in Years 10 and 11 need to be able to talk more about their own and other artists' work. By the end of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils have a very good understanding of language use and can write for effect. Middle-attaining pupils generally construct their sentences accurately, but lower-attaining pupils have difficulties with sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils can use language skilfully for specific effects. All pupils have an understanding of texts they have read, but lower-attaining pupils continue to have weaknesses in their own writing skills. In history, higher-attaining pupils use sources well and write extended answers to factual questions.

13. Standards of numeracy are below average when pupils start school. Although the school has made some use of the national strategy to develop numeracy and progress is satisfactory, there is more to be done to develop a whole-school approach to developing pupils' skills. Pupils show good progress within mathematics lessons. Year 9 higher-attaining pupils can accept the challenges presented to them and begin to demonstrate algebraic proof. Years 10 and 11 pupils build on their earlier work with higher-attaining pupils demonstrating a variety of high-level techniques, and lower-attaining pupils are able to solve complex linear equations. In other subjects pupils only occasionally demonstrate or develop their skills in numeracy. In ICT pupils make good use of databases to draw charts and diagrams and can use formulae in complex calculations. In science, pupils' numeracy and graphing skills are weak and pupils rely too much on calculators and quote measurements to inappropriate degrees of accuracy.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Attitudes and behaviour are good and play a significant part in helping pupils to learn. Pupils' personal development is good and significantly better than at the time of the last inspection. Attendance is below average but improving. The ethos of the school values learning, harmony, good behaviour and partnership and most pupils enjoy their time in school.
15. Pupil response is predominantly positive to all aspects of school life. They particularly appreciate the support, guidance and encouragement they receive from teaching and non-teaching staff in both their personal and academic developments.
16. In more than three-quarters of lessons observed pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged as good or better, with more than one-third very good or better and nearly one-tenth excellent. This is reflected in their mature conduct during break periods, in the dining room and in their movement around school between lessons. They are courteous and respectful of each other and staff. In the classroom they work well collaboratively and as individual learners. They participate well in lesson discussion and in contributing their own ideas and understanding of what they have learned, as well as respecting the views of others. They also appreciate different teaching styles that contribute to their learning process.
17. Pupils enjoy school and the wide range of opportunities provided to raise their self-confidence and to take on roles of responsibility through year councils, development of their eco-school project, Hebburn Youth for Positive Action (HYPA) project, sports teams and other charity-related activities. The majority are clearly proud of their school as reflected in year council promotion of landscaping of courtyards as both a social and learning resource, the enhancement of sports kit to incorporate the school logo, and the wearing of team, club and responsibility badges; together with opportunities to participate in events within the wider community.
18. Pupil confidence in the school is reflected in a slight improvement in the level of attendance since the previous inspection. Overall attendance is now only 0.3% below the national average and steadily improving, while the proportion of unauthorised absences, below average, is one quarter of the national position.

19. Pupils are aware and predominantly respectful of the school behaviour policy, having contributed to its composition. They respect the code of conduct, respond to sanctions and value the range of rewards, merits and certificates that celebrate a variety of success criteria. They also have confidence in staff and are willing to share any concerns with them both pastoral and academic. This sense of security is based on the firm foundation established in their transition from primary school. They are confident in reasons for placement in teaching bands and tutor groups, and targets set for both academic and personal development. Pupils particularly appreciate targeted support received from the mentoring team and learning support unit in both encouraging their improved levels of achievement and access to the full curriculum.
20. Good attitudes, coupled with good relationships and improving levels of personal responsibility and provision for moral, social and citizenship education are proving supportive of the learning environment and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. Because the school has spare capacity an above average number of pupils enter the school following permanent exclusion, or potential exclusion from other schools, the overall good behaviour in school is a credit to the school's ethos and inclusive approach.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. It is rarely unsatisfactory. Lessons judged to have satisfactory teaching still ensure effective learning. Teaching was good in around two-thirds of all lessons seen and very good or better in around one-sixth. There is a small number of lessons with outstanding teaching. The quality of teaching is a little better in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) than in Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3). All subjects have good teaching and almost all have some that is very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, with more good and very good lessons and fewer unsatisfactory lessons.
22. A number of features characterise the teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this knowledge well to challenge pupils. For instance, in RE teachers use good familiar examples to help pupils understand unfamiliar concepts. Lessons are well planned and prepared, practical materials are to hand and so little time is lost, resulting in a good pace of learning. In most lessons teachers share the lesson intentions with pupils at the start, this, together with the preparation, helps lessons to flow well, with both teacher and pupils aware of what is to be achieved and why. Teachers use a variety of methods and these are well related to the individual subject being taught. Presentations are clear. Year 11 left school for examination study leave during the week of the inspection and so teachers rightly concentrated on revision and preparation and answering pupils' queries. Year 9 pupils had just completed their statutory national examinations and so some work developed from that experience. In appropriate Year 10 lessons recent work experience was followed up. The good and better lessons are marked by a good level of expectations for pupils. Teachers know what pupils need to do and make use of skilful questioning to bring pupils on. The skills of teachers in using ICT in their lessons has improved since the last inspection and are now at least satisfactory on those occasions seen, but access to ICT equipment is still a problem for some areas of the school.

23. There are some similarities between the outstanding lessons observed. In a mathematics lesson in Year 9 pupils were challenged to do an investigation into lines of symmetry, working in small groups with a very good pace and a great deal of thought, using good technical language to each other. In another mathematics lesson in Year 10 there was a real sense of urgency and pupils worked to solve problems in pairs, being able to describe their methods to the rest of the class, using good language, to the whole class. In a French lesson with Year 11 the teacher used quick questions to set the pace at the start of the lesson, switches between languages to stretch pupils while giving them confidence, and although the pace was brisk pupils had time to consider their answers and think about their work, resulting in a remarkable level of achievement.
24. As at the time of the last inspection, teachers continue to have a commitment to good behaviour and hard work and this is a very good feature of their teaching. Pupils respond well to this, in particular the relationships that teachers develop. The effect is that pupils concentrate on their work and apply good effort to their learning. It is a credit to the teachers that they were still able to ensure satisfactory learning in half of the small number of lessons where pupils' behaviour was overall unsatisfactory.
25. Since the last inspection the government has introduced a national strategy for the development of teaching, learning and standards in Years 7 to 9, referred to as the Key Stage 3 strategy. The school has made sound progress in developing teaching in this area, with particular strengths developing in English. Other subjects are now beginning to make use of the Key Stage 3 approaches, for instance through devising lessons with clearly identified starts, middles and conclusions and by putting more emphasis on the use of literacy and, less frequently, numeracy. These approaches are evident in many of the good lessons.
26. The teaching of literacy is good. Teachers are making use of national developments in the teaching of literacy to help all pupils have good access to learning in lessons. Teachers explain the meaning of special vocabulary for the subject being studied and this is now one of the strengths of pupils' knowledge. Almost all subject areas have key words on display. Some departments, especially in humanities, give explicit teaching of literacy skills. In history, these are developed through activities such as extended writing to compare the experiences and cultures of the past. Arguing different viewpoints is often done in role, as in a lively Year 7 lesson in which pupils spoke as Normans or Saxons. In geography, pupils used a writing frame to give an account of the impact of natural disasters, and pupils are expected to give their spoken answers in complete sentences. In RE, pupils carry out a range of writing and talk is used well to develop thought. Pupils' awareness of language use was seen in MFL where pupils showed interest in differences between French and English. In mathematics, pupils are able to explain terminology.
27. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers and pupils use numbers and graphical information satisfactorily in lessons, but there needs to be a more determined overall strategy for the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum. In some subjects there is some planned use of numeracy. In RE, Year 10 pupils used a belief line in one lesson, marked from -5 to +5 to record personal reflections on religious education. In a Year 8 geography lesson pupils drew bar charts to show data for different countries.

28. The combination of the strengths in teaching, together with the good, very good and excellent attitudes and behaviour in most lessons mean that pupils' learning in lessons is good. The support given by teachers to learning outside of lessons through clubs and voluntary activities, together with mentoring and levels of individual concern, make a significant contribution. Examples of considerable extra support from teachers are evident across the curriculum.
29. There are two main areas for development to improve teaching further, the weaknesses identified in assessment and the inconsistencies in the use of homework. Assessment is not a strength of teaching and in some subjects is in clear need of improvement. A number of subjects have begun the process of target setting in relation to National Curriculum and external examination requirements but these are not yet widespread enough to affect individual pupils and their ability to take more responsibility for their own learning. Pupils have sound knowledge of their own learning.
30. Where homework is used it is satisfactory but is not used consistently and opportunities are lost to develop pupils' learning through this activity. The last inspection reported that insufficient emphasis was placed on working independently and co-operatively, including solving problems and carrying out individual research. There has been some improvement, for instance in DT and RE and through more co-operative work, but further progress still needs to be made. For instance, there is some over dominance by teachers in some lessons in PE, science and geography. The school has begun work to improve its library provision but present facilities do not yet sufficiently help the development of independent learning during or beyond lessons.
31. The challenge for the more able pupils in lessons varies in quality but is overall satisfactory and in some instances good. These pupils learn well in some lessons, for instance in mathematics, English and RE but there is sometimes insufficient challenge in science, MFL, geography and music. Lack of challenge for these pupils was a feature at the time of the last inspection and although progress since then is satisfactory the school should now act to deal with the inconsistencies still remaining in some subjects.
32. The school has made good progress in improving the teaching of pupils with SEN since the last inspection; at that time there was evidence of some underestimation of pupils' abilities. Teachers now take responsibility for and value all of their pupils, especially those who experience significantly greater difficulties in learning than their peers. This is evident in positive and secure relationships that teachers and assistants routinely establish with their pupils. This helps both lower attaining pupils and those with SEN to remain actively engaged in learning. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging targets. When these are seen within well planned and carefully managed lessons this produces a positive and energetic climate for learning. As an example, in a Year 9 English lesson, pupils with SEN were able to reflect upon and write high-impact poetry because of the quality of this teaching. In most lessons subject teachers use curriculum materials and activities that are suited to pupils with SEN.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

33. Overall the curriculum provision is good. The school provides its pupils with a good range of learning opportunities particularly the breadth and balance for Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4).
34. Overall, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and the National Curriculum is in place although there are weaknesses in the quality of provision for art for Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) and of ICT across the curriculum, particularly for pupils in Years 10 and 11. At Key Stage 3 the broad curriculum provision is good. In science, the department's arrangements for allocation of teachers to groups have changed this year and, because it is not well enough managed, it is an important factor in the underachievement of pupils in this subject.
35. At Key Stage 4 a very good range of courses is offered, meeting the pupils' vocational and academic needs and providing the opportunity to gain qualifications across this broad spectrum. This curriculum enables pupils to develop and achieve their potential. However, there are aspects of the curriculum that need improving for some pupils. The school has recognised that for those not following the sports studies course the time allocated for PE is poor and it is planning to address this. Although about half of the pupils follow a discrete course in ICT, the provision for the others through subjects is not mapped or well co-ordinated and as a result the school cannot guarantee the quality of coverage of National Curriculum requirements for these pupils.
36. The school strives to provide opportunities based on pupils' requirements by designing the option structure in response to pupils' choices. A high level of match is achieved although not all pupils' choices can be met. Classes after school, in subjects that because of limited demand cannot be provided on the timetable and the statistics course followed by those who have taken their mathematics GCSE earlier in the year, are examples of how the school seeks to provide a curriculum designed to meet the needs of its pupils.
37. There is a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities, participation that enhances social and personal development. These include participation in sport and musical performances, the Youth Parliament, National Bar competitions and the HYPAs. Programmes for personal development, careers guidance and extra-curricular activity together contribute well to the all-round development of pupils and enhance the statutory curriculum. There is a course in PSHE and citizenship at both Key Stages 3 and 4 that includes health, sex and relationships, drugs, parenthood, work and careers. In Year 10 all pupils follow a GCSE short course in citizenship.
38. Partnership and the community enhance the quality of curriculum provision, particularly via focussed activities involving specialist providers, for example in health, sex and drugs education. Parents report that the newer arrangements now in place for preparing pupils to start the school in Year 7 are good. The school has some liaison with a local further education college for the provision of media studies and will also make use of the City Learning Centre to support this.

39. Provision for literacy is good across the school and there are positive steps to implement literacy across the curriculum. The cross-curricular group has a representative from each department and most subject policies have a section on literacy. Members of several departments, apart from English, have attended literacy training organised by the LEA. The English department is responsible for delivering extra literacy lessons for identified groups of pupils. The progress units produced by the national strategy for Key Stage 3 are also utilised in these lessons. Given that pupils come into the school with standards of literacy that are below average and make good progress in these skills, the range of strategies used is successful.
40. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is inconsistent. Co-ordination has been determined and link teachers within the mathematics department identified. A guidance document has been issued to all departments. There is some limited implementation of issues from numeracy training into departmental schemes of work and teaching but this is not consistent across the school.
41. Pupils in the Guidance and Learning Centre are given good provision in line with their identified needs, enabling them to engage in learning either that they would be doing if in lessons, or to support their inclusion in the school.
42. Good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils beyond the normal subject provision although in a minority of lessons there is still insufficient challenge. There are opportunities for early entry to examinations, for example in mathematics and music. Opportunities are provided in a variety of other ways, some through extra-curricular activities, weekend activities and field trips. To challenge aspirations pupils have visited other schools and a university. Resources have been provided for departments to support extension work for the gifted and talented, for example an oboe, specialist art material and whiteboards to develop teaching strategies. Overall, the provision made has resulted in increased levels of achievement at the highest grades of GCSE and is increasingly enabling these pupils to achieve to their potential.
43. Provision for pupils with SEN is appropriate and curriculum opportunities are well adapted to the particular needs of pupils. The way in which most subject departments and teachers are able to support pupils with SEN in their classes is a strength of provision, which supports the school's inclusive approach to equal opportunities. Arrangements for the use of individual educational plans (IEPs) have improved and comply with the national expectations.
44. The provision for careers educational and guidance (CEG) is satisfactory. There are some strengths and areas that require development. A new co-ordinator has made a good start in the role and has made some positive changes in the teaching of CEG this academic year.
45. All Year 10 pupils have two weeks in work placements as part of an efficiently organised programme of work experience for which they are well prepared. There are some good special events such as an Industry Day for Year 9. Partnership with the Connexions Service is working well and a new personal adviser for careers provides good support. He is new to the role and the school, but has some good ideas for developments. All Year 11 pupils have a detailed individual interview with the personal adviser.

46. The Connexions Service provides useful support in organising and maintaining the school's CEG Library, but this is not well located at the back of a teaching base that restricts access for pupils. Of the areas for improvement, the main ones are: detailed teaching programmes are required; staff training; a CEG development plan and the use of computers to research careers.
47. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Its particular strengths lie within the moral and social development of pupils. Carefully presented, and cared for, displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate achievement and show the many opportunities pupils have to develop academic, social and creative skills through performances, visits and other activities. The school recognises the need to co-ordinate its work in these areas. For instance, there are many instances of the use of resources to support the teaching of multicultural education but no overall strategy to ensure its effectiveness.
48. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. RE lessons provide opportunity for pupils to become more reflective. In one lesson this considered belief through addressing the question "what promotes belief in God?" Through the curriculum, particularly within PSHE and citizenship, there are opportunities provided to explore issues and feelings. Pupils work in a climate where their views are respected. They learn to become more reflective and self-aware. The school does not meet the requirements for providing a daily act of worship for all pupils and so an opportunity is lost to strengthen the spiritual dimension.
49. Provision for moral development is good. Moral education, both formally and informally, provides the framework for good behaviour from pupils and good levels of respect for people and property. The building shows little evidence of damage by pupils and there is little litter, reflecting the school's position as an 'eco-school'. Relationships in the school are good and there is mutual respect. Pupils are given many opportunities to explore moral issues in citizenship, history and English in particular and in some assemblies. In a history lesson where pupils were in character as either Saxons or Normans they engaged very effectively in arguing the rights and wrongs resulting from a clash of cultures.
50. Social development is good. The programme of extra-curricular activities, such as in sport, musical performance, and HYPAs, provides good opportunity for pupils to work together co-operatively. Work in citizenship and PSHE, as well as in some other subject lessons, contributes significantly when pupils work in groups or debate and discuss social and personal skills. The school and year council as well as involvement in the Bar and Youth Parliament are other occasions where their skills are developed.
51. Overall cultural development is satisfactory. The involvement and knowledge of local culture is good. Pupils engage in a number of local events and initiatives. Pupils have been involved in an English Heritage project, the Boldon Environmental Centre, as well as days to the theatre and ballet.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. The pastoral care of pupils is good. There are good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare, promoting good behaviour and supporting pupils' personal development.
53. Significant improvements have been achieved on this aspect identified for action in the last inspection. This is based on a firm foundation of knowledge of individual pupils gained through links with their primary schools and a very supportive transition process. Pupils have confidence in this process, are aware of why they have been placed in bands or tutor groups and the continuity of guidance and support that they will receive. Heads of year and form tutors are now better placed to relate to their pupils than previously.
54. The benefits of continuity of tutor leadership of Year 7 and established links with local primary schools are recognised by the head teacher, whose ambition is to marry both pastoral and academic oversight throughout the school. There are good plans to further develop care for individuals by bringing together academic and pastoral support and guidance. There is a recognised priority to match the combination of experience and individual staff skills to particular roles within the pastoral team.
55. The use of data to monitor pupils' academic performance has been subject to some significant improvement and is overall satisfactory. It is good in that the system enables information about the performance of individuals and groups to be analysed. It is not yet being used successfully to set targets for individuals, for classes, for subjects or for year groups. A small number of subject departments are beginning to look at how they can make use of the data but this is not yet embedded into the school's work. The system is also separate from the information held about pupils' personal development and as a result there is no easy way in which the development of a pupil can be monitored as a whole.
56. The school has, in recent years, established a number of well-focused support initiatives some with the assistance of outside funding such as EiC. Of particular note are the successes of targeted support provided through the mentor team in raising individual pupils' achievement at GCSE level and other national tests, the re-integration of poor attenders and pastoral support of younger pupils during the transition process. This individual support is reinforced through mentor team initiatives such as the very successful breakfast club, with high levels of attendance by pupils. It provides a good start to the day in terms of providing a meal, but also acts as a contact point for pupils seeking counselling from the mentor team. The lunchtime club also provides a safe environment for vulnerable pupils seeking support and a homework club for those without suitable home facilities for study. The mentor team also has input into the Year 9 industry day with the senior learning mentor, alongside the head of CEG being the lead organiser and is involved in the organising of sports and other activities as a social outlet for disaffected pupils as an integral element of the school's personal and social development strategy.
57. Very good use is also made of the learning support unit, not only within the behaviour strategy, but also as a means of ensuring fullest access to the curriculum for pupils with challenging behaviour. This is proving particularly effective. The behaviour policy itself, introduced last year following consultation with parents and with input from pupils, has served to provide an effective discipline structure consistently applied by staff and respected by pupils. Good behaviour within the classroom in particular provides a pleasant environment conducive to teaching and learning.

58. Very good support is provided through the senior pastoral team, together with the school nurse and outside support agencies. Effective child protection procedures are in place and access to individual counselling is provided via the school nurse with referral on to other specialists where appropriate. Very good support is also provided for pupils in care. Pupils have confidence in staff in sharing any concerns in the knowledge that any issues such as bullying will be promptly and effectively addressed. The use of 'bully boxes' for confidential reporting of concerns is a welcomed facility in this strategy.
59. Health and safety concerns are subject to an annual local authority audit and inspection by the school's staff/governor property team. Daily checks are also made by the site manager with staff to identify any immediate risk issues. These are promptly addressed and the premises are kept in a generally well maintained/safe condition. Inspectors reported to the school some health and safety issues in the science department and the school has indicated that action is in hand to address these.
60. Pupils also very much value the encouragement of success recognised through the merit and reward system that is given high profile across a range of areas of school life. These are celebrated through assemblies and end of year presentation evenings. A series of awards is also recorded on honours boards in the foyer to the main hall. These all serve to raise pupils' self-esteem, confidence and pride in the school.
61. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These are accessible to all pupils with particular interests and skills. The wearing of badges reflects their sense of association with particular clubs and roles of responsibility. Of particular note is the reintroduction of the prefect system with head pupils. They have direct involvement in support of younger pupils as well as other roles within the whole school community. Pupils also take lead roles in year councils initiating a series of ideas for improving school facilities, achievement of the 'eco-school' bronze level status and current pursuit of silver level, and participation in the HYPA initiatives. All are successful vehicles in developing pupils' self-confidence and maturity.
62. This confidence of pupils is being allied to long-term strategies to improve attendance. Various initiatives are in place with very good, targeted support provided by the education welfare officer. The recent introduction of a swipe card and computerised system of recording attendance for Year 7 pupils is to be extended to cover the whole school in September 2003. A steady improvement in attendance has been achieved but the school recognises the need for further improvement to achieve nationally expected levels. They are seeking guidance on other initiatives, particularly in collaboration with neighbouring schools, to achieve this goal.
63. Pupils with SEN are well cared for. There are good identification systems for pupils transferring from primary education and appropriate support is provided. Pupils with statements receive the support identified but the statements themselves often contain out-of-date details, lack specificity and are of limited practical value to the school in determining the best form of provision.
64. Significant improvement in care for its pupils has been achieved in recent years, but the school recognises that this is a foundation on which to further enhance provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. The school's work with parents is satisfactory and improving. The impact of parents on the school is small and the school is anxious to involve parents more. The school is working hard to encourage and improve parents' involvement in their children's education and parents have a growing confidence in the school and, in particular, progress achieved under the leadership of the current head teacher.
66. Parents are kept advised of their children's progress through detailed interim and annual reports, consultation evenings and the recent introduction of 'collapsed timetables' when teachers have time for individual discussions. For Years 7 and 8 consultation meetings, around 95% parent attendance was achieved. Parents are particularly encouraged to be involved in the transition process from primary school to Year 7, to be aware of reasons for tutor group and ability band selection, subsequent reviews and their support in setting targets against staff appraisal of their child's current and potential levels of achievement in both academic and personal development. Form tutors are additionally encouraged to contact parents direct both to discuss any individual areas of concern and to share praise of achievement.
67. In the upper school parents are directly involved in the selection of options in Year 9 and subsequently in review of targets, achievement of completion of coursework etc. for GCSE. They are also consulted on the potential involvement of targeted support for their child through the mentor team on raising levels of achievement at GCSE and other national tests, as well as strategies to improve attendance. Parents are generally very supportive of these initiatives and welcome the opportunity to seek guidance from staff.
68. Parents are kept advised of wider school activities through regular newsletters and are encouraged to attend celebration evenings, school productions, sports activities etc. The eco-school and HYP A project also provide facilities and encouragement for parent support and direct involvement.
69. The behaviour strategy involved consultation with parents and is successfully endorsed by them including partnership support schemes with parents of pupils with particular behaviour problems, together with related use of the learning support unit.
70. One area of concern is the consistency of setting homework. Poor use is made of pupil planners both to record homework tasks and as a communication medium between home and school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. Leadership and management are overall satisfactory but there are strengths and weaknesses in different aspects. Improvements within the past year are clear and provide a good basis for further development.

72. The head teacher provides very good leadership for the school and has been in post for one year. His immediate task on appointment was to prepare a strategic plan that has focused successfully on improving the quality of learning. He has a very clear overview of what is needed, for instance he recognises the need for the school to learn from others, a problem identified at the last inspection, and he has rightly involved the LEA and local successful schools in that process. The head teacher holds the confidence of the staff and governors and he uses his personal skills very well to motivate staff and influence their developments. He provides a very good role model, in his approach to leadership, in his sensitive approach to managing people and in his personal skills in teaching. He shows good concern for individual staff and helps them to build on their personal and team successes. By completing a lesson observation jointly with an inspector he demonstrated sound judgements in the quality of teaching.
73. The head teacher is supported by a senior leadership team, which lacks capacity to move the school forward because of recruitment difficulties. There are some individual management strengths, involvement in decision-making and a shared commitment to succeed. Governors attempted to appoint a second deputy head teacher last year but were unsuccessful in recruiting an appropriate person. The present position, although intended to be temporary, is unsatisfactory, since the team needs to be able to provide stronger overall leadership in support of the head teacher at a time when the school wishes to move forward rapidly.
74. Governors provide good strategic leadership. They are committed to the long-term future of the school and are properly involved in the development of the school improvement plan. They are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school, both long and short-term, and are committed to supporting the head teacher. Their overall knowledge of the school is good because of very good briefings from the head teacher and others, a process they recognise as having shown clear improvement, and attendance at school activities. They take responsibility for the preparation of the annual report to parents. Their support for the school as critical friends is satisfactory. They have held the school to account for much of its work, for instance they are very aware of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievements. However, in other aspects they have not ensured that the school has made enough progress. The last Ofsted inspection identified a number of key issues for improvement and progress in dealing with these has been slow until more recently. The result is that overall improvement is satisfactory for most issues but unsatisfactory for the development of independent learning. The head teacher has done a detailed analysis of progress in each of the key issues and even where progress is satisfactory he still recognises the need to develop work further. Governors have not fulfilled the statutory requirements of ensuring that collective worship requirements are met and that data analysis of achievement includes analysis by race.
75. Leadership by heads of department and other teams varies between very good and unsatisfactory. It is very good in RE, and good in English, mathematics, DT, history, ICT as a discrete subject, music, citizenship, SEN and pastoral areas. It is unsatisfactory in science and art and is the main feature that has contributed to the underachievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 in those areas. The head teacher has introduced a good school improvement planning process that has the capacity to empower heads of department and some have been able to use this successfully to move their areas forward although overall they still need to take more responsibility for developments.

76. School management is overall satisfactory with some strengths, nevertheless there are some significant areas for improvement. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall, it is good at the senior management levels but more work is needed at department level. The head teacher knows well the strengths and weaknesses of the school, evident in the self-evaluation document completed as a team exercise prior to inspection. Many of the judgements correspond with the views of the inspection team. The school has used a variety of approaches to judge its own performance, it has rightly focused on ways of improving teaching and learning and used a combination of peer review, line management and performance management processes to improve. The head teacher has a clear commitment to staff development and links this closely with performance management and the school improvement plan. Professional development arrangements have been well managed within the senior team and have focused rightly on the main issues of the school improvement plan. Information from external reviews has also been of use, for instance an evaluation of the school's 'Learn to Learn' course. The head teacher has benefited from LEA external evaluations and support of his progress since appointment but the school has had only one external subject department review from the LEA or elsewhere in recent years. Departments vary in how well they carry out self-review, with strengths in DT, RE, English and mathematics, but less use is made of lesson observations to improve performance in geography, history and citizenship.
77. The school has developed a data management system that enables staff to have a clear view on strengths and weaknesses in previous academic performance in their areas and this has been a good development. This information now needs to be used more to look forward and for target setting at subject and pupil level. A small number of departments have made progress in this area but not within a common framework. The governors have properly set targets for academic standards but recent ones for higher attainment have been very challenging, since, although the school increased its percentage of pupils who gained 5 A*-C grades at GCSE in 2002 by more than 5% over 2001, it still fell more than 4% short of the governors' target. This was despite the school's overall results well exceeding those of similar schools and the school reaching its targets for overall points score and exceeding the intended number of pupils gaining at least 1 A*-G at GCSE. Governors, staff, pupils and parents need full information about pupils' potential achievements in order to set the right balance between aspirations and real possibilities.
78. The lack of capacity in the senior management team results in the head teacher being overburdened by his own teaching commitment and his many practical responsibilities, meaning that he is unable to develop the management of the school in the depth to which he would hope, despite his individual personal skills. The senior team members have worked for the school for many years and more recently have had some opportunities to learn from good practice elsewhere, for instance this has had a good effect on the quality of learning in school through a focus for the last school improvement plan. The teaching and learning policy has been thoroughly consulted on with staff. The team shows good commitment to the school and works collaboratively to try to manage their responsibilities even though they are overburdened. The 'link manager' system to overview the work of departments has some clear strengths in identifying issues and supporting developments in subjects. Individual team members' responsibilities are identified only temporarily until a new appointment is made. The team would benefit from new ideas and additional capacity so that practical management activities such as the use of assessment, evaluation of financial decisions and pastoral/academic developments can be effectively embedded in school. Further investigation of good practice in other schools, and processes already begun, will aid this.

79. Middle management of subject areas is mainly satisfactory. It is very good in RE and good in English, DT and history. The quality of management in these areas is supporting pupils' progress and the best use of resources. It is unsatisfactory in science, MFL and ICT across the curriculum. Unsatisfactory management in these subjects is preventing improvements in standards and the best use of resources. The improvement plans for departments generally do not have sufficient information regarding the intended effects on standards of achievement and addressing the real issues in subjects where there are weaknesses
80. Leadership of the support for pupils with SEN is good and there is satisfactory management of provision. The school appointed an acting special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in September 2002 and she has worked very successfully with subject departments and learning support staff. SEN provision is now well aligned to the expectations of the SEN policy and an SEN improvement action plan is in place and is providing a secure basis upon which to consolidate improvements.
81. The need for whole staff training in SEN was identified in the previous inspection report. Despite the rapid improvement and progress recently made in the assessment and review arrangements and the teachers' obvious commitment to the principles of inclusion, whole-staff training is still outstanding. The SEN action plan sets out appropriate timescales to address this and other areas identified through self-evaluation. Improvements to the aspects of SEN provision are still at an early stage of implementation. Governors need more information to be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of their SEN policy.
82. The strategic use of resources by the school and financial planning are satisfactory. The school's budget is currently almost all allocated. The school has benefited from central government funding as part of the EiC initiative. It is clear that this has had positive effects on pupils. Those identified as gifted and talented have achieved higher standards than predicted; pupils supported through mentoring have also shown more than expected progress. The school's system for supporting pupils with difficulties of behaviour through its guidance and support, and learning support, are very effective. The school has had clear benefits from being part of a small education zone and from connections with a city learning centre. Control of finances is sound, specific grants have been properly applied to their purposes.
83. Further consideration needs to be made of how school finances are best used. The last school improvement plan had to be completed quickly after the overall school budget had already been set and consequently there is insufficient depth of information about the costs of activities. Individual subject improvement plans indicate financial requirements for the significant activities but there is no clear school system for allocation of funding for these developments or of subject maintenance costs. The school's draft SEN policy does not yet make it sufficiently clear how the use of delegated funds for pupils with SEN relate to the decisions on spending. On a practical level, the school was audited financially by the LEA in 2001 and although the outcome was that satisfactory systems were in place overall, a number of items needed attention. The school agreed to put in place the auditor's recommendations by 2002 but no review has been carried out internally to ensure that this has been done since then.

84. The governors have good systems for ensuring best value in their expenditure and take care to judge the quality of goods and services purchased. This has led them to question the value of some services and they should continue with this line of approach. Best-value approaches should be used more widely in school management however, and for comparisons with other schools. For instance, the management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because the school cannot easily guarantee how well all pupils in Years 10 and 11 cover the curriculum. No senior manager oversees this aspect sufficiently. The school has used its money well to provide a good level of ICT resources, having already surpassed government targets for computer provision, but nevertheless access to ICT is still a problem for some teachers and pupils. Comparison with provision in other schools needs to be made to see whether better value can be gained from the school's own provision.
85. New technology is used well for senior management and administration and the use for teaching and learning, lesson preparation and teachers' administration is improving. The school office runs efficiently, practical arrangements are good and the head teacher is well supported practically. Because of this the school is able to cope with the bureaucratic requests of central and local government. There is a welcoming reception area for school visitors with good organisational arrangements. There is an effective infrastructure of administrative, technical and ancillary staff that supports the education of pupils well. Adults across the school work well together, for instance lunchtime supervisors support the school's positive approach to the management of pupils effectively.
86. The match of the numbers of the teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum are satisfactory. Many committed staff have worked in this school for a long time and many responsibility posts have been appointed from existing staff. The school is also starting to benefit from the ideas and experiences of staff new to the school and from the work of advanced skills teachers, from its strong position as a base used for several teacher training institutions and from recent involvements with other successful schools. The school has made good use of national programmes to improve the quality of the teaching force, for instance through the advanced skills teacher scheme, but it has also suffered at times from the losing of good staff to promoted posts in other schools. There is a good level of morale, however, and currently the school is not suffering excessively from the need to employ long-term temporary teachers and the turnover of teachers has been effectively managed.
87. There is sufficient accommodation and it is of good quality. The school is in a modern building which provides a pleasant learning environment that meets the needs of the curriculum, particularly so in the case of DT, music, geography, PE and RE. Some rooms are small and this causes practical difficulties, for instance within art. The school uses most of the accommodation very well. Teachers work to make the rooms attractive with displays which support learning; art is a particularly well-developed area. Pupils look after the building well and there is very little evidence of any damage or litter. The recent appointment of a member of staff to oversee the building quality is proving effective, resulting in fewer practical difficulties for teachers as issues are dealt with systematically.

88. Library provision is currently unsatisfactory as the school is going through a change in the organisation of resources. The original library area has been turned into a computer resource area that has many advantages by the use of new technology. However, the room is used for teaching purposes and is not always available therefore for independent research. Library books have been moved to what was a drama studio, this is a suitably sized room but it does not have computer availability, book stocks are low and this room is separate from the main school building. Plans exist for further developments. Resources for teaching elsewhere are satisfactory and are well used in lessons, this being a particular strength of teaching, although access to ICT resources is a difficulty for some areas of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. To make the school better the head teacher and governors should:

- Improve the capacity of the senior leadership team by:
 - completing the governing body's objective of further recruitment; (Paragraph numbers 73, 78)
 - developing further the process of looking at good practice in higher-achieving schools. (Paragraph number 78)
 - Improve the achievements of 14 year olds in science, art and design and MFL and aspects of leadership and management within those subjects by:
 - focusing on improving standards; (Paragraph numbers 122, 127, 128, 189)
 - effectively co-ordinating the teaching in Key Stage 3 science; (Paragraph numbers 5, 115, 122, 123, 125)
 - broadening pupils' standards in art and design; (Paragraph numbers 6, 127, 128, 130, 131)
 - tackling inconsistencies in MFL. (Paragraph numbers 6, 183, 184, 189)
 - Use assessment effectively to set targets for learning and raise standards by: (Paragraph numbers 29, 55, 77, 100, 112, 119, 122, 137, 159, 176, 188, 220)
 - developing further and more consistently the use made by departments of targets for learning for groups and individuals; using assessment information to identify improvements in curriculum provision in subject departments;
 - using assessment information to help plan lessons;
 - involving pupils more in the setting of targets for learning.
 - Improve financial planning by: (Paragraph number 83)
 - having clear statements of the finance to be allocated to priorities in the school improvement plan;
 - clarifying the system for the allocation of finance to departments.
 - Ensure the quality of the ICT curriculum across subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11 by: (Paragraph numbers 35, 169, 173, 180)
 - raising the level of priority of this aspect for the ICT department and providing effective support from the senior leadership team;
 - developing effective co-ordination and management;
 - developing a more consistent approach between subjects;
 - improving access to ICT for all departments.
 - Improve pupils' abilities to learn independently by:
 - developing suitable activities and approaches particularly within lessons; (Paragraph numbers 30, 74, 88)
 - completing the development of library provision. (Paragraph number 88)
90. It is recognised by the inspection team that the school is already working to improve the items within these key issues.

91. In addition to the issues above, the governors should consider including in their action plan the following minor issues:
- The level of attendance. (Paragraph number 14)
 - Provision and progress in numeracy. (Paragraph numbers 13, 27, 40)
 - Consistency in the difficulty of work for higher-attaining pupils. (Paragraph number 31)
 - Use of homework and homework diaries. (Paragraph number 29)
 - Co-ordination of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. (Paragraph number 47)
 - Use of self-evaluation procedures. (Paragraph number 76)
 - Collective worship arrangements. (Paragraph number 48)
 - Analysis of pupils' performance by racial background. (Paragraph numbers 10, 74)
 - Further improvements in provision for SEN. (Paragraph number 81)
 - Adequacy of resources for science, art and design, geography and SEN. (Paragraph numbers 81, 124, 138, 160)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	28	86	59	5	0	0
Percentage	2	15	48	33	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	917
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	246

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	89

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	95	86

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	63	62
	Girls	70	54	45
	Total	139	117	107
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (48)	65 (61)	59 (56)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (20)	31 (32)	21 (24)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	68	51
	Girls	57	70	39
	Total	109	138	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (57)	76 (68)	49 (59)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (24)	40 (36)	15 (21)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	81	88	169

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	70	79
	Girls	33	80	86
	Total	64	150	165
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (33)	89 (86)	98 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.0
	National	39.8

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a
	National	N/a

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	898	94	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	180

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	19.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-3
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	£
Total income	2,897,511.00
Total expenditure	2,895,511.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,159.78
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,978.00
Balance carried forward to next year	4,000.00 (Est)

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	917
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36.4	55.1	7.5	0.9	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43.9	52.3	1.9	0.9	0.9
Behaviour in the school is good.	33.6	53.3	9.3	0	3.7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22.9	60	9.5	2.9	4.8
The teaching is good.	30.8	60.7	1.9	0	6.5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35.8	43.4	12.3	5.7	2.8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53.3	41.1	2.8	0.9	1.9
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69.2	29.9	0.9	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36.4	41.1	15.9	2.8	3.7
The school is well led and managed.	45.3	47.2	0	0.9	6.6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51.4	1.9	1.9	3.8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36.4	43	4.7	0.9	15

Other issues raised by parents

92. The ten parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were confident in the leadership and management of the head teacher and the improvements that were being made across a number of areas since he was appointed.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

93. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- There was very good achievement in 2002 tests at the end of Key Stage 3.
- There is overall good achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Teaching is consistently of good quality.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The department is committed to improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work in Key Stage 3 *scheme* do not include clear opportunities for using ICT.
- Comments and suggestions for improvement on pupils' work are not consistent.
- The use of homework is inconsistent.

94. Standards are average and pupils are achieving better than expected because of good teaching, leadership and management. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

95. Results in English at Key Stage 3 in 2002 were above the national average in the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or better and well above at Level 6 or better. This was a very good achievement, given that their results from Key Stage 2 when these pupils entered the school were below national averages. Many pupils improved by two levels during Key Stage 3, and some by three (for example, some entered the school on Level 3 in English and reached Level 6 in the tests at the end of Year 9).

96. GCSE results in English in 2002 showed that pupils achieved better than might be expected given their prior attainment. Although the proportion of grade A*-C in English was below the national average, it was above similar schools. The percentage of grade A*-C in English Literature was above the national average, even though the percentage of pupils entered was slightly higher than the national figure. Boys performed particularly well in this examination, attaining A*-C grades 10% above the national average. This cohort of pupils came into the school with Key Stage 2 results in English that were below average, so their achievement has been good over their time in school.

97. Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 are currently in line with national expectations. In their skills of speaking, higher-attaining pupils at both key stages are articulate and can express their views clearly. Some lower-attaining pupils, however, give very brief utterances that are not always audible. There is also a wide range demonstrated in writing skills. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher-attaining pupils have a very good understanding of language use and can write for effect. Middle-attaining pupils generally construct their sentences accurately, but lower-attaining pupils tend to write rambling, over-long sentences. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils can analyse the effect of language and symbolism in a range of texts. They can use complex vocabulary and sentence structure and they show flair in their own creative writing. All pupils have an understanding of texts they have read and they can consider, for example, the staging of a drama, but lower-attaining pupils continue to have problems with sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. Nevertheless, all year groups came into the school with below average attainment, so their progress during their time at school is good.
98. The quality of teaching is consistently good. No lessons were unsatisfactory and most lessons observed were good or very good. This is due to teachers' good preparation and well-chosen materials. The objectives for lessons are clear. The department has an inclusive approach, and the teachers work hard to involve all pupils in the lesson. Good open questioning is used to enable pupils to express their own views. A higher-attaining Year 9 class working on media was asked to give free associations of different colours that could be used in film, and they then had to read an extract from Jane Eyre 'with a film-maker's eye'. A lower-attaining Year 7 class was well supported through appropriate questioning and teaching so that they engaged with the text Skellig, motivated by the teacher's own enthusiasm. In Year 10, pupils were able to formulate their own initial response to a poem by Simon Armitage, working together in groups to explore its possible meanings. Pupils are well prepared for their GCSE examinations and staff make close reference to assessment criteria.
99. Pupils respond well to their English lessons. At Key Stage 3, both boys and girls are keen to participate in discussion. On a few occasions, where the pace of the lesson was slow, their concentrations wandered and some lower-attaining pupils had a limited attention span. The attitude of Year 9 pupils, considering they had only just finished their end of key stage tests, was very positive. At Key Stage 4, pupils listen carefully to teachers and to each other. They settle quickly to tasks. They collaborate well in groups. Sometimes, in spite of the best efforts of the teacher to draw them in, girls tend to be passive in discussion.
100. Written work is marked carefully, with levels being given at Key Stage 3 and GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 and standardisation carried out. Written feedback to pupils is useful although targets for improvement are not as precise as they could be to raise achievement further. The department makes good use of data to identify and act on weaknesses, although the individual data on pupils needs to be used further to track progress.

101. The department has taken steps to implement the Key Stage 3 English strategy, by mapping the objectives against the scheme of work. The progress units, produced by the national strategy, are used within literacy lessons, which are staffed by members of the English department. Extra sessions, such as booster classes for Year 9 and revision classes for Year 11, are held. Teachers have put up informative displays in classrooms that make clear the requirements and assessment criteria of Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations. New resources are in place, such as the interactive whiteboard. This was well used in lessons observed and pupils were highly motivated to participate. Some newly published texts have been bought. One new resource is a film, 'The Unique Oneness of Christian Savage' that is shown to Year 10 for their media assignment. This has resulted in some very good work analysing the film's portrayal of a racist culture and the impact of the symbolism. Drama activities in lessons were not observed during the week of the inspection, but they are shown within the scheme of work. Opportunities for ICT, however, are not shown in the scheme of work and use of these facilities is inconsistent across the department. The setting of homework is also inconsistent, with little time being spent on this on the whole. Staff contribute to extra-curricular activities through drama productions, drama workshops and visits to the theatre. In addition, a poet came into school to work with gifted and talented pupils.
102. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teamwork between the head of department, second in department and other staff is good. Younger teachers are encouraged and their skills are appreciated. There is a structure to support the department, with a link member of the senior management team. A programme of classroom observations is in place beyond the requirements of performance management. The departmental development plan focuses on raising standards for identified groups of pupils.
103. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. In 1998 teaching was judged to be good or better in over half of lessons and rarely unsatisfactory, whereas now it is mainly good or better and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed during this inspection. The progress of boys was seen as weaker than that of girls in 1998, whereas boys' attainment is now better than girls' in relation to national figures. Differentiation was criticised in 1998. This is now largely provided through the setting arrangements. Higher-attaining pupils are now achieving well, with the percentage of pupils at Key Stage 3 achieving Levels 6 and 7 above the national average in 2002, and the number of A* and A grades at GCSE having increased. Links with partner primary schools are now good, as summer schools have taken place for Year 6 pupils coming into Year 7 and members of the English department have taught lessons in primary schools. However, in 1998 use of the library was criticised. There has been no significant improvement in this aspect. Similarly, access to ICT is still limited within the English curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

104. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE is good.
- Teaching is good; teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge which they use to plan interactive lessons.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and willingly participate in the lessons; relationships are very good.
- Curriculum provision is good.
- The department is well led and the department is a 'lead' department for the associated regional City Learning Centre.

Areas for improvement

- The use of homework across all abilities is inconsistent.
- Marking is generally of good quality but is limited in quantity.

105. Standards in mathematics are average and pupils are achieving well because of good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning. The department is well led and has made good progress since the last inspection.

106. Standards attained in national tests at Key Stage 3 in 2002 are in line with those found nationally at Level 5 but below the national figure for higher levels. When compared with similar schools the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 is well above average and at the higher levels average. The value-added measure for mathematics at Key Stage 3 is in line with all schools nationally and well above similar schools. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving a qualification in mathematics is equal to the national average and that for those achieving grades A*-C is in line with the national average and in line with their prior attainment at Key Stage 2. Boys do better than girls at both higher grades and in the percentage achieving grades A*-C. Results of a small pilot entry into GCSE statistics in 2002 are above the national average although the sample is too small to be statistically significant. Achievement is good in both Key Stages 3 and 4.

107. Standards achieved by pupils in lessons and as seen in the sample of pupils' work are good in Key Stage 3 and at least satisfactory in Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher-attaining pupils can solve quadratic equations by algebraic techniques and can apply Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve triangles. They accept the challenges presented to them by teachers and begin to demonstrate algebraic proof. Middle-attaining pupils can solve linear equations including those involving brackets and can find the area of shapes, including the circle. They use measures of average in statistics and can draw and interpret data represented in pie charts. In number, these pupils can find percentages or fractions of quantities. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress in statistics and, in algebra, can substitute into linear algebraic expressions. Pupils of all abilities use technical language well, following the good example set by teachers.

108. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher-attaining pupils manipulate complex algebraic expressions, determine the equation of a quadratic function after transformation and write extensive and comprehensive reports. In statistics coursework to test reaction times they set up hypotheses and use spreadsheets and graph-plotting software. Middle attaining pupils study sampling techniques and use a variety of statistical methods to represent data. These pupils apply mathematical techniques such as Pythagoras' theorem, to solve real-life problems. Lower-attaining pupils submit investigative coursework that is limited to counting, tabulating and predicting near values but increase their ability in algebra to solve more complex linear equations.
109. The teaching of mathematics is good, with a significant proportion of very good and occasionally outstanding lessons. There are a number of strengths that support pupils' learning and achievement in lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and set high expectations when planning lessons. Planning is rarely less than good and caters for different learning styles. Teachers employ very good questioning skills and often use an interactive style of teaching that offers plenty of opportunities for pupils of all abilities to share strategies and explain reasoning. There is a positive climate in the classroom in which teachers use praise to motivate pupils. Relationships are very good and lessons proceed with good pace with teachers making effective use of informal assessment to adjust planning to meet the needs of pupils. In one very good lesson in Year 7, pupils demonstrated with enjoyment in the oral-mental starter the graphs of simple linear relationships using arm movements. In the main part of the lesson the pupils explored the n th term of linear sequences, demonstrating with confidence their answers and reasoning to the whole class. Effective use was made of the overhead projector in this part of the lesson and also in the plenary that extended pupils' learning to consider the links between sequences, graphs and equations. The three-part lesson structure is used effectively in planning lessons although many are further sub-divided with tasks set to be completed in short time intervals. This provides motivation and challenge and ensures a brisk pace of working. The use of homework is not consistent across all abilities.
110. In all lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils is at least satisfactory and in over three-quarters is good or better with almost one-quarter excellent. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are generally willing to participate in lessons, demonstrating techniques or sharing methods and reasoning. Pupils listen attentively and work with concentration taking care to present their work neatly. A small minority of pupils is more passive in lessons although teachers' questioning usually seeks to involve them.
111. All pupils are provided with the breadth of the National Curriculum for mathematics and a variety of learning opportunities. There is satisfactory use of ICT to support mathematics teaching. For example, pupils in Year 8 used a software package to investigate the graphs of straight lines and in a Year 10 class the teacher made effective use of an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate relationships between the areas of shapes. Higher-attaining pupils are provided with enrichment activities such as participation in mathematics challenges. Higher and middle-attaining pupils are given the opportunity to follow statistics courses to GCSE in addition to mathematics. Good links with partner primary schools support the transfer of pupils between Key Stages 2 and 3.

112. The mathematics department is well led with good delegation of responsibilities. The department benefits from having a full complement of qualified mathematics teachers who share a collective commitment to improvement. A monitoring system operates to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and department improvement planning identifies actions to be taken. There are effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment that lead to target levels or grades but do not yet lead to curricular targets for all pupils. The quality of teachers' marking is generally good but the proportion marked in this way is too low. There is some inconsistency in marking in Key Stage 4. The use of ICT as a management tool, especially in the tracking of pupil performance could be developed further. Management of the department is at least satisfactory with some good features such as the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the interaction style of teaching that gives pupils opportunities to talk about mathematics and the use of overhead projectors in lessons, and in the structuring and resourcing of lessons for pupils with SEN. Improvements have also been made in the software available to support mathematics teaching. The department is a 'lead' department in the associated regional City Learning Centre and pupils and staff are benefiting from those facilities.

SCIENCE

113. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching quality has improved since the previous inspection.
- Attainment in the higher grades of the dual award science GCSE is above national averages.
- Good relationships and rapport with pupils create an atmosphere in lessons that fosters involvement and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in Key Stage 3.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management result in inconsistencies.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop skills for scientific investigation.
- Lesson activities do not always sufficiently challenge higher-attaining pupils and homework is not used to consolidate learning and extend it.
- Results in single award GCSE science are below those of dual award science and many other subjects.

114. Provision in science is satisfactory overall and while there are some strengths in improved teaching quality, some above average attainment and a good atmosphere of learning, a number of weaknesses affects pupils' progress. Unsatisfactory leadership and management have, this year, led to pupils in Year 9 not achieving as well as they should, pupils at this age previously having made at least satisfactory progress. Attainment at the end of each key stage is below average. At Key Stage 4 achievement is overall satisfactory but standards in the single award science GCSE course are not as good as in other subjects.

115. Standards in the 2002 statutory tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average although pupils made satisfactory progress compared with their attainment when they were in Year 6 and results were better than in similar schools. The present Year 9 pupils are not making satisfactory progress because of gaps in learning and an inconsistent approach between teachers. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have a reasonable grasp of basic concepts but understanding relationships between them is much less secure. For example in Year 7 they know the difference between mass and weight but cannot apply the principle in a simple spring balance. Year 8 know that salt lowers the freezing point of water but cannot explain why it is spread on roads in winter. Year 9 higher-attaining pupils can derive an order of the reactivity of different metals but confuse terms such as oxide with the process of oxidation. Pupils' practical investigation skills such as measuring and recording information accurately, and drawing conclusions, are not developed as well as they should be. Their numeracy and graphing skills are relatively weak with an over-reliance on using calculators. There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainments.

116. Standards in the 2002 dual award science GCSE examination, taken by more than one-third of pupils, were above the national average. Proportionately, more boys gained grades A*-C but more girls attained grade A*. In the single award science examination, taken by nearly all other pupils, attainment at grades A*-C was below average although points scores were the same as the national average with little difference between boys and girls. However, results in single award science are relatively lower than in dual award science and many other subjects, especially English

- and mathematics. Overall, pupils achieved satisfactorily because their results were close to average when they were in Year 9 in 2000.
117. Standards in both dual award and single award classes in Years 10 and 11 are currently around average, reflecting satisfactory achievement. Higher-attaining pupils have a good grasp of atomic structure and can use a theoretical model to explain reactions between elements. However, some struggle with chemical formulae and equations to represent reactions they study. Pupils in Year 10 know symbols for electrical components and can correct faults in simple circuits but they are confused about key concepts, for example voltage and current. Pupils do not take sufficient care to carry out practical activities accurately, and limited understanding inhibits them when making deductions from their results.
 118. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. There are considerable strengths in the better teaching that help pupils make good progress. Questions directed to pupils by name, good rapport and a touch of humour sustain their attention. Teachers sequence activities effectively and maintain a lively pace that keeps pupils involved throughout the lesson. They conduct clear demonstrations of scientific phenomena that stimulate pupils' interest. They stress safety in practical activities. Some text-based activities help develop literacy skills such as in a Year 10 topic where pupils competently analysed written information about inhibiting the growth of harmful bacteria. At the end of lessons, teachers use time well to consolidate what pupils have learned. Lessons about different aspects of science are not sufficiently well co-ordinated. In turn pupils have an incomplete knowledge and understanding of important concepts and below-average investigation skills. It is not the quality of teaching by individual teachers but the co-ordination of learning across the department that causes the under-achievement.
 119. Weaknesses identified have, in some lessons, even when teaching is overall satisfactory, indicated a lack of attention by department management in monitoring and evaluating lessons to ensure a good focus on learning. Teachers often give too much information and overuse copying notes. In turn, pupils are too dependent on the teacher instead of having to analyse information, draw conclusions, give explanations and learn to solve problems for themselves. Homework is not used systematically. Lessons do not give sufficient attention to the development of investigative skills. Teachers do not insist on careful record keeping: there is too much information put on loose papers that become separated from pupils' notebooks. There is insufficient attention to promoting numeracy skills. Very limited use is made of ICT to help learning in science.
 120. Teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are too low. The department assesses the standards of pupils' work to be lower than is shown in actual national tests. This discrepancy, evident at the time of the last inspection, must be resolved. Information from assessments is not used in lesson planning. For example, there are few particular activities designed to challenge higher-attaining pupils or extend their knowledge. The new target-setting procedures are not yet informing pupils of where and how they should improve.
 121. In most lessons pupils' attitudes are very good. They are well behaved, attentive, and involved. Only in a very few lessons does attention-seeking behaviour disrupt learning, and that is minimal. Teachers manage pupils well.

122. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is not sufficient focus on improving standards. The arrangements where several teachers teach science to one class are not co-ordinated and lead to gaps in pupils' notebooks and in their learning. Inconsistencies of approach and content explain the ways in which pupils find difficulty explaining scientific relationships and applying scientific principles. The situation is worst in Key Stage 3, but there are some similarities in Key Stage 4, particularly in the single award programme.
123. The school has embarked on new courses and, although monitoring teaching and pupils' work has begun, the outcomes are not yet supporting the new course requirements. The relatively recent handbook does not give guidance on a scheme of lesson planning to achieve a common approach to teaching science. As a result there are not enough planned opportunities to develop scientific skills of investigation. Where guidance is clear, for example about marking, it is not being universally followed so its purpose is not being realised.
124. Accommodation is adequate with plans for refurbishing laboratories. Teachers have a good balance of expertise between them but the level of technician support is insufficient. Managing resources is in need of urgent attention, and after a period of disruption, the clear need now is for all staff to help rationalise their safe storage, access and maintenance.
125. Improvements since the last inspection have been mixed but overall are unsatisfactory. The best has been in raising the quality of teaching overall. Progress in improving standards is reflected in the GCSE dual award results, but not for the single award course nor in Key Stage 3. Teachers have a clear capacity to promote improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

126. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Achievement in Key Stage 4 is very good, particularly in three-dimensional work and photography. Attainment in the photography course is very high, representing excellent achievement.
- All teachers are highly committed and enthusiastic and this is a major contributor to the high achievement in Key Stage 4.
- There is good teaching in the substantial majority of lessons.
- The positive ethos in the department makes art and design a popular subject that pupils enjoy.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not make enough progress in Key Stage 3.
- Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory because of the lack of focus on standards in Key Stage 3 through curriculum and assessment.
- Independent research skills and sketchbooks are underused.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to talk about and express and justify their opinions on the work of other artists and designers.

127. The overall provision for art and design is satisfactory because there is good teaching in the substantial majority of lessons and there is a good degree of care for, and high commitment to, pupils shown well beyond lesson time in accommodation that provides a very positive ethos. This all helps to explain the very good achievement in Key Stage 4 and the excellent achievement in GCSE photography in 2002, all based on an above-average number of pupils following art and design courses. Despite this, the leadership has not had sufficient focus on the breadth of standards in Key Stage 3 and as a result, even though improvements are now being made to curriculum planning, pupils in this key stage have not made enough progress overall and there has not been enough improvement since the last inspection.

128. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments show that attainment is well below national expectations and during the inspection work scrutinised was below average. Attainment on entry is below average and pupils do not make enough progress during the key stage because the curriculum is not focused sufficiently on raising standards in a structured way.

129. In Year 7, pupils learn to explore texture and develop tactile awareness in making masks using mixed media; they also investigate pattern and shading in their drawings of butterflies. They start to gain confidence in mixing and applying primary and complementary colours through basic exercises and design work. In their successful 'Wanted' posters, the more able pupils in Year 8 show they can use paint effectively, blending colour and using tone in their well-proportioned studies of faces.

130. By the end of Year 9, pupils are beginning to develop critical skills and some know characteristics of the work of artists such as Roy Lichtenstein. They are able to use characteristics of his work to develop designs for their 'painted shirt' project. Others have made giant sculptures of everyday objects based on the work of Claes Oldenburg. However, most pupils are not used to discussing the work of other artists and find it difficult to express and justify their opinions about what they see.

131. Drawing is a weakness because there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their skills and understanding of the visual elements or use a wide range of media and techniques. Pupils do not use sketchbooks and their ability to investigate and experiment is limited. The use of ICT is weak in this key stage.
132. GCSE art and design results in 2002 were well above national averages. Attainment in the photography course was very high, with all pupils achieving grades A-A*, which represents excellent achievement for both boys and girls. Art and design is a popular subject and the take up for GCSE courses is above the national average.
133. In the present Year 11, attainment is around the national average and above average in three-dimensional work and photography. Pupils are able to produce high quality photographic images with a single lens reflex camera, which they modify and enhance using both darkroom and digital technology. This is backed up by good primary research, including field visits and contextual work, with appropriate effective reference to artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe. The very good teaching and facilities, including the lighting studio, well equipped darkroom and ICT suite all contribute to high achievement on this well structured course.
134. Pupils taking the unendorsed GCSE course produce lively, colourful and well made three-dimensional and relief work, often on a large scale, which reflects their personal interests and reference to popular culture. They are well motivated by the commitment and enthusiasm of their teachers. The more able pupils use sketchbooks effectively, with sound research, annotated ideas, and reference to the work of other artists such as Picasso and Dali.
135. Drawing in Key Stage 4 is generally below average because pupils have had few opportunities to develop their skills in earlier years. Where the drawing is effectively integrated into research and investigation for specific projects, standards are higher. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about art and design and the ability to talk about their own and other artists' work is below expectations, this needs a firmer foundation in Key Stage 3.
136. Achievement in Key Stage 4 is very good for the majority of pupils, in relation to prior attainment. Boys achieve above national expectations because they respond well to the opportunities to make large-scale sculptures and learn photographic and digital techniques. Progress across the key stage for all pupils is good in these areas, although there are aspects such as drawing and research where this is less secure.
137. The majority of teaching in the department is good. Teachers know the subject well and expectations in individual lessons are good. Teaching methods are effective and there is very good management of pupils. The very good relationships and positive working atmosphere help pupils achieve well in Key Stage 4. Provision is enhanced for some pupils by field visits, such as a residential weekend in Alnmouth and biennial trips to Venice. In Key Stage 3, although there is reference to the context of other artists' work, pupils are not taught critical skills effectively. Day-to-day assessment procedures in Key Stage 3 do not reflect the National Curriculum levels, which are not fully understood by pupils or staff.

138. All staff use their individual strengths to work well together to provide management of the department which is overall satisfactory. There is a lack of resources for sketchbooks, folders, and images of artists' work which limits pupils' ability to develop good standards across the range of their work.

CITIZENSHIP

139. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Subject leadership is good.
- Approaches to teaching are appropriate for the curriculum and pupils.
- Curriculum development is good.
- There are well-developed community links.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work does not provide enough guidance on teaching activities.
- Arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and sharing good practice are not established.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough.

140. Standards are average and pupils are achieving satisfactorily as a result of satisfactory to good teaching coupled with a good response from pupils. Good leadership and sound management are supporting developments.
141. Although citizenship was not required to be implemented until September 2002, the school has taught many aspects of it for some time within its PSHE programme. Citizenship is now timetabled for all Key Stage 3 pupils together with PSHE and tutorial work and covers the broad requirements of citizenship. All Year 10 pupils now follow a GCSE short course.
142. As yet there are no external examination results in citizenship, but from lessons observed and scrutiny of work, standards are judged to be in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement in lessons is satisfactory as a result of effective teaching. Pupils learn about how to make informed choices and to argue their case. This was evident when they undertook a media analysis activity and in a lesson when they discussed legal rights. These skills enable the pupils involved to make the school council effective. Pupils speak positively about how successful the council has been, for example, in changing the uniform and the provision of drink dispensers.
143. Pupils respond well to lessons in citizenship. When working as individuals, in a group or as a whole class they contribute to discussions and engage in the activities provided. Pupils demonstrate confidence and develop self-esteem, enabling them to share and develop their ideas and opinions on social, cultural and moral issues.
144. Teaching is satisfactory in the discrete citizenship lessons and sometimes it is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers are well prepared. In the best lessons the teacher encourages trust and enjoyment through an enthusiastic approach. A range of tasks is provided to promote thinking, and pupils' ideas are often challenged appropriately. Relationships in the classroom are good. Focussed activities using outside agencies have made an effective contribution to citizenship, particularly in the area of sex education and drug awareness. Community links have been well developed with guest speakers and drama groups a feature; examples include representatives from the police, HYPAs, the health service and religions.

145. Overall, pupils are provided with a range of learning activities through a variety of resources and approaches to teaching. These result in pupils making sound progress in lessons. They impact positively on pupils' ability to think, analyse and discuss; argue a case; respect and have views on the opinions of others and community matters. They develop pupils' knowledge of governance and the legal system.
146. Leadership of citizenship is good. Management is sound. The head of department is enthusiastic about the subject and is making good progress with its introduction despite her many other responsibilities. She is well informed and has a clear idea of what should be provided, why and how. The outline of what should be provided has been established and plans are in place to develop this. Documentation has been produced to guide the teaching and coverage of the subject requirement. The school has recognised the need to build up a resource file to support teachers in this approach. Monitoring and evaluation processes are not yet established to ensure quality for all and to ensure that teachers are able to make provision as required. Assessment is an area to be developed but the head of department already has ideas on this and on strategies to use. Overall a good start has been made on the introduction of this subject to the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

147. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- The teaching and learning of designing and making throughout the subject are good.
- Teachers have good technical expertise in all areas of the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The working environment and accommodation are very good.
- Support for SEN pupils is good.

Areas for improvement

- The GCSE examination results in resistant materials at Key Stage 4 are too low.
- The GCSE performance of girls in Key Stage 4 is too low.
- Resources for consumables are not sufficient.
- Technical support is less than expected.

148. Standards are average and pupils are achieving better than expected in Key Stage 3 and satisfactorily overall in Key Stage 4. Good teaching, leadership and management are supporting standards and the satisfactory improvement made since the last inspection.

149. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average in all areas of the subject. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Departmental assessments show standards to be higher than the national average at the end Year 9 but there are some inconsistencies and more work needs to be done in standardisation. The range of projects is stimulating and pupils show that they have acquired satisfactory understanding of design and communication processes and can demonstrate competence in 'making' skills in all areas of the subject. Drawing skills have improved since the last inspection and computer-aided design is being used well to enhance presentation and drawing quality. At the end of Year 11 attainment is at the national average for DT as a whole but there are variations in the results for each area of the subject. Results in systems and control have been well above average whilst results in resistant materials have been below. Girls have performed less well than boys at GCSE level, which is not typical nationally in DT. Pupils with SEN are producing good work with a particularly good example being observed in a food technology design folder.
150. Attainment across Key Stage 3 currently is above the national average overall and could lead to even higher attainment at the end of Year 9 if changes were made to the way in which the teaching of the subject is organised or co-ordinated. Currently pupils only have short modules with a teacher of each subject area in a 'carousel' system where they keep moving on to different teachers every few weeks. This makes it very difficult to achieve continuity and progression for pupils. Attainment in Key Stage 4 currently is at the national average overall in DT. Pupils with SEN make good progress in lessons and the progress of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory across the department.
151. The attitude and behaviour of pupils are good and often very good in all DT lessons observed. Pupils can share equipment well and help and support each other. They respond well to teachers' questions and work with quiet confidence. In a Year 8 food technology lesson pupils came in at the start of the lesson and got all their equipment and ingredients organised and ready to start with very little intervention from the teacher. In systems and control pupils are able to work on computers designing their electronic circuits quietly and independently. During all practical lessons pupils work with interest and enthusiasm.
152. Teaching is good in all areas of the subject and this is a strength of the department. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and are able to stimulate and motivate pupils well. They use technical language well and level descriptors are displayed and shared with pupils. Lesson preparation and structure are good, with clear objectives, which are communicated to pupils. A good example is where a wide range of working models is used to demonstrate mechanisms in a Year 8 lesson. There is good use of questioning to engage pupils. Teachers demonstrate technical skills very well and more use could be made of this in some lessons. The display of pupils' work is excellent in most rooms with good examples to stimulate pupils' interest and illustrate the level of expected attainment. Teachers' expectations are high and homework is used to extend pupils' knowledge. The teaching and support of SEN pupils is good.

153. The leadership and management of the subject is good overall and the curriculum meets the statutory requirements. The two subject leaders work well together to develop a team approach to DT resulting in a positive ethos in the department. Schemes of work are well developed. Rooms and accommodation of the subject are very good and resources are good in terms of equipment but consumable resources are low. Health and safety are satisfactory and staff are completing the Design and Technology Association National Standards Training. There is good use of 'Pro-Desktop' computer-aided design software in design folders and staff training needs to be extended to include textiles and foodstuff. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The department development plan now has some costing and targets but lacks financial detail. Monitoring and evaluation take place through lesson observations with feedback to teachers and targets set. Progress has been made with links to primary schools but links to further education and the development of vocational courses need to be explored. The last report identified a need for more technical support. This has been improved in this academic year but is not yet fully adequate.

GEOGRAPHY

154. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' relationships with pupils are good.
- The quality of teaching by geography specialists in Key Stage 3 is good.
- The introduction of the Key Stage 3 national strategy, especially literacy, within the department is effective in supporting pupils.
- Facilities for ICT are good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils' independent learning are insufficient.
- More able pupils are not set difficult enough work in a minority of lessons.
- Target setting for individuals and the department does not do enough to raise standards.

155. Standards are below average but pupils are achieving satisfactorily, having entered school with little knowledge and ability in the subject. Good teaching is supported by satisfactory leadership and management. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although pupils are achieving better than previously, progress in issues raised then is inconsistent.

156. Attainment is below average in Key Stage 3. In 2002 tests girls performed well below girls nationally. Pupils enter school with varied experiences of geography, some extremely limited, but by the end of Year 9 achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with SEN make good progress and their achievement is good because of good individual support. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below the national average. Over recent years GCSE examination results have been below national average with 2002 results particularly weak. Compared to their performance in other subjects, pupils obtained results one grade below in geography. However, given their previous standards, the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 4 is currently satisfactory.

157. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, learning skills more readily than factual information. At the beginning of Key Stage 3 learning is concentrated on basic skills. Pupils learn map work and atlas skills that are developed as they move through the key stage, but their knowledge of places and locations is still limited in Year 9. By the end of the key stage most pupils can use six figure co-ordinates satisfactorily and can construct and interpret graphs of various types aided by the use of computers. A variety of writing styles is demonstrated, including notes, extended and imaginative pieces. This reflects the good introduction of literacy skills in the department. New programmes of work in Key Stage 3 have improved pupils' grasp of geographical processes and factors, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in Year 10 competently carry out fieldwork under guidance and many produce good-quality urban studies of their local area. Many of the studies show a clear understanding of the issues and good use of geographical skills to analyse the data and to reach realistic conclusions. By the end of Year 11, most pupils have a good understanding of physical processes and can describe land forms associated with glaciation. They have a good grasp of settlement patterns and use appropriate technical vocabulary.
158. Pupils' attitudes to geography and behaviour in lessons are good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4, with only a few not being fully motivated and engaged in the learning activities. Positive attitudes are often a direct consequence of good teaching. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and use praise well to encourage them. However, pupils are given few opportunities to think for themselves and work independently. Opportunities for working collaboratively in groups are also limited.
159. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is good overall and contributes well to the satisfactory achievement. Specialist geographers' teaching in Key Stage 3 is good and although the teaching of non-specialists is satisfactory, it is not of the same quality, as they lack detailed subject knowledge. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Most lessons follow a similar format of introduction, followed by activities from a textbook. Teachers are well prepared and a strength of all teaching is the detailed, careful way in which their pupils are informed about what they will learn in each lesson. The best lessons are delivered with good pace and teachers check on pupils' knowledge and understanding at the end. The Key Stage 3 national strategy is being well introduced in the department and is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. This is particularly so for literacy. The teaching of 'thinking skills' now features in some lessons and there is some good teaching of low-ability pupils. However, in a minority of lessons there is not enough challenge for more able pupils. Teaching of ICT in the department is improving and pupils use it well in the presentation of their work, but ICT in lessons needs further development to make better use of the good facilities. A new, good system of assessment is being introduced in Key Stage 3 using National Curriculum levels in grading pupils' work, but this is not yet embedded. In Key Stage 4 assessment is more secure with GCSE grades well used. However, the setting of targets for individuals and the department lacks clarity and requires further work.
160. Accommodation is of good quality and in specialist rooms teachers create an interesting learning environment with displays of maps, posters and photographs. However, there are no globes to help with the teaching of places and locational knowledge. There are sufficient quantities of the main textbooks, but the range of library references is poor with most of them out-of-date and not relevant to current topics. There are good ICT facilities for the subject.

161. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department provides good support for non-specialist teachers, giving advice, guidance and detailed teaching resources. Systems for monitoring, evaluations and improvement planning are not established well enough. A good development is the introduction of new programmes of work that are more relevant and help to interest and motivate pupils, especially in Key Stage 4. Pupils are achieving better than previously. However, a number of issues raised in the last inspection report are just being addressed now, for example, monitoring and evaluating the work of the department, and improvement is inconsistent. Consequently, improvement in the issues identified for attention at the last inspection although overall satisfactory, is not as good as it should be in all areas. Initiatives have been started recently, with others planned, which will help move the department forward. The specialist staff have the capacity to improve standards.

HISTORY

162. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good at both key stages.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- There is a good focus on language and social development as well as history skills.
- There is a good focus on assessment and sharing the criteria for success.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not always allowed time to undertake meaningful, focused activities.
- There are too many teachers involved in teaching this subject, sometimes involving split classes, and this makes effective management difficult.

163. Standards are below average in Key Stage 3 and average in Key Stage 4. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily because of good leadership and management supporting good teaching.

164. In 2002 the assessments showed pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as below average. This is still the case but pupils' attainment is closer to the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their standards when entering school. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher-attaining pupils write extended answers, for example on the Industrial Revolution. They can review a film of the topic they have been studying and draw out similarities and differences, for example between British and Zulus. The answers of average and lower-attaining pupils often lack detail and conclusions to extended answers, but they can answer factual questions and make creditable efforts to write letters and newspaper articles from a contemporary viewpoint.

165. The 2002 GCSE results were below the national average. Pupils did generally less well than in their other subjects with underachievement particularly affecting boys. However, nearly all obtained a grade. Currently, at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are working at least at the national average. Their prior attainment was higher than the previous year's, but their present standard represents satisfactory achievement, an improvement because of the good teaching and subject leadership. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher-attaining pupils offer good recall and knowledge, for example on the rise of Hitler. They use sources well and write extended answers to factual questions. Average and lower-attaining pupils lack detail and sometimes conclusions to their extended work. However, they are conscientious and have orderly and well-presented notes and coursework, for example on the causes and outbreak of the First World War. Behaviour and attitudes are almost always good. Higher-attainers in particular at Key Stage 4 are well focused on their examination work.
166. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and usually good at both key stages. Good relationships enable teachers to encourage pupils with praise, but to insist on attention and accuracy, for example in the use of subject terminology. The teachers are able to offer supportive assessment and as a result pupils understand the levels they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Good knowledge of both subject and examination requirements means that revision lessons in Year 11 have a good emphasis on source work and on what constitutes good extended answers and examination technique. The teachers plan well for a variety of activities. Occasionally, in lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, introductions are over-long or there is too much teacher intervention so that the sharp focus of the activity is lost or there is not time for the planned activities to have their full impact. Generally, however, activities are challenging and enable pupils of all levels of attainment to respond well to them and make good progress. Sorting activities are used well, for example in Year 8 to categorise statements about the King and Parliament as the basis for a propaganda article favourable to one side or the other; and in Year 7 to clarify reasons for the Norman victory at Hastings as the basis for a current affairs broadcast. In Year 9 well-chosen examples of propaganda from the First World War encouraged pupils to analyse and compare the purpose and impact of the images. These activities are often in pairs and groups, generally of both boys and girls, enabling pupils to share and develop their opinions before giving them to the whole class. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson, groups of pupils had produced presentations favourable to either Norman rulers or Saxon rebels in the form of statements, badges, posters, poems and songs, combining vivid language with hard facts, and enabling pupils of all levels of attainment to make a contribution. Good use is made of video and of visits and visitors. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, two former evacuees related their experiences during the Second World War. This made the topic come alive for the pupils and enabled them to ask precise but sensitive questions.
167. History is well led and managed. The new head of department has worked hard to bring together a disparate team. The systems and documentation are in place to support the team. Literacy skills are built into the scheme of work and language appropriate to analysis and argument is displayed in the main history rooms. Good resources, especially visual, are made available. ICT is used satisfactorily. It is used extensively to word-process assignments but access to computers to use websites for research is difficult for classes. The large number of people teaching history as a part of their responsibilities, sometimes with classes split between them, places a strain on the departmental team. After a period of staffing instability, the department is demonstrating satisfactory improvement from the last inspection, and has the capacity to improve further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

168. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Resources for ICT are good; there are more computers than the numbers set by national targets.
- There are well-planned ICT experiences in Key Stage 3 and for those pupils following ICT examination courses in Key Stage 4.
- Leadership of the ICT department is good.
- Pupils enjoy their work in ICT, are well motivated and apply themselves well.

Areas for improvement

- The management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, especially in Key Stage 4 and does not ensure the quality of curriculum coverage for all pupils.
- Monitoring procedures are not embedded into the department's work.
- The good system for assessing performance is not used as well as it could be to support lesson planning.

169. Standards are below average in the separate ICT taught courses and in pupils' attainment when they use ICT in other subjects. These standards represent satisfactory achievement for pupils given their below-average standards when starting at the school and are a result of good leadership of the subject taught courses backed up by satisfactory, and often good, teaching. Although pupils are achieving satisfactorily, the school has not made sure that the curriculum provision for ICT across subjects has been managed satisfactorily because the subject leader has not been given this as his main priority and the support from senior management is not effective enough. This is a particular problem at Key Stage 4 where around half of the pupils do not have separate ICT lessons. The result is that the school cannot guarantee the quality of curriculum coverage across subjects.

170. Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations but improved since 2002 when they were well below average. Over the last academic year, the new units of work from the ICT strand of the Key Stage 3 national strategy have been incorporated into the scheme of work for ICT and this has resulted in improved learning activities. Although the achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory overall there is an element of underachievement by girls, although pupils are provided with equal opportunities in lessons. By the end of Year 9, pupils access resources across the school network quickly and confidently. They make good use of spreadsheet and database software to handle information and produce various charts. Pupils use models to experiment with changes in finances affecting budgets. Presentation skills are well developed and pupils produce and deliver 'PowerPoint' presentations as well as more traditional desktop publishing and word-processing. They design and test simple web pages. Higher-attaining pupils show a consideration of audience and appropriate methods to suit different groups of people such as younger children or adults.

171. By the end of Year 11 the attainment of pupils following an examination course in ICT is average. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils, based on their prior attainment.
172. The 2002 GCSE examination results showed underachievement in ICT compared with other subjects, with boys attaining higher standards than girls. Recent improvements in the department have resulted in current standards being higher. Pupils design and implement database systems using features such as forms, reports and control panels to make the database more user-friendly. They use formulae within spreadsheets to perform complex calculations and models. Pupils present with a particular audience in mind, showing a good appreciation of the appropriate design features such as font choice, background colour and use of text in presentations. They create small web sites and higher-attaining pupils are beginning to use more sophisticated web authoring techniques such as the use of 'Java' script.
173. The experiences in ICT for the non-examination group of pupils, around 50% of the cohort, are inconsistent. In some subjects, such as mathematics, English and geography, appropriate use of ICT supports learning and results in an average level of attainment, which is a good achievement. Overall, however, this group of pupils is attaining below average because of weaknesses in other subjects.
174. Pupils display good attitudes to ICT in the majority of lessons. They treat the resources with care and respect and show considerable enthusiasm and enjoyment in their use of ICT. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good and pupils work well together, often supporting each other well in their work. Independent work on the computers is well supported by a range of resources both on the school network and on paper. Pupils with SEN get good support by a range of methods, often by learning support assistants.
175. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory for pupils throughout the school. Within this, there is a range of quality from very good to satisfactory. There was one unsatisfactory lesson seen. Most lessons are well prepared and clear plans include appropriate learning objectives that are shared with the pupils. Regular on-line assessment is a feature of most of the lessons and each class has detailed predictions for pupil attainment at the end of key stages. Teachers have good classroom management techniques such as switching off computer monitors to prevent distraction during explanations. Interactive whiteboards are well used for demonstrating the use of applications and for providing good models of work for pupils. In some teacher-led lessons, pupils were able to use the interactive nature of these boards effectively to support learning.
176. In a minority of lessons learning objectives were vague or inappropriate. Better use could be made of the generous amount of assessment data available to inform lesson planning and differentiate activities. In some lessons, low-level misbehaviour and inattention went unchecked and had a negative impact on pupils' progress. Although evident in many lessons, the use of the final section of the lesson to establish pupil progress and the setting of homework to support learning activities was inconsistent.

177. The ICT scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has been strengthened by the use of the new units of work from the ICT strand of the Key Stage 3 strategy. Pupils get a generous allocation of specialist ICT lessons, two hours a week in Year 7 and one hour a week in each of Years 8 and 9. Cross-curricular use of ICT is not well planned however, and there is some inconsistency across the range of subjects. Around 50% of the pupils in Key Stage 4 follow GCSE ICT. For the non-examination group part of the cohort, cross-curricular ICT provision is not planned and is inconsistent.
178. ICT resources are good. The computer-pupil ratio stands at 1:4.8, which already exceeds the national targets for 2004. Several teaching areas also have interactive whiteboards and good use of these was made during the inspection. Funding from EiC and the National Grid for Learning project have supported this and have helped to improve standards.
179. Pupils have good access to ICT resources outside of timetabled lessons and a computer club is held which caters for higher-attaining pupils. These pupils were able to demonstrate high levels of web authoring skills. Despite the good resources, access to computers is an issue for some subject departments.
180. The leadership of the ICT subject department is good. The head of ICT provides resources and support for colleagues both within the department and throughout the school. Although the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) ICT training has not been completed by around half the staff, post-NOF ICT training has been delivered in house by the ICT department. Management of the subject department is sound with clear indications of rapid progress in many areas. The department has not yet been able to embed monitoring of teaching into its work. Management of cross-curricular ICT, particularly for Years 10 and 11, is unsatisfactory.
181. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the subject department is well placed for further developments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

182. Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Teachers show commitment to improvement.
- Teachers make effective use of the target language by giving information and instructions in the language being taught.
- The courses offered to different groups of pupils are appropriate.
- Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 4 and pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not achieve as much as they should and pupils need more opportunities to read and write at length.
- There are too many inconsistencies because of unsatisfactory management.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is unsatisfactory.
- ICT is not used as effectively as it could be.

183. Standards are below average. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not make as much progress as they should because, despite satisfactory teaching, there is inconsistency and unsatisfactory management. Pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
184. At the end of Year 9, attainment is below the national average in both French and German for both boys and girls. Pupils do not reach their potential because they have not acquired the grammatical skills to adapt and re-use prior knowledge effectively. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress because of individual support and a suitable course. Because pupils do not make sufficient progress in Key Stage 3 they start the GCSE course at a low level and despite satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, standards are still below average. Standards of attainment in GCSE have fallen since the last inspection and are now significantly below the national average in French, although the number of pupils entered for the examination is well above the national average. Numbers sitting German have fallen. Numbers taking two languages are very small, despite the fact that over half of the pupils study both French and German throughout Key Stage 3, few pupils are disapplied from studying a MFL.
185. There are variations in how pupils achieve in different aspects of their work in Key Stage 3. Writing is mostly based on adapting from a model, and there is very little challenge to write either from memory or to produce new work based on structures already known. Reading is not a well-developed skill. In speaking there is a wide range of accuracy, reflecting the pupils' different experiences in lessons. Pupils often show curiosity and offer strategies for learning, which teachers do not always recognise and develop. Listening skills are good, however, and this is largely due to the regular use of the target language by the teachers, although pupils rarely use the target language to engage with their teachers. Pupils enjoy and respond to challenge, whether in the form of games, or when required to complete work within a time limit. Relationships with teachers are good.
186. In Key Stage 4 the quality of pupils' learning is also variable, but, in both French and German, progress is good, given attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Presentations of some pupils in Year 11 often display a high level of accuracy and a wide range of structures, and they are delivered fluently and without prompts. The achievements of the middle ability group in French were impressive: their presentations for the GCSE speaking test were fluent and accurate yet based on understanding of the grammar and vocabulary. They could talk easily about their recent leisure experience and offer opinions about environmental change. The writing of some pupils shows a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, often very accurate, though many pupils have not yet consolidated their knowledge and make elementary mistakes.

187. Most teaching is satisfactory but it varies between outstanding and unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 3 teaching is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 4 it is mostly good. However, there is inconsistency of approach. In the best lessons seen pupils were challenged all the time and helped to reflect on the language they were learning as well as to reach high standards in speaking and listening. The introduction of coursework is helping pupils to reach higher standards in writing. Teachers work hard to help pupils cope with the rigours of the course, providing comprehensive notes and revision booklets, some of very high quality, and all testifying to their commitment and dedication. In the most effective lessons teachers insist on correct pronunciation and intonation and develop the pupils' ability to make connections between the written and spoken form of the language so that they begin to read with understanding. This is, however, not given due importance uniformly across the department. Where there are high expectations coupled with sympathetic explanations, pupils respond very well, whatever their prior attainment. Access to ICT rooms is limited, and there are few opportunities to use ICT in language classrooms. Some pupils in Year 10 have sent e-mails to French tourist offices and received replies, but work involving ICT is largely limited to word-processing, and adds little to the pupils' progress in French and German.
188. Procedures for assessing progress during Key Stage 3 are not currently effective. Pupil profiles are not a genuine record of progress, and assessment of pupils' speaking skills from individual cassettes is very time consuming for teachers. Assessment does not currently inform planning or provide ways of setting targets for pupils, but some teachers are finding ways of integrating assessment into their teaching. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson the pupils enjoyed using mini-whiteboards to show their answers and this allowed the teacher quickly to assess understanding and to know whether she could move on. Some teachers are also uncertain about the criteria for assessing levels of attainment, which sometimes gives pupils a false impression of their overall progress.
189. The department is committed to the progress of all pupils and individual teachers provide support for pupils, which is satisfactory and sometimes good, but overall the management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Pupils with SEN follow a course suited to their ability, whilst more able linguists have access to outside programmes designed to boost their confidence and raise their attainment. The quality of ancillary materials and the provision of other educational opportunities such as visits to France is a sign of the teachers' dedication. However, the department needs to re-assess its priorities and develop a wider repertoire of teaching methods in order successfully to meet the challenge of imminent changes in the curriculum. Improvement is also needed in the provision of support and guidance for teachers who have recently embarked on their careers so that they may improve their practice. In particular, teachers need to plan collectively to increase the level of challenge in the early stages of Key Stage 3 so that all pupils reach their potential at the end of Year 9, and remain confident in their ability to succeed in a modern language.

MUSIC

190. Overall, the quality of provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The leadership of the head of department is very supportive of staff and pupils.
- Planning and policy documentation are good.
- There is good quality teaching of pupils of average and below-average ability.
- Materials are well-prepared and effective in supporting learning.
- Classroom management is good.
- Accommodation is of very high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining pupils are not always given hard enough work.
- ICT resources are unsatisfactory. The quality and number of keyboards and pitched percussion resources limit pupils' learning.
- Skills development, including composition is not thoroughly embedded.

191. Standards are average in Key Stage 3 and, for those pupils opting to take music at GCSE level, are below average. Pupils progress well during Key Stage 3 and achieve well as a result of satisfactory and better teaching and a high level of commitment from the teachers. Progress in the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory as a consequence of satisfactory teaching and teachers' efforts beyond lessons, but are limited by the curriculum arrangements.
192. In Key Stage 3, the good progress made by pupils enables them to achieve average standards in their written work, although instrumental standards are relatively lower, with many pupils at beginner or elementary stage. Nevertheless, a small number of pupils does exhibit high level skills across the music curriculum.
193. In Key Stage 4, even though attainment is below average, in 2002 all pupils entered for the examination gained a GCSE grade; boys attained higher standards than girls. Listening skills are well developed but the practical skills of composition and performance are less well secure and it is this aspect that is reducing the overall levels of attainment. This is particularly true of Year 11, although the situation is less of a concern in the Year 10 group, where there is a sizeable minority of pupils who are competent instrumentalists. There is a number of pupils offering singing as their major performance study.
194. The quality of teaching is almost always at least satisfactory and frequently good or very good. Where teaching is good, the chosen material and teaching strategies fit perfectly with the ability of the group in question. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils engaged well in practical work, showing marked improvement in their ability to sing a sea shanty while playing a simple accompaniment. Occasionally, more able groups become bored because tasks were placed at too low a level. The head of department works very hard and produces excellent supportive teaching material.
195. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to motivate pupils. Discipline and relationships are good, as is classroom management. Where lessons are not as successful, even though satisfactory, it is because there is a narrow range of activities. On some occasions, the layout of the classroom causes practical difficulties.

196. The department encourages pupils of average and below average ability very well. It is sensitive to the needs of pupils with SEN and plans lessons accordingly. There is evidence of real challenge within the learning programme of these pupils. The curriculum is well planned and assessment is built into the teaching process. However, better use could be made of more regular formative assessment and of the ongoing development of skills of rhythm, pitch notation, and performance. More attention in composition and singing is needed. The keyboard is used throughout Key Stage 3 although pupils would benefit from a more systematic approach.
197. The department is a busy place with many opportunities for the pupils to develop their instrumental skills. Ensembles exist for strings, brass and woodwind, folk music, keyboards, guitars and rock music. While many of the performance levels are of an elementary standard, the pupils are keen to succeed and improve. This is very much to do with the encouragement and leadership given by the head of department.
198. Attitudes to the subject are good. Pupils respect the teachers and they are well behaved in and around the music department. This positive ethos supports learning in and beyond lessons. Pupils enjoy singing. The rock band players rehearse very well without supervision and are able to perform their own compositions as well as those of some current, popular groups.
199. The accommodation is of very high quality. ICT resources are not satisfactory. There is insufficient hardware and software to meet the needs of pupils at both key stages. Other resources require further improvement and the quality and number of keyboards and pitched percussion resources limits pupils' learning. Some keyboards are too small for the pupils.
200. Overall the department has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection and the department is rightly trying to improve attainment at Key Stage 4. The high level of commitment of the head of department has been effective in ensuring learning during a difficult period of staff turnover. This commitment is evident in the teaching well beyond normal lesson time in order to provide the best opportunities for all pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

201. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is at least satisfactory or better and frequently good, lessons are very well managed.
- Pupils are achieving satisfactorily.
- GCSE PE results in 2002 were well above the national average.
- Pupils enjoy PE and have very positive attitudes; behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils of different abilities are not always actively engaged in learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and manage activities themselves.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is not planned effectively.

202. Standards are average and pupils make satisfactory progress because of satisfactory teaching, leadership and management. Higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress. Teachers show a good commitment to pupils beyond lessons.
203. In Key Stage 3, attainment is average. In athletics pupils display well-developed running techniques and in games they select and apply appropriate movement skills and decision-making skills to perform effectively in co-operative and competitive situations. Whilst attainment of boys and girls is broadly the same, a few low-attaining girls in Year 9 do not achieve as well as boys. This is because some lessons are not planned for pupils with a wide range of different skill levels. For instance, in athletics, some pupils struggle to achieve basic throwing actions and show limited knowledge and understanding of the event. School data shows that teachers are underestimating pupils' standards in their assessments.
204. In Key Stage 4, attainment is average and sometimes above, particularly in football where pupils display a high level of individual ball control. They pass the ball with consistency and precision and show good tactical awareness in attacking and defensive strategies in a competitive game. In other activities such as squash and tennis, ball skills, movement around the court and understanding of games strategy are not as good. Skill levels are lower due to the lack of regular and frequent play. The curriculum is based on an options programme where pupils select an activity to study for a short period of time. This provides pupils with a wide range of experiences but does not allow them to spend enough time on selected sports or to achieve high standards of play. Additional curriculum time to be allocated to PE provides an ideal opportunity to improve provision and explore further accredited courses.
205. GCSE PE has been introduced since the last inspection. Results have been below national averages, however, in 2002, results improved dramatically and were much higher than national averages and almost a whole grade higher than pupils achieved in their other subjects. The department insists pupils achieve expected levels of performance in Year 9 before being considered for the GCSE course and makes use of weekly homework and regular testing in theory and practical lessons to generate high standards.
206. Pupils currently studying GCSE PE can make the connections between the theoretical aspects of anatomy and physiology and personal fitness. They demonstrate and explain practical exercises that form part of a warm-up and relate them to specific sports and events. Coursework is usually well presented and files contain a good range of completed work and resources that form a useful revision resource. Higher-attaining pupils make some use of ICT to record data and illustrate their personal fitness programmes, and all pupils are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular sport at least once a week to boost performance.
207. Teaching in PE is at least satisfactory and frequently good. Teachers are experienced and have good subject knowledge, lessons are organised and managed so that time is not wasted and pupils are actively involved in learning. In effective lessons, learning outcomes are shared at the start so pupils know what they are expected to achieve and reviewed at the end to check understanding and reinforce learning. Lessons begin with a vigorous warm-up; pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and show others new ways of stretching in preparation for physical exercise. Lessons have good pace and activity levels are high. For example, in a Year 8 athletics lesson, pupils were given long periods of time to practise and refine their hurdling technique over low hurdles, with the teacher offering regular comments on how to improve during the short rest periods.

208. In lessons which are satisfactory overall but need further improvement, teachers do not plan activities that appeal to all pupils, consequently some pupils, particularly the less able, have difficulty in knowing what they are expected to do and achieve only limited progress. For example, in a Year 10 tennis lesson pupils were asked to hit ground strokes over the net without having previously acquired the necessary ball skills or understanding of how to move into a position on court to hit the ball after it had bounced. Their play lacked accuracy and consistency and pupils showed little understanding of how to improve their performance. In a few athletics lessons insufficient resources are used so pupils have to wait too long for their turn, leading to low activity levels and reduced progress. In a minority of lessons pupils spend too long listening to the teacher and are not challenged enough to act independently.
209. Pupils are encouraged to practise in pairs and small teams with the teacher intervening to provide feedback. Questioning is well developed and is used effectively to check understanding and reinforce learning. Frequent use of demonstration with short explanations helps to clarify key teaching points and motivate pupils. In most lessons, pupils work hard. They think for themselves, show interest in what they are doing and always co-operate. There is little use of ICT or strategies to develop literacy and numeracy, resulting in lost opportunities for pupils' development.
210. Pupil attitudes are very good and sometimes excellent. Relationships have a positive effect on learning. Pupils enjoy PE. They work hard, behave themselves and co-operate fully with staff. Standards of PE clothing are excellent, all pupils wear the recommended kit and very few arrive at lessons without it. Pupils excused from lessons get changed into PE kit and assist staff in organising equipment or supporting other pupils. Many pupils participate in extra-curricular sport and this helps to promote high standards of performance particularly in games and athletics, and the school enjoys success in competitions with local schools.
211. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, management of the GCSE PE course has improved and high standards are now achieved. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in the department is not planned effectively. Assessment procedures are not fully established. Whilst pupils' skill level is assessed, other aspects like application of skills, evaluating and improving performance and knowledge of fitness and health, require further work.
212. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes sports like squash and indoor rock climbing which pupils find appealing. A high number of different games is taught, meaning that pupils have a good range of experiences but little time to practise and consolidate skills.
213. The gymnasium, climbing wall, squash courts and changing rooms are excellent facilities and good use is made of them for PE lessons and extra-curricular sport. The sports hall is an austere learning environment requiring some refurbishment; whilst it provides a large indoor teaching space, the floor and walls are dirty and a better cleaning schedule is required. Outside a very good multi-use games area and extensive playing fields are ideal facilities for teaching and playing different sports.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

214. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- There is good teaching by a team of specialist teachers.
- Very good leadership is reflected in the head of department's vision to set goals for development.
- Very effective management is exemplified in clear, well structured planning and procedures.
- There is a relevant, interesting curriculum with a good balance of knowledge, understanding and reflection.
- The climate of mutual trust and respect gives pupils confidence to learn from each other as well as their teachers.
- Pupils' very good behaviour, powers of concentration and involvement in their learning support achievement.
- There are well-planned opportunities for the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Standardisation of marking and assessment is not yet carried out through levels of attainment.
- The use of ICT to support learning is not well enough incorporated into lessons.
- Pupils need more opportunities to learn independently.

215. Standards are above average and rising. The pupils achieve well and they learn at a good pace. The explanation lies in consistently good teaching that is typically knowledgeable, demanding and interesting, supported by very good leadership and management.

216. The attainment of 14 year olds more than meets the expectations of the South Tyneside local Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a well-developed sense of important concepts that are integral to faith communities such as belief, deity and commitment. Further, they are knowledgeable on the central features that characterise the religious traditions they explore. In a lesson in Year 9 for example, the pupils used their knowledge and understanding perceptively when discussing the links between experience and enlightenment in Buddhist teaching. This led to a lively debate on associated ideas such as impermanence, change and happiness at a level better than might be expected by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. In both class and written work, the pupils have a secure grasp of religious terms and are able to give fluent and accurate explanations of their meaning and significance.

217. Pupils throughout Key Stage 3 achieve well in response to demanding tasks that engage them in both talk and writing activities. In a good lesson pupils in Year 7 produced coherent paragraphs on valuing the environment when asked to consider what the influence of holding religious beliefs might have on thoughts and actions. Equally, pupils in Year 8 showed good gains in assimilating the principles of commitment and change in the Sikh 'rite of Khalsa' prompted by a class discussion on the importance of inner qualities in religious observance. Pupils in Year 9 produced some excellent examples of personal reflection in poems on the theme of 'The Outsider'. The pupils' work showed considerable development of essential skills of empathy and application as well as imagination.

218. Standards in the GCSE short course in RE 2002 were in line with the national average and showed a rise on the previous year's results. Over half the pupils gained higher grades. Few pupils failed to achieve a grade, placing the results in RE well above that of the school's overall GCSE performance. This is all the more commendable given the high number of pupils entered for the examination, reflecting a wide ability range and in which numerous pupils exceeded their predictions.
219. Teachers prepare pupils well for examination work through structured tasks that increasingly call for evaluation, perspective and arriving at an informed view. This accounts for the pupils' good achievement throughout the GCSE course. A group of more able pupils in Year 10, for example, worked conscientiously in small groups considering reasons for and against a belief in God. They showed good skills in putting forward argument and counter argument for a range of belief stances and made good gains in getting to grips with the complexity of holding a personal belief in a secular society. In Year 11 the pupils' written work showed increasing awareness of the relationship between beliefs and lifestyle in both the Christian and Islamic traditions when writing about real-life situations such as euthanasia and social harmony.
220. Teaching is always at least good, sometimes very good, and the pupils learn at a good rate. Teachers have wide subject knowledge and understanding, set out the focus of learning clearly and move lessons along at a good pace. The pupils, therefore, settle quickly and purposefully to their work. Teachers demand a lot from the pupils who invariably rise to the challenge. Pupils in Year 7 for example, responded well to the demands of exploring the significance of the senses in the Hindu puja'. The pupils went on to reflect perceptively on 'quiet times' in their own daily life. They made good gains in recognising important elements of private worship. Above all, teachers involve the pupils in varied and thought-provoking tasks that are well matched and inclusive. Essentially, this explains the good achievement and progress all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make in their development of key skills and concepts. Care is taken through use of praise and informative marking to build the pupils' confidence and inspire further effort and improvement. In consequence, the pupils know what is expected of them and how they may achieve their targets. Nevertheless, plans to introduce levels of attainment in assessment procedures is a sound move to establish the standardisation in grading pupils' work that the department is seeking. Teachers regularly help pupils to take stock of their achievement through timely intervention and brisk plenary sessions. Invariably, constructive homework tasks are set that are well designed to probe further thinking and learning.

221. The pupils are often encouraged to think independently and their contributions in lessons are valued. Even so, independence in learning is sometimes restricted as much of the work continues to be tightly structured, the only aspect from the time of the previous inspection in 1997 that has not yet been fully addressed. Resources, on the other hand, have improved markedly since 1997 and are currently being used to advantage to support learning. The use of artefacts, for example in a lesson in Year 7, made a significant contribution to the pupils' interest in their work on Hindu worship. The introduction of visits and visitors in Year 8, in particular from across faith traditions has done much to enhance the pupils' first-hand experience of religious and cultural diversity in their own region. The RE curriculum makes a commendable contribution to the teaching of literacy most noticeably in the excellent use of talk to develop ideas. The use of ICT is not so well integrated in lesson planning, although there are some good examples of pupils' work where presentation has been enhanced through the competent use of word processing. Some of this work, such as their own version of 'a creed' in Year 9, is displayed to good effect and helps to create the colourful and lively environment that teachers create in all three specialist teaching rooms.
222. Teachers create a climate of mutual trust and respect. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes significantly to the pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and involvement in their learning. They gain confidence from frequent opportunities to discuss, form opinions and reflect on religious, moral and social issues, both in their own and other cultures. This underpins the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for personal reflection in almost all aspects of their work is a strong feature that has a significant impact on the pupils' personal development and insight as well as enjoyment of their learning.
223. The department is effectively led and managed. The head of department, along with a strong team of specialist teachers, has had a major impact on raising standards and the quality of provision since 1997. The department has clearly benefited from the advice and support provided through the senior leadership team. Procedures with regard to monitoring and review of the pupils' performance and departmental practice are firmly in place. Outcomes are used conscientiously to set clear goals for further development. Areas highlighted for improvement in this inspection have been well anticipated with action already being taken. Pupils are being provided with an interesting, relevant and balanced RE experience.