

INSPECTION REPORT

SANDHILL VIEW SCHOOL

Sunderland

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108867

Headteacher: Mrs P Marshall

Reporting inspector: I D Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th January 2003

Inspection number: 252955

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 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Grindon Lane
Sunderland

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Urwin

Date of previous inspection: May 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12271	I Thompson	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What sort of school is it? Leadership and management. What should the school do to improve further?
9742	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
12183	P Ingram	Team inspector	Science	
15051	L Kaufman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
11300	B Smith	Team inspector	Geography	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Art and design Music	
2414	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	
4676	M Griffiths	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sandhill View School is an average sized, 11-16 mixed comprehensive school housed in new buildings that are part of a purpose-built community learning centre, developed through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The school serves an urban area of Sunderland that has high levels of social and economic deprivation. The school has been identified as facing challenging circumstances. Numbers have been rising slowly and there are now 873 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and in previous years was well above average. Almost all pupils are white; of the very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds none is at an early stage of learning English. The school's tests show that pupils' standards when they join the school are well below average overall. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above average but the proportion with statements of special educational need, most of which refer to moderate learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties, is below.

The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives aimed at raising standards, including partnership in an Education Action Zone (EAZ). A national award was won by the school for sustained improvement over the two years following the previous inspection in May 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sandhill View provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is improving as a result of good leadership and management. Teaching is good overall. Standards are rising and in Years 10 and 11 at a faster rate than found nationally. The great majority of pupils do at least as well as might be expected and most do better in all years. Overall, the school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers support pupils well and build their confidence.
- Most pupils have good attitudes to school that support learning.
- Leadership and management are good and have secured good improvement.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school provides high standards of care for its pupils.
- Procedures for monitoring standards of teaching and learning are very good.

What could be improved

- Attendance, although improved, is unsatisfactory and affects the progress of too many pupils.
- The behaviour of a minority of boys impedes their own and others' learning.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers do not use homework consistently well enough to enable pupils to develop their independence.
- Not enough attention is given to developing pupils' numeracy skills in many subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection in May 2000. All issues have been tackled effectively with the exception of attendance which, although improved, remains unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved. Planning has improved greatly and development planning is closely linked to departmental planning. Staff are now much more involved in decision making; consultation and

communication are key features of management. Standards and achievement are improving. Unsatisfactory attendance remains an issue for improvement.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	A	Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E

Standards in work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils do at least as well as expected and the majority do well. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in English and science; they were well below average in mathematics. Results have improved at a similar rate to standards nationally and were above average in comparison with those of similar schools.

Standards in work seen at the end of Year 11 are below average. Pupils do at least as well as might be expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9 and the majority do well. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well below average. Pupils did well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Virtually all pupils who attended regularly gained a pass at grades A*-G, representing significant achievement for many pupils with statements of special educational need. Results improved in many subjects, continuing the faster than average rate of improvement since the previous inspection, and were well above average in comparison with similar schools.

Pupils' performance was close to the school's targets. The school's assessment data show that in relation to their prior attainment, the majority of pupils did better than might be expected. Current targets are challenging and based on detailed information about pupils' prior attainment.

Standards of literacy are below average; standards of numeracy are well below average.

Standards in work seen

	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11
Above average	Physical education	Physical education
Average	Citizenship	Design and technology, English, music
Below average	English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), music, religious education	Science, art and design, geography, history, ICT
Well below average	Mathematics, modern foreign languages	Mathematics, modern foreign languages

Achievement (progress over time)

	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11
Good	English, science, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education.	English, science, citizenship, design and technology, music
Satisfactory	Mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages	Mathematics, art and design, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of pupils are keen to learn and make the most of what the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good in classrooms apart from a minority of boys and good out of lessons when supervised; otherwise satisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory, although much improved.
Partnership with parents	Unsatisfactory. The school tries to forge links with parents but meets with limited success.

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.

Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects, with consistently good teaching in English, drama, science, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education. Some very good teaching was seen in the great majority of subjects during the inspection and some outstandingly good teaching was seen in modern foreign languages, music and physical education. This high quality teaching gives the school strengths on which to manage further improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is similar throughout the school but within this positive picture there is substantially less very good teaching in Year 10 lessons than for any other year. This discrepancy reflects the difficulties teachers have in dealing with the behaviour of a minority of pupils, mainly boys, that affects the quality of learning for all.

In otherwise satisfactory lessons, often opportunities are missed to support wider aspects of pupils' learning such as the development of their numeracy skills and the use of homework to promote independent learning skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good range of opportunities to meet pupils' needs and extend their aspirations. Good careers and vocational education. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Good relationships with partner institutions contribute to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision helps pupils achieve well. Good support is provided for specific needs.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory overall. Provision for moral development is very good and for social development it is good. Opportunities are missed to contribute to pupils' spiritual development and provision is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. Procedures for monitoring academic performance and pupils' well-being are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership provides clear direction and promotes improvement. Good management is raising standards through rigorous monitoring. Leadership and management of the pastoral system are strong. Managers at all levels are held accountable for performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body provides good support for the school while holding it rigorously to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Mechanisms for managing performance are well established. The school's self-critical culture provides a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of available resources. Additional funds are used well to support the school's priorities, such as improving attendance.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects pupils to work hard. Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency of homework. Information about progress. The school working more closely with parents.

Very few parents expressed their views, either through the questionnaire or at the parents' meeting. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and that homework should be more consistent. Information about progress is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- Standards have improved since the previous inspection and continue to improve.
- The majority of pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are well supported in their learning by the school's quality of care, effective teaching and good evaluation and assessment procedures.
- The standard of some boys' attainment remains a cause for concern.
- A high rate of absence continues to affect the progress and performance of some pupils.
- Numeracy skills are not developed sufficiently across the curriculum and affect pupils' standards of attainment in other subjects.

1. The school's performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was below average overall compared with all schools in 2001 and well below average in 2002, but well above and above average respectively in comparison with similar schools. In relation to pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieved at least as well as might be expected and many achieved well. Despite the dip in performance in 2002, pupils' average points score has been rising over the last five years at a faster rate than nationally. Girls have usually done better than boys and the gap between them widened considerably in 2002.
2. The school identified the problem of low attaining boys before they entered the school. That pre-existing problem was subsequently compounded by the poor attitudes, behaviour and attendance of a small group of these boys (currently in Year 10) who did not attain expected standards at the end of Year 9 despite the school's diligent efforts. Several strategies have been put in place to improve the situation in relation to these pupils and also the substantial proportion of boys who enter the school at level 3 or below; it is too soon to assess their impact on standards of attainment.
3. GCSE examination results since the previous inspection show that although the school's performance compared with all schools has been well below average, it has done well in comparison with similar schools. In recognition of its performance, the school received a national award for sustained improvement. In 2002, pupils' achievement was good in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9, results improved in many subjects, and performance overall was well above average in comparison to similar schools. Results have improved at a faster rate than nationally; significant improvement has occurred in mathematics results over the past two years. In comparison with their other subjects in 2002, pupils did particularly well in English, English literature, drama and geography. The school does well by those pupils who attend regularly: virtually all pupils who did so gained at least a pass grade at GCSE in 2002, a significant achievement for many pupils with special educational needs.
4. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress because of the additional challenges presented to them by most teachers and the special arrangements the school makes through its organisation of the curriculum to ensure that they have appropriate opportunities for development.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets that are set for them. This is due to good teaching and high quality support throughout the

school. Excellent procedures for tracking pupils' progress quickly alert the special educational needs co-ordinators and learning support assistants to any problems, enabling them to take effective action. By supporting the majority of pupils within the classroom, alongside their peers, the school successfully promotes enjoyable learning experiences.

6. Although attendance rates are much improved, poor attendance is still a significant factor affecting some pupils' progress. Slightly more than one third of the teaching staff are new to the school in the last two years, and in the last three years a relatively high number of teachers have been absent through illness. All these factors affect the continuity of pupils' learning and the standards they attain. It is to the school's credit that these difficult circumstances have been managed well to minimise the disruption and continue the school's improvement.
7. Standards of literacy are below average, reflecting the difficulties many pupils have with reading, writing and speaking when they enter the school. Standards of numeracy are well below average because not enough attention is paid to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum. As a result many pupils are having difficulty in dealing with numeracy tasks in mathematics and other subjects. For example, in science and design and technology, many pupils have difficulty with measuring accurately and using appropriate units of measurement. In geography, pupils generally interpret graphs reasonably well but they do not use number and graphs well enough to convey the meaning of data. Although pupils are encouraged to draw graphs in many subjects, graphical skills are not well developed and as a result the quality of graphical work is not high.
8. Significant contributions to maintaining and improving standards are made by the school's care for its pupils, by its support for pupils with special educational needs, by good teaching and assessment procedures, and by the school's self-critical approach and close checking of quality. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- Pupils' attitudes are generally good.
- Pupils like the school and what it has to offer them.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and as pupils move around the school, though standards drop when they are not directly supervised.
- Pupils respond well to most aspects of the provision for their personal development. Relationships in the school are good.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, though improved.

9. Pupils' attitudes to the school are generally good. Those interviewed said that they enjoy the school and are particularly appreciative of the new buildings with the many extra facilities they offer. In lessons, pupils respond with keen interest to good and lively teaching. During the inspection such good attitudes were a feature of English, drama and dance lessons. A dance lesson for Year 9 pupils was a good example of the type of response generated by enthusiastic teaching as all pupils concentrated on the theme of the dance with successful results. There are some pupils who get bored and become passive when otherwise satisfactory lessons are dull. This particular attitude – a tendency to 'switch off' – is more common among boys who do not always apply themselves to their studies as well as girls. Opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility for their own learning and to work independently are not extensive, and the extent to which pupils will accept and make use of those provided

varies. Some pupils are ready to think for themselves and tackle topics which stretch them, taking pride in their success but, in general, pupils prefer to be given information.

10. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. In lessons pupils behave well: there are few instances of disruption or unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils themselves think that behaviour is good, though they said there are a few pupils, mainly boys, who can be a nuisance and whose behaviour slows the learning of all. Behaviour as pupils move around the school, in corridors, on stairs, in year group social areas and the dining room is usually good, although standards can fall when pupils are not directly supervised. Pupils interviewed said that there are cases of bullying but were confident that these would be reported and dealt with quickly. Exclusions during the last academic year (2001/2002) were high for a school of this size. The number of fixed term exclusions dropped during the autumn term, but the number of permanent exclusions remained high. Most exclusions followed a series of incidents of unacceptable behaviour, where pupils had not responded to the extra support given.
11. Pupils respond well to the school's provision for their personal development. Each year group has its own area where pupils can meet at break and lunch times. These are popular and provide a good focus for informal social development, especially since the year staff have their offices here too. Pupils in the Year 7 transition classes gain from the extra support which helps them to adjust to the extra demands of secondary school routines. Most of those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have difficulty conforming to classroom discipline respond well to the extra help they receive from the learning mentors and the learning support centre. Pupils consider they benefit from the topics covered in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Those pupils who are considered to have particular gifts or talents gain experience of a wider world from projects run through Excellence Challenge. Relationships in the school are good, especially between pupils and members of staff. This was seen to help pupils learn effectively in many lessons during the inspection. Relationships among pupils are also usually good. They can collaborate productively in pairs or groups. There was a good example of how well pupils can work together in a PSHE lesson where pupils worked together to research information about AIDS and HIV and then presented their findings to the rest of the class. All took part in each group.
12. Attendance is unsatisfactory, although it has improved recently. Attendance during the academic year 2001/2002 was 86.8 per cent, which is well below the national average. There was a significant improvement during the autumn term (and especially in the first half of the term) to 91.1 per cent. This level of attendance, if sustained for the academic year 2002/2003, would be about the average for schools nationally. The rate of unauthorised absence is higher than the national average. Many individual pupils have good rates of attendance. However, despite the improvement in the overall rate during the autumn term, a third of all pupils in the school – with no particular pattern – still had attendance rates of less than 90 per cent. This inevitably affects the standards those pupils can attain: some cannot be entered for examinations because their absence leads to incomplete work.
13. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the previous inspection, but attendance remains an issue.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The overall quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning so that standards are improving and pupils' achievement is good. Some very good teaching was seen in the great majority of subjects during the inspection and some outstandingly good teaching was seen in modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The quality of teaching in music is particularly noteworthy because the department is currently staffed by temporary teachers who have brought expertise and enthusiasm to their work that inspire pupils, quickly establishing constructive relationships with them so that they learn well. The considerable improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection reflects the work that the senior management team have put into teachers' professional development and the monitoring of classroom quality by managers at all levels. The consistency of teaching in the English department, for example, is a clear illustration of effective departmental leadership. Teachers' positive response to monitoring can be seen in the fact that during the inspection week most reacted to any criticism of their teaching by making improvements in subsequent lessons.
15. The quality of teaching and learning is similar throughout the school but within this positive picture there is substantially less very good teaching in Year 10 lessons than for any other year. This discrepancy reflects the difficulties teachers have in dealing with the behaviour of a substantial minority of boys that affects the quality of learning for all. An example was in mathematics when good teaching of a well-planned lesson, with a good range of interesting activities designed to make pupils think and find out for themselves, led to learning that was only satisfactory. Although the teacher handled the disruptive behaviour of a minority of boys well, they were determined not to be interested and did not apply themselves to the work in hand. The need to repeat instructions for this group and the waste of time involved slowed the learning of all pupils. In this class, girls showed much better attitudes than boys – a contributory factor to their overall better performance throughout the school.
16. In the very good and excellent lessons, the common feature is the way in which teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that interest and engage pupils while meeting their individual needs. In a very good English lesson, the teacher took pupils through a scene from *Macbeth* using well-chosen examples of similar situations to promote pupils' understanding. Explanations were especially effective because they were rooted in everyday situations that brought meaning home to the pupils. The result was sustained very good behaviour and attitudes that supported very good progress in the lesson. In a very good food technology lesson, the teacher's expert demonstration of technique and explanation of the function of ingredients ensured that pupils understood exactly what was expected of them and knew they were able to achieve it. Clear evidence of planning and forethought were shown in a Year 11 mathematics lesson when the teacher had planned to use the school's computer network. When the network failed, the teacher had an effective contingency plan and managed to teach a very good lesson using alternative resources.
17. Teachers are good at using their subject knowledge and good relationships with their classes to build pupils' confidence and to challenge them to raise the level of their ambition. They provide good individual support to promote pupils' learning and make effective use of additional support for pupils with special educational needs, for example enabling a pupil with visual impairment to take a full part in a science lesson. A very strong commitment to inclusion ensures that all staff accept responsibility for pupils with special educational needs. Working closely with the co-ordinator for special educational needs they are responsible for drawing up individual learning programmes, setting targets for pupils and checking their progress. Teachers are all familiar with procedures for the identification and monitoring of pupils' performance

and their records are very thorough. Pupils are sensitively supported by teachers and classroom assistants who work well together. A positive feature in most subjects is good planning to ensure that tasks and resources are frequently adapted to suit the needs of individuals. However, this is not the case in all lessons and on occasions vocabulary used in lessons is too advanced.

18. The adoption of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, planning lessons in three parts, has helped to improve the quality of learning in the school. Many teachers use the time at the end of lessons well to reinforce the objectives of lessons and to check how much pupils have learned to assist planning of subsequent lessons. In an excellent Spanish lesson, the last ten minutes of the lesson were spent most productively in consolidating pupils' learning.
19. A strength of many history lessons is the good use of a session at the beginning of the lesson to review previous learning and to set objectives which are then evaluated at the end.
20. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, it is the missed opportunity to use the time at the end of lessons effectively that is the common weakness. There are three other common weaknesses that would be relatively easy to remedy. Too often opportunities are missed to use homework to promote pupils' independent learning skills. In part, this is the result of the difficulty teachers have in ensuring completion of homework. Nevertheless, this is a relatively neglected aspect of pupils' personal development. Occasionally work is presented in ways that do not take sufficient account of pupils' needs, generally by underestimating the level of difficulty, for example in the technical language of subjects. Although the school now has a good policy for developing pupils' numeracy skills in subjects across the school, teachers in few subjects take advantage of the opportunities that have been identified in planning.

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

21. The curriculum is broad and balanced. In Years 7 to 9, it contains all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education and PSHE. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow a core curriculum, with further options to provide breadth including two vocational GNVQ courses in health and social care and in leisure and tourism. Courses are also provided in child development and business and communication. A number of pupils follow an alternative curriculum in Years 7 to 9, which is designed to meet their needs. These 'transition' classes are designed to offer continuity of teaching so that the pupils are secure in their learning. Gifted and talented pupils study two languages in Years 7 and 8, and have music lessons outside the school day. In Years 10 and 11, gifted and talented pupils take three GCSE subjects in the time allocated to two for other pupils. The school has made good use of the opportunities provided by partnership in the EAZ to develop an innovative curriculum. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that advantage is taken of opportunities for development, better to meet pupils' needs.
22. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have access to the full curriculum and to a range of extra-curricular activities. Most pupils are supported within the classroom and this has a positive effect on their learning and enables them to develop confidence and self-esteem as they work alongside their peers. It is necessary to withdraw pupils from lessons from time to time so that the curriculum can be taught individually or in small groups. This is designed to cause minimum disruption to the rest of the curriculum. When pupils are withdrawn as part of a behaviour modification programme, they follow the same

curriculum as the rest of their group until they can rejoin their class. The curriculum in Year 7 transition classes is initially taught in a similar way to that in the primary school to help pupils with special educational needs to make the necessary adjustments to secondary education.

23. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for the teaching of literacy through the work of the enthusiastic literacy co-ordinator who leads the literacy development group, provides opportunities for sharing good practice on training days and keeps a check on what has been done so far. Contributions to the development of literacy skills by subject areas other than English vary in their effectiveness, however. Most departments have 'word walls' or display key words for their subject in teaching rooms. Some teachers, for example in religious education, physical education and history, make good use of these, but in mathematics, art and modern foreign languages teachers do not give sufficient attention to referring to and using the subject vocabulary in lessons. Some subjects do not yet develop pupils' writing skills sufficiently. Inaccuracies and lack of use of a good scientific vocabulary, for example, mar written work in science. In geography, the range of writing and its length are limited. On the other hand, higher attainers in modern foreign languages have good opportunities to write at length and teachers in design and technology and ICT provide good support for writing through the use of 'writing frames' and 'planning boxes'. History teachers encourage extended writing projects in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE coursework. Generally there are insufficient opportunities and support for reading and a limited range of speaking and listening activities. At present, therefore, the strategies for developing literacy skills are only satisfactorily effective.
24. There is a policy statement and plans to guide the development of numeracy in mathematics and other subjects. All staff have been made aware of the national strategy for teaching numeracy and what they should do to assist pupils within lessons. They have identified where numeracy impacts on their subject. However, only a few subjects are at present making an effective contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills in lessons. A good contribution is provided in science.
25. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum. A particular strength is the variety of activities offered by the physical education department, involving 30 per cent of pupils and nine members of staff. After-school clubs are provided by a number of departments, as well as booster classes and homework clubs. In addition, some departments offer educational visits as part of their curriculum.
26. The school's provision for pupils' PSHE is good. It is well planned by the co-ordinator and taught by volunteer specialists in all year groups. The school uses the Schools' Health Education survey to gauge pupils' approach to health matters and revises its provision in the light of their replies. Some modules (series of lessons) in citizenship are included in the overall programme as well as sex and relationships and drugs education. Very effective use of outside professionals was noted during the inspection as part of drugs education in a 'road show' for Year 11, which significantly increased pupils' knowledge of the effect of alcohol on individuals.
27. The provision for careers and vocational education is good. The programme is taught by the careers teacher as part of the PSHE course. Provision includes the opportunity for all Year 11 pupils to have work experience. Teachers prepare pupils for work experience carefully. They are monitored during their placements and the experience is followed up effectively in school so that pupils benefit fully from it. The careers information agency Connexions provides additional careers information in school, and works closely with pupils in all year groups to raise awareness of career paths.

University visits are organised to widen pupils' horizons. An 'Aspirational day' with Nissan helps to raise self-esteem with Year 9 pupils.

28. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Extensive links with both the immediate and wider community are used to provide many opportunities to broaden the curriculum for pupils, and especially those at the higher and lower ends of the ability range. The school is part of an Excellence in Cities initiative and is at the centre of a mini EAZ. Many local businesses and organisations are involved with the school through this. An example of the type of link is the group organised by Education Business Connexions who will come in to a conference for Year 8 pupils, exploring the reasons for and the consequences of low attendance at school. The group will then return as mentors for some of those pupils. Raising pupils' aspirations is another area where pupils are benefiting from contact with the community, for example master classes at the local university and the 16+ project that is designed to encourage Years 10 and 11 pupils to continue their education when they leave Sandhill View. Similarly, Year 9 pupils visited Nissan to spend a day working on basic skills. Sometimes, too, pupils benefit from helping others, such as those who visit local primary schools as reading mentors. These initiatives are helping to improve attendance and raise standards.
29. The school maintains good links with its partner primary schools. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science make effective use of transition units so that teachers have a good understanding of what pupils can do before they arrive at Sandhill View. There are also good college links, which begin early on so that pupils know what opportunities are available to them. There are plans to further develop college links by offering motor vehicle service placements to past pupils who want to maintain their contact with the school.
30. The school's support for the moral development of its pupils is very good. Success and achievement are celebrated, reinforcing positive values. Very clear expectations of behaviour have been laid down and staff are consistent in their support of these standards through example and through the application of the rewards and sanctions that are recognised by the pupils. The school has made a significant commitment to support pupils who may be at risk of failing to meet these standards through the provision of additional staff and an alternative curriculum. In many subjects opportunities to consider moral issues are developed, for example in design and technology and in geography where pupils investigate issues surrounding the question of re-cycling, and in religious education where pupils in Years 10 and 11 debate moral dilemmas surrounding such issues as euthanasia. Pupils demonstrate concern for others both within their school and in the wider community through fundraising and through actions such as the Christmas 'shoebox' appeal. The positive response of Year 11 pupils to the death of one of their classmates, by sponsoring a pupil in the third world, demonstrated the thoughtful guidance and support for moral values given by their staff.
31. Provision for pupils' social development is good. The school supports pupils through the identification of social areas that provide pupils with informal access to heads of year and mentors. Activities planned for end of terms and during the end of year activities week provide very good opportunities for pupils to gain wider experience of their community and to develop team-building skills. Activities such as the annual 'talent show' enable pupils to work co-operatively together and girls are already hard at work planning and rehearsing for the evening of dance to be presented later in the year. The range of sporting clubs and teams provide opportunities for pupils to display leadership and to work with their fellows on a shared goal, encouraging the development of co-operation and teamwork. Of particular note is the excellent work

undertaken in the development of pupils as swimming coaches. Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem, demonstrating concern for the success of others. Apart from through sport, there are very few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility or to develop leadership skills. The work of the pupil councils is not well known to the pupils. Although the school welcomes requests from pupils to take initiative in fundraising, there are few planned opportunities to encourage all pupils to become part of the wider school community.

32. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to learn to play musical instruments are available and a significant number of pupils do so. During the year pupils are able to perform before an audience. There are some opportunities for pupils to view performances of professional artists and performers locally, and the regular visits by a local author encourage pupils to take an interest in their work. The school recognises 'book week' and a range of activities take place to promote interest in literature. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to investigate their own culture, other than during the activity days, or to appreciate the contribution of the world cultures that are present in Britain. In art and music, pupils consider the influences of other cultures and in design and technology Chinese and Indian textile design is celebrated. During their religious education lessons, pupils have the opportunity to understand and appreciate the beliefs and cultures of the Middle East; however, they have no opportunities to visit their places of worship or to meet their representatives. There are very few opportunities for pupils to have first-hand experience of a culture other than their own. Arrangements to develop pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own were limited at the time of the previous inspection and remain so.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The school is actively seeking to raise pupils' aspirations and many pupils are benefiting from this. The awards evening and dance celebration help to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence; opportunities to take responsibility for the success of others through coaching non-swimmers enable pupils to grow spiritually. However, there are very few other opportunities for personal growth through taking responsibility. The transition classes in Year 7 support the confidence of vulnerable pupils who can later integrate well. In some subjects, such as design and technology and ICT, pupils are given the opportunity for reflection and evaluation of their work and so become sensitive to the feelings of others. Through dance, pupils develop their spirituality in their interpretation and self-expression of music and poetry. In history, pupils in Year 9 demonstrated their understanding of the horrors of trench warfare through their own poetry writing. The sensitivity and opportunity for reflection presented during a Year 11 assembly seen during the inspection were well received by the pupils. Opportunity for reflection and spiritual development through assemblies, however, is greatly dependent on the individual teacher. In most subjects opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual development are missed. In one morning registration the pupils themselves had suggested the introduction of a short prayer, clearly indicating that they are open to greater use of reflection and meditation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- Standards of care in the school are good.
- The school provides effective personal support and guidance for all pupils.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good.

34. There are good procedures to ensure the health and welfare of pupils in the school. Health education – in its broadest sense – is an important element in the PSHE programme. Members of staff know pupils well. Tutors, heads of year and the learning mentors use their knowledge sensitively to support and guide pupils. The siting of their offices in the year bases helps with this as informal contact is easy. Good child protection procedures are in place. They follow the local education authority's recommendation with appropriate training and guidance for members of staff. The school's procedures to monitor and improve behaviour are good. Pupils are managed effectively and this minimises potential disruption in lessons. Good behaviour is acknowledged and rewarded through the school's PRIDE system that celebrates and rewards pupils' positive behaviour and achievements.
35. There are very clear procedures in place for identifying and monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The establishment of a very good inclusion policy ensures that other pupils are supportive of those who experience difficulties. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils requiring them and subject departments effectively modify these where it is felt they can help pupils to achieve their targets. Individual education plans take into account the recommendations of pupils' statements of special educational needs. They are reviewed every term to ensure that pupils' achievement is the best that it can be. Targets give pupils realistic and achievable goals. Very good pastoral support for pupils who are on the brink of exclusion is a strong feature. Pupils themselves are actively involved in reviews of their progress and in agreeing targets. There is good access for disabled pupils and parents.
36. The school has altered its procedures to monitor and improve attendance. This has been given a much higher profile in the school to show the importance of good levels of attendance. Excellence in Cities and EAZ funds have been used to provide additional staff to help with this reorganisation. Monitoring is more rigorous. Parents are contacted if a pupil's attendance drops below 90 per cent in a four-week monitoring period. Close co-operation with the education welfare service means that first day contact with parents is often a home visit on the first day of absence. The breakfast club is considered an aid to better attendance. As a result of these changes, the rate of attendance improved markedly during the autumn term to a level which, if sustained, would be satisfactory.
37. There are good procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal development across the school. The school has particularly effective measures to help those pupils whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion, by improving their self-control and social skills. The learning support co-ordinator and learning mentors work together to help pupils in lessons or in the centre itself, or by organising an alternative curriculum for them. Equally good support is given to those pupils identified as gifted, or with a particular talent, for example in sport. The school provides opportunities for such pupils to extend their horizons and encourages them to develop academically. All pupils in the school do receive good support, but there are times when some groups consider they are less favoured than others. This is reflected in the views of pupils in discussion who felt that pupils who behave badly, or who do not accept the school's values, receive more than their fair share of attention. The school is aware of this and initiatives, such as the PRIDE system, are intended to provide balance.
38. The school has a well-integrated approach to academic and personal support. Heads of year have an overview of both. Pupils' record books and progress reviews show clearly how well pupils are doing. All pupils, particularly as they approach the GCSE years, receive the necessary support and guidance through mentors and personal

interviews, to help them to do as well as they can. Mentors are drawn both from among the staff of the school and from outside businesses. The overall quality of educational and personal support and guidance is good. Standards have risen in consequence.

39. Good standards of care have been maintained since the previous inspection. Attendance procedures are better.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- The school tries hard to develop an effective partnership with parents but meets with little success.
- The school provides good quality information for parents, particularly about progress.

40. Too few parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and/or came to the parents' meeting for a representative judgement of their views to be made. However, the very small sample who did respond indicated that they think that the school expects their children to work hard and do well and that teaching in the school is good. Inspectors share these positive views. Some of those parents have concerns about homework, about information on progress, and do not think that the school works closely enough with them. Inspectors agree with parents that the use of homework in the school is inconsistent but consider that information on progress is good. The inspection team thinks that the school tries to forge links with parents but meets with little success.
41. Considered overall, the quality of information that the school provides is good. The range of general information given in the prospectus and the governors' annual report is appropriate, although the use of comparisons with similar schools does not make actual national test and GCSE results entirely clear to parents. Letters from the headteacher keep parents up to date. Information for parents is also given on the school's website. Parents receive good information about the progress that their children make. Review sheets allow parents to follow progress through the year. Annual reports give a succinct picture of the year, although some subjects describe what pupils should do in order to improve more clearly than others.
42. The school tries to forge a partnership with parents, but its efforts meet with little success, which is not satisfactory. There is an appropriate programme of consultation evenings, but the school has difficulty in persuading all parents to come. Heads of year contact parents, usually by telephone when they have concerns about their children. Many parents are reluctant to visit the school and the school says contact has to be made individually. A home/school liaison officer is employed to work with parents at home. When the school does try to consult parents, it frequently finds it difficult to get a response.
43. Parents have little impact on the life of the school and few contribute actively to their children's learning, much less than would be expected. Too few questionnaires were returned to constitute a reliable sample. Parents are unwilling to become involved in school issues, preferring to contact the school (most usually by telephone) only when something happens concerning their own children. Attendance at consultation evenings is low. The school has difficulty persuading parents to come into the school for meetings and reviews. Diaries are seldom used as a means of dialogue. A third of pupils have a lower than average rate of attendance. These factors indicate a low level of parental involvement and suggest the school has not convinced parents of the

need for them to contribute to their children's education and develop an effective partnership.

44. There has been no change since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The school is well led with very clear educational direction.
- Management is good.
- Procedures for performance management and ensuring quality work well.
- Governors support the school well and keep a close eye on performance.
- The school's accommodation is very good, making a positive contribution to pupils' social development.
- The school has good quality resources to support learning overall but there are deficiencies in ICT provision.

45. The school is well led and given very clear educational direction by the headteacher. She has worked to restructure the staffing of the school and its systems with the result that overall standards are improving and the school is getting better. The issues from the previous inspection relating to management and the quality of teaching have been tackled very effectively. The headteacher's vision of securing the best for pupils by raising their ambitions and giving them the confidence to succeed through good teaching and support is beginning to be realised. She is well supported by the complementary strengths of the senior management team in translating vision into reality so that the school's aims and values are apparent in all aspects of its work. Together they have established a self-critical culture in the school so that development planning clearly identifies what needs to be done to secure improvement, how it will be done and who will take responsibility for seeing that it is done. The overall effect is that staff at all levels are held accountable for performance.
46. A clear structure for performance management has been established and is working well. The overall improvement in the quality of teaching is the result of regular monitoring of classroom quality by the senior management team and middle managers, linked to staff development and training. All staff have clear targets for improvement that are reviewed regularly. The very good system is managed very well and is a considerable improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection. When people have been unable or unwilling to work towards improved performance, the headteacher has not flinched from taking the strongest action to ensure that the school's momentum of improvement is maintained.
47. Improvement in both leadership and management can be seen in the movement to the school's new buildings. The process of creating a new school in collaboration with the PFI partners – achieving a building that supports the development of the school, reflects the headteacher's vision and that works well for teachers and pupils – has been managed very well. The organisation of the move, so that the school was established and running effectively in its new location for the start of the autumn term, shows good management at all levels. The common sense of purpose created among staff by leadership underpinned the success of the move. It is this unity that gives the school a good capacity to improve further.
48. The quality of middle management is satisfactory overall, with many strengths and few weaknesses. There is a clear policy for equality of opportunity and all departments respond to the policy as part of their commitment to the whole school improvement. Excellent leadership and management of special educational needs

ensure good progress for all pupils and very good support for all teachers. The quality of detailed information is very good and systems are in place to ensure that pupils' progress can be tracked from primary school up to the time when they have completed their GCSE examinations. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is very supportive and the school has good relationships with a range of outside support agencies. The headteacher and governors are fulfilling legal requirements in respect of 18 pupils with statements. The Code of Practice is well implemented and funding is used appropriately. Very good departmental management is the key to the recent improvement in the mathematics department, improvement in English, high quality in drama and the above average standards in physical education. The high quality of care provided for pupils is largely the result of strong management of the school's pastoral system. Only in modern foreign languages is management unsatisfactory and has not secured sufficient improvement.

49. Governors support the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. The governing body acts as a good check on the school's performance, holding the headteacher and senior staff sharply to account. They now meet all their obligations except in respect of providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and some information in their annual report to parents.
50. Overall, the school's management of its finances is satisfactory. Currently there is a budget deficit that resulted from a combination of staffing difficulties, inexperience and lack of effective oversight. This situation has been corrected, the school is on course to balance its budget next year and sound financial management procedures are in place. The school receives additional funds, for example because of its partnership in the EAZ. These additional funds are targeted well to improve specific aspects of the school's work, such as attendance procedures and provision for pupils with particular learning difficulties. Spending is closely linked to the priorities of the school improvement plan. The school takes care to find out what pupils think of the school and to ensure that it get the best value possible for the funds it receives. The school's spending matches the national average figure and it provides good value for money.
51. The school has been in its new accommodation for just one term and staff are beginning to adapt the building to their needs. Generally the accommodation is very good and the indoor facilities for physical education are excellent. All departments were consulted before the building was erected so many teething problems, such as storage rooms and office accommodation, have been avoided. Good accommodation provides a suitable area for the withdrawal of small groups of pupils who need a 'time out' facility. Its close proximity to the special educational needs office and consultation areas enables the co-ordinator to be fully aware of what is going on. There is ample space for pupils to move around the corridors and accessibility requirements have been fully met. Currently there are no display boards in the long corridors to show off pupils' work or provide information in order to stimulate the environment. The building is very warm and very secure. Cleaning staff are around the school all day; they keep the floors free from dirt and litter and help maintain a pleasant working environment.
52. In spite of the long-term absence of seven teachers, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good overall. Good quality supply staff have helped to maintain standards and creative management has eased the pressure on staff cover. Performance management has been through the first cycle and staff have begun to set targets for themselves, including professional development objectives. A well-planned in-service training programme is established and a comprehensive and successful induction scheme supports newly qualified

teachers. Time is allocated to team leaders to observe, monitor and evaluate teaching in their departments. The relatively new senior management team has worked hard to establish new procedures and policies in the school. All staff have reacted to the change of school positively and co-operate effectively with each other. Staffing levels to support pupils with special educational needs are low, given the above average number of pupils with special educational needs and associated behavioural difficulties. The appointment of a learning support co-ordinator is beginning to have a positive impact in Years 10 and 11. One or two departments, such as physical education, require additional specialist staff. The administrative, caretaking, dining and supervisory staff all contribute to the school's ethos through their support and cheerfulness to pupils and visitors.

53. Resources are good overall and used effectively to support learning. Provision of resources is particularly good in English and physical education. The drama theatre is well equipped and is a valuable resource for both classroom drama and full productions. The improvement in physical education is related to the new building programme. Many subjects have interactive white boards, a good range of textbooks and at least one computer in classrooms. Science is extending its range of basic equipment for all the laboratories and has an extensive range of data logging equipment for use in its own ICT room. The school library is open to pupils during lunchtime and after school for the borrowing of books and Year 8 pupils are able to use it as a base during lunch time. The library staff prepare packs of materials for projects for use in lessons. While there are modern books available in all subjects, the library does contain a significant number of out-of-date, unattractive textbooks.
54. In modern foreign languages, textbooks are being replaced but this has not been allowed for in the scheme of work. In history, textbooks do not cover the full range of attainment of pupils and textbooks in religious education do not cover the full range of topics.
55. The school has carried out an initial assessment of ICT provision. There is a lack of local control, a power supply which can become overloaded and inadequate staffing to maintain the network. The specialist ICT rooms do not have modern equipment and lack interactive whiteboards. These deficiencies are being addressed by the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to improve standards further, the school should:

- (1) Continue efforts to improve attendance, particularly by establishing a stronger partnership with parents. (Paragraphs: 6, 12, 36, 42, 43).
- (2) Continue efforts to improve the behaviour of the minority of boys, particularly in Year 10. Their behaviour impedes their own learning and that of their classmates. (Paragraphs: 1, 2, 10, 15, 57, 59, 67, 73).
- (3) Ensure that opportunities are planned in lessons across the school to:
 - a) improve standards of numeracy;
 - b) use homework consistently to develop pupils' independent learning skills;
 - c) contribute to pupils' spiritual development.

(Paragraphs: 7, 0, 24, 33, 40, 121)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	127
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	25	62	35	0	1	0
Percentage	3	20	49	28	0	1	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	873
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	224

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	221

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9

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	91	75	166

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	34	32
	Girls	57	52	50
	Total	84	86	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (66)	52 (49)	49(54)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (31)	20 (20)	12 (20)
	National	29 (31)	43 (43)	30 (42)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	34	32
	Girls	60	52	50
	Total	93	86	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (50)	52 (56)	49 (45)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (12)	20 (19)	11 (11)
	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	68	103	171

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	16	62	67
	Girls	39	95	100
	Total	55	57	167
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31 (32)	89 (91)	94 (96)
	National	51 (48)	87 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.4 (30.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	867
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	69	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This 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)	57.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21
Key Stage 4	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2380383
Total expenditure	2567158
Expenditure per pupil	2675
Balance brought forward from previous year	64800
Balance carried forward to next year	-121975

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	24
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

873

Number of questionnaires returned

34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	53	9	9	0
My child is making good progress in school.	26	47	12	0	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	35	6	6	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	41	24	9	3
The teaching is good.	24	53	6	0	18
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	38	21	15	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	26	41	15	9	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	41	3	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	21	26	29	3	18
The school is well led and managed.	26	41	0	0	32
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	59	9	3	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	35	6	0	15

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and commendably consistent in quality, given the number of teachers involved. Pupils learn well as a result, and enjoy their English work.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, and there is good capacity to improve further.
- The head of department provides good leadership and effective management. As a result the department has a clear sense of direction and works purposefully for the benefit of its pupils.

Area for improvement

- Continue to work on raising boys' attainment, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

57. Standards of attainment are below average overall at the end of Year 9 because boys are not attaining as highly as girls are. Standards are average at the end of Year 11, reflecting the good performance of girls and the improvement in boys' performance that is currently taking place. In relation to pupils' below and often well below average standards of attainment on entry to the school, standards are at least as high as they should be and represent good achievement overall.
58. In 2002, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was well below average, but well above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in English was better than in mathematics and science. Girls did much better than boys, and the difference between them was greater than nationally. The trend for all pupils over the last five years is nevertheless a rising one and shows a faster rate of improvement than found nationally. Given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, the picture is one of good achievement by many pupils, and reflects the good provision for lower attainers and those with special educational needs.
59. GCSE English and English literature examination results for A*-C grades in 2002 were just below the national average and below average for A*-G grades. Girls did better than boys in both subjects, but the difference between them was less than it was nationally. Results were, however, affected by lower attaining pupils (mainly boys) who did not obtain a pass grade or who were not entered at all because of attendance problems. Nevertheless, compared with their standards at the end of Year 9, pupils' results indicate that they achieved as well as should be expected, and very well compared with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in these examinations was better than in most other subjects.
60. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the end of Year 9. This judgement is in line with current predictions based on pupils' prior attainment and other departmental analysis and represents good achievement by many pupils bearing in mind their well below average attainment on entry overall. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils speak knowledgeably and perceptively about their Shakespeare text. They have good control over their writing and use some sophisticated vocabulary. The standards of middle and lower attaining boys are affected by lack of clarity in

speech and difficulties with handwriting, spelling and sentence punctuation. In one small class of Year 9 boys, standards are additionally affected by poor concentration, limited recall, restricted vocabulary and attendance problems. Despite their difficulties, all these boys are nevertheless making good progress in lessons and learning well. Standards of attainment among younger pupils are higher because the department has implemented the national strategy for teaching English and uses 'progress units' for the pupils (mainly boys) who enter the school at level 3 or below. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils rapidly develop knowledge about how language is used, and gain confidence in speaking about their learning. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 7 show by their knowledge and use of a wide vocabulary and their well-presented, accurate and expressive writing that they are already attaining above average standards. Compared with the previous inspection in May 2000 standards have at least been maintained and are likely to rise in the next year.

61. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are average. Given that this group of pupils did very well to exceed the national average points score in their 2001 tests, maintaining average standards in their GCSE courses represents continuing good achievement. Lower attainers can write at some length, though difficulties with over-conversational expression and sentence punctuation persist. Middle attainers show a strong grasp of character and key issues raised by their set texts. Higher attainers write fluently, accurately and with personal involvement. From classroom observation the improvement in boys' performance is evident from their greater involvement in discussion and perceptive contributions to the study of poetry. Higher attaining pupils are developing a wide-ranging vocabulary to use in analysis of poetry and to give greater expression to their writing. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils benefit from helpful 'frameworks' for writing provided by their teachers that give structure to their writing and help them to write more than they otherwise would. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and suitably challenging work is provided to meet their needs. As a result, pupils are making good progress. Compared with the previous inspection, standards are higher.
62. The quality of teaching in English is consistently good, and pupils learn well as a result. The fact that most teachers in the department are, as a matter of policy, also teachers of drama helps to explain their skill in managing pupils. They use a combination of good humour, praise, knowledge of the needs of individuals and a variety of activities in a lesson. They expect that pupils will work hard and ensure that all are involved. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils participate willingly. They are attentive and interested, and recognise that they are gaining in confidence and making progress. In addition, teachers plan lessons well and provide well-presented, stimulating extracts, worksheets and other materials which help pupils to understand their learning and make an appropriate written response.
63. Some teaching is very good. In these lessons teachers make complex relationships and situations understandable by relating them to pupils' experience, they question pupils very well, and they encourage pupils to aim for a higher standard. In one very good Year 11 lesson the teacher's sensitive discussion of her own and pupils' anxieties and fears produced serious responses which she transferred very effectively to the poem under study. As a result, pupils were able to see connections with the experiences previously discussed and subsequently to make perceptive predictions about how the poem might end and also appreciate its ironic tone and ambiguous message. In a very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher's very good questioning established the important qualities of descriptive writing, and his

expectations of the pupils raised their confidence and encouraged them to work at a level above expectations. On rare occasions teaching is less effective because teachers do not adjust their planning to match the momentum of the lesson, or over-prolong an activity or, in concentrating on one or two pupils, do not include others sufficiently. As a result the pace of learning slows and pupils are not taking an appropriate share of responsibility for their learning.

64. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in 2000. Standards of attainment are higher by the end of Year 11. Boys' results in GCSE examinations have improved. Inconsistencies in departmental practice have been ironed out. Teaching quality continues to be good and commendably consistent across a large number of teachers who contribute to the work of the department. The head of department provides good leadership by example and a clear sense of purpose about improvement. She ensures a consistency of approach among her teaching team so that the department works effectively on behalf of its pupils.

Drama

65. Drama is part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and is offered as an option for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Over 90 per cent of the 35 pupils taking drama in 2002 obtained A*-C grades, and all obtained at least a pass grade. These very high results were much the best in the school, and pupils' performance in drama was significantly better than in any other subject.
66. In the limited observation that was possible in this inspection, pupils' standards of attainment are at least average overall by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. Given pupils' attainment on entry to the school and their limited experience of drama, these standards represent very good achievement. Teaching by members of the English department is good overall and sometimes very good. Pupils enjoy their drama work and benefit from working together and the increased confidence and self-discipline they acquire. For example, in one very good Year 9 lesson the teacher helped pupils to make significant progress in understanding the idea of 'status' by asking them to represent in performance the status attached to the face value of a suit of playing cards. All pupils were engrossed in the activity and at the second attempt were able to find a way to reproduce the different degrees of 'status' absolutely accurately. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher was herself a very good model of how small gestures, eye movements or changes in posture could communicate feelings, and pupils learned well from her as a result. She also effectively used pupils as models so that eventually all were able to interpret character from text and show above average understanding and skill in translating speech into appropriate action. A very good example of pupils' above average performance skills occurred at the end of a Year 10 lesson when pupils rehearsed a chorus with movement and dance from the musical version of Willy Russell's play *Blood Brothers*. This was done with energy and control, and pupils demonstrated their ability to work together and adapt quickly by providing admirable substitutes for absent leading 'actors'. It is clear that drama is making a significant contribution to the work of the English department and to the life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The head of department provides very good leadership and manages the department well. As a result the department has a clear direction and is working purposefully for the benefit of its pupils.
- GCSE results have improved significantly in the last two years.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of numeracy across the school.
- The achievement of boys to match that of girls.
- Better quality and assessment of homework to inform the attainment and progress of pupils.
- Better use of the review time at the end of lessons.

67. In 2002, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was well below average, but below average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in mathematics was not as good as that in English and science. Girls did significantly better than boys. Overall, results have risen steadily in line with national trends over the last five years although little improvement has been made in results at the higher levels. Given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, the picture is one of satisfactory achievement by most pupils although the achievement of boys is not as good as that of girls.
68. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well below average. Results rose significantly in 2001 and similar improvement was made in 2002. The proportion gaining grades A*-G was below average. The performance of boys was not as good as that of girls. Compared with their standards at the end of Year 9, pupils' results indicate that they achieved at least as well as should be expected, although pupils did not do as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects.
69. Standards in work seen at the end of Year 9 are well below average. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are better because the implementation of the national strategy for teaching mathematics in both years is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Overall, standards of numeracy are well below average. Only higher attaining pupils handle numbers confidently in mental and oral activities. Most other pupils do not recall their tables easily. Graphical skills are not well developed for many pupils. Good attention is given to pupils' problem solving skills through lessons on 'thinking skills'. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson pupils developed well their understanding of how patterns could be found by investigating problems about leaves on twigs and tiling patterns.
70. In work seen, by the end of Year 11 standards are well below average. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their earlier learning. Number skills are still weak for many pupils; most still do not handle mental calculations confidently although they use calculators accurately. Algebraic skills are generally weak and graphical skills are not developed as well as they should be. Often pupils have difficulty recalling work from previous lessons. Problem solving skills are improving in GCSE coursework.

71. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is often good or very good. As a result, learning and achievement are satisfactory overall. Teaching is significantly better than in the previous inspection in 2000. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures new skills and concepts are explained clearly, which helps pupils to understand them better. Good relationships between pupils and their teachers ensure that pupils usually work well on their tasks. Well-planned lessons that cater well for pupils' needs contribute much to the progress of the pupils. Teachers use new technologies very well, which enhances their teaching methods and ensures that generally pupils appear interested. The national strategy for teaching mathematics is being implemented in all lessons and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Starter activities are being used well to review pupils' learning and introduce new topics. However, although objectives are displayed for each lesson they are often too general and do not clearly focus on learning in different parts of the lesson. In addition, the review time at the end of lessons is not always used well enough to give pupils sufficient time to think about what they have learnt. Support staff are used effectively to support pupils with special educational needs. This ensures they make similar progress to other pupils. Generally teachers manage pupils' attitudes and behaviour well so that pupils generally behave well and usually listen well enough during discussions. Occasionally, management is weak; this results in pupils not applying themselves well enough and leads to poor progress in the lesson. Teachers generally question pupils well. However, they do not always involve sufficient pupils in answering questions or use this opportunity effectively to find out what pupils already know about the work covered. Often teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are able to do and, as a result, activities do not challenge pupils sufficiently. The presentation of pupils' work is often untidy. Although homework is set regularly, the quality of homework set does not adequately reinforce pupils' learning, challenge more able pupils or provide information about pupils' progress or attainment.
72. There have been very good improvements since the previous inspection. Leadership and management in the previous inspection in 2000 were described as 'ineffective'. It is now very good. The new head of department provides a clear direction and ensures that teachers work effectively as a team on behalf of their pupils. New schemes of work, good assessment procedures and an effective process for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department are beginning to have an impact on improving standards.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and promotes good learning.
- A wide range of opportunities for the use of ICT is provided which helps to develop pupils' skills.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and they promote good behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- To continue the improvement of standards as measured in national tests.
- The standard of pupils' written work is unsatisfactory overall.

73. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are below national averages. In 2002 in national tests at the end of Year 9, attainment in science was well below the average for all schools but above the average for similar schools. Girls' attainment improved throughout the period 1998 to 2002 but that of boys declined, leading to a decline overall in 2002. Attainment in science in 2002 was below that in English and above that in mathematics at the higher levels in national tests.
74. In 2002 GCSE examinations, attainment in science was well below national averages overall. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-C was well below the national average with the attainment of boys below that of girls. The proportions of both boys and girls gaining grades A*-G was comparable with national averages. There has been an upward trend in results over the last four years. The proportion of pupils entered for double award science was significantly higher than the national average. Attainment in science was below that in English but higher than that in mathematics.
75. Standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they joined the school. Similarly, standards at the end of Year 11 indicate good achievement in relation to pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. There was no significant difference in the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those with higher prior attainment.
76. In work observed during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below national averages and higher than in national tests in 2002. This is mainly due to the more stable staffing position at the time of the inspection. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to carry out observations on colour and other changes when metals are exposed to air. They are able to distinguish those metals which react with water and place metals in an initial order of reactivity. A group of higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson started an investigation into the motion of objects and were able, after prompting by the teacher, to explain the slope of a distance/time graph. In general, pupils' graphical work is in line with national averages due to good teaching. However, pupils' written descriptive work is unsatisfactory overall with incorrect spelling of scientific words, poor sentence construction and incomplete work. In a small class of lower attaining pupils in Year 8, pupils investigated magnetic fields of bar magnets using iron filings and plotting compasses, following correct experimental procedures, and were able to recognise areas of strong and weak fields. In a Year 7 class of lower attaining pupils, some with special educational needs, pupils observed the boiling of a coloured solution and then the condensation of the vapour to give clear water. In these two classes, pupils used scientific terms in answer to verbal questions, which ensured good learning in the lesson but little written work was carried out. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were required to think whether or not evidence was significant and after initial difficulties were able to analyse the information. Pupils have good access to ICT for data logging changes in temperature, to retrieve information of the chemical and physical properties of substances and, at the start of an investigation, to develop a product. Number skills are satisfactory to take measurements of length, mass, time and temperature.
77. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the end of Year 11 is below national averages. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 class understood the energy changes in food chains. In this lesson they were challenged to think about current issues of the use of pesticides, GM food and battery hens. In another class, lower attaining pupils found difficulty in understanding the forces acting when objects fall freely and with parachutes. In both lessons number work in taking measurement of time was accurate. Pupils were required to write complete sentences to summarise their

conclusions on rates of reaction but standards of written work in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory overall.

78. Pupils' behaviour is good and they relate well to each other and to their teachers. Equipment is respected and laboratory rules are followed. In the great majority of lessons, pupils are interested in their work but in one Year 11 class pupils took a passive attitude to a topic which was presented in an interesting way. Not all written work is completed, despite comments from teachers, and some work is presented in an untidy way.
79. Teaching and learning are good. There are no significant differences in learning between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Teachers have secure knowledge and good class management, plan carefully and are concerned that pupils succeed. All teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better; about three-quarters was good or very good. Teachers use good question and answer technique in starting a lesson and make the main topic clear to pupils. However, time management in several of the one-hour lessons was insecure so that there was inadequate time for reinforcement of learning or preparing pupils for homework. There are inconsistencies in the application of the school's marking policy. Although good attention is generally given to developing pupils' literacy, occasionally insufficient attention is given to the raising of standards of writing and spelling, particularly scientific words. Assessment procedures are good and marks in end of module tests are related to National Curriculum levels or future grades in GCSE. In one Year 7 class of higher attaining pupils, in which learning was very good, the teacher took particular care to ensure that graphical work was carried out properly, that the graph was given a proper interpretation and that the experiment was described accurately in paragraph form. Pupils were challenged to think about the energy changes involved and all pupils worked at a good pace. Enhancement classes after school for GCSE and in preparation for national tests in Year 9 are well supported by pupils. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to visit universities and to take part in 'master classes'. There is appropriate provision for pupils with special educational needs in separate small groups in Years 7 and 8 with additional classroom support. Pupils work with interest in these classes and make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
80. The science department moved into new laboratories for the start of the autumn term in 2002 and now has excellent facilities with good resources. ICT equipment is installed because of the keenness of staff to use it but it is still unreliable and teachers are having to be flexible in their lesson planning. A full range of data logging equipment is available. Agreement has not yet been reached on the display of pupils' work in the corridor and laboratories. Leadership and management of science are good. Inexperienced teachers are given good support and the difficulties of long-term absence of staff have been managed effectively. Assessment data for a group of underachieving Year 9 pupils in 2002 has been used to guide curriculum planning with the provision of GNVQ science and foundation level GCSE biology in Year 10. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection report and has the capacity for further improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Well-qualified staff.*
- Very good accommodation and resources.*
- Very good support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to participate fully in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- To develop pupils' abilities to discuss critically their own and others' work by improving their knowledge and understanding of art vocabulary, art and artists.
- To encourage more rigorous attention by pupils to careful and detailed preparatory studies leading to well-finished final pieces of work.
- To promote good habits of independent thought and learning by all possible means.

*Note. Until very recently the department has had considerable staffing difficulties, and the very good accommodation and resources had been available for only one term at the time of the inspection.

81. Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below average, representing satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' earlier attainments.
82. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show boys' attainment to be broadly in line with national standards, girls well above and pupils overall above national standards. This does not match inspection findings and highlights a need to review the accuracy of assessment procedures.
83. GCSE results for 2002 show that the proportion of boys attaining grades A*-C was extremely low compared with national averages and the proportion of girls was well below. The overall results were well below average but nevertheless showed some improvement on previous years, and for the individuals concerned represented satisfactory achievement in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9.
84. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Basic art skills, such as how to show the direction from which light falls upon images, or the use of perspective, are not well developed. However, recent work shows that pupils are improving in observational drawing, particularly portraiture. Knowledge of art and artists and the vocabulary to describe and discuss them is poor. Pupils work in two and three dimensions, and good use is made of ICT, for example in manipulating images captured with digital cameras.
85. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are below average. Basic art skills in drawing, painting and modelling develop satisfactorily from the end of Year 9 but pupils make insufficient effort to research thoroughly, to make trials, or to refine their work to achieve really good finished pieces of work. Their ability to critically appraise their own and others' work is underdeveloped. These are factors that affect GCSE coursework and pull down overall examination grades.
86. After a period of considerable staffing difficulties and the upheaval of the move from old to new premises, the department has now achieved some stability and is in a position to tackle positively the problems identified thus far. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject which

enable them to support pupils' learning. They manage pupils very well so that little time is lost in dealing with inappropriate behaviour and lesson time is used effectively. High calibre support staff make a good contribution to pupils' progress and very good resources support learning. Careful attention is given to the assessment of pupils' work, though further work needs to be done to relate this realistically to the criteria for National Curriculum levels. Teaching of basic art skills and methods are satisfactory, but not enough attention is given to developing pupils' art vocabulary and knowledge about art so that they understand the processes used in works of art. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop habits of independent thought and learning. The result is that pupils' learning is satisfactory but heavily dependent upon teacher direction. Pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to the subject, and a good number choose to study the subject for GCSE. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and enables them to make similar progress to their classmates.

87. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment. The accommodation for art is new and of a high specification. Resources are very good.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Citizenship courses within PSHE are well planned and well taught.
- A comprehensive action plan is being implemented to remedy any deficiencies in provision.

Areas for improvement

- The cross-curricular elements of citizenship have not been reviewed to determine where the gaps are in provision.
- Subject contributions to citizenship are not clear in departmental plans and schemes of work.
- The assessment system does not provide sufficient information to determine pupils' level of attainment and does not take into account pupils' related achievements in other subjects.

88. After only one term of the courses, it is too early to be able to judge standards accurately, but the attainment in lessons observed in Years 9 and 11 was broadly average. Year 9 pupils are making good progress and gaining satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They understand the idea of community at the local level of school and neighbourhood and how decisions made by the local council can affect their lives. In the lessons observed, pupils were able to engage in debate about a local planning issue and present the likely views of different interest groups. They are improving their skills of speaking and listening through discussion. Year 11 pupils studying the civil rights movement in America were well aware of the evils of racism and showed their concern for justice and equal treatment of diverse groups in the posters they produced. It is not clear how far this understanding of the diverse nature of modern society is supported in other areas of the curriculum.
89. Pupils display positive attitudes towards the subject, enjoying the variety of activities and applying themselves well to tasks. In discussion, pupils show consideration for

each other's point of view. They adopt responsible attitudes towards prevention of juvenile crime and the promotion of racial equality. Behaviour in class is generally good, as are pupils' relationships with their teachers and amongst themselves. They are responding well to occasional homework, for example carrying out crime surveys and producing crime prevention posters in Year 8. Pupils appreciate the relevance of their studies to everyday life, as teachers choose examples of the issues from youth culture.

90. In the six lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good overall. The PSHE team of teachers is committed to teaching the subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives stated at the outset and reviewed at the end. Careful preparation ensured that, when the Internet was unavailable because of technical difficulties, one teacher was able to switch easily to an alternative set of materials. Teaching methods are effective at engaging pupils actively in their learning. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson, pupils took part in a simulation of a meeting to hear public views on a planning issue. Skilful briefing of pupils and prompting by the teacher chairing the meeting enabled pupils to represent the views of different groups and, through direct involvement, appreciate something of the democratic process for resolving conflict. The emphasis on styles of learning that maximise pupils' involvement in lessons enables all pupils to make good progress with their learning. The quality of the resources varies between lessons but a good bank of material is accumulating, as teachers pool ideas and source material. The importance of the subject is also being established through setting and marking homework.
91. Planning for the introduction of the subject in September was satisfactory and the leadership and management of the subject within the PSHE team are good, leading to successful courses that are equipping pupils to meet expected standards. The weakness in planning is in the co-ordination of the contributions to citizenship from other areas of the curriculum. An audit was carried out at an early stage but was not used to establish the extent of provision and to identify any gaps. Consequently, there are aspects of the curriculum that are not covered, particularly in Years 10 and 11, such as the role of national and international political institutions, and the United Kingdom's relations with Europe, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Except for English, departments have not highlighted their contribution to citizenship in their schemes of work. It remains incidental to their teaching, rather than prominent so that it can be monitored. As the allocation of time for citizenship within PSHE reduces by half in Years 10 and 11, teaching of the curriculum depends more heavily on contributions from other subject areas but those contributions are not clear at this stage. For example, education for life in a diverse society is an area that needs highlighting across the curriculum. A suitable system of assessment has yet to be devised that will take into account achievements linked to citizenship in a variety of subjects. The school is aware of these shortcomings and has drawn up a detailed action plan to remedy the deficiencies over the course of the academic year. The school recognises the importance of education in citizenship for its pupils and is earnest in its endeavour to ensure that their entitlement is met in full.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Clear, effective assessment procedures to track achievement.
- Good vocational developments.
- Effective use of basic ICT.

- Improved provision of tools and equipment has led to better attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The appointment of a department leader.
- Consistency in application of policies
- Further development of ICT to support learning.

92. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards and with no clear assessment of their design and technology capability from their primary school. At the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is below average. GCSE examination results in 2002 were below average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C but just above average for the proportion gaining grades A*-G. The trend over recent years shows an improvement in results, especially for girls. In comparison with their other subjects, pupils do not do as well in design and technology.
93. In Years 7 to 9, from activities observed in lessons, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils, achievement is good in relation to pupils' standards when they enter the school. The previous inspection identified that pupils had difficulties with the design aspect of the subject. This has improved and pupils now see the value of taking account of users' needs in planning their products before making them. Teachers have produced new guidelines for designs that sharpen the pupils' approach to designing, making and evaluating their products. Expert demonstrations by teachers are leading to the development of good practical skills so that pupils strive for high quality products. They are proud of the things they make, for example the hand-held game manufactured by Year 8.
94. Achievement is good overall for gifted and talented students. Many work in groups with other higher ability pupils while others are integrated into classes. The effective assessment system highlights where pupils need extension work. Lower attainers also make good progress in relation to their prior learning. They are confident in their theory and practical work because of teachers' attention to their individual education plans.
- [0]95. Standards in work seen by end of Year 11 and pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment have benefited from the move to the new building and progress is good. Pupils' attitude to work has improved because of the well-equipped space for working and improved access to better tools. Many pupils, especially boys, have difficulty in meeting deadlines for design projects because of erratic attendance and limited organisational skills. This has a consequent adverse effect on final examination results. All pupils prefer the practical work involved in making things and many see designing as unnecessary. Their attitude is improving because good feedback from teachers and the use of examination board criteria help to clarify the need to design products. The result is that pupils are beginning to improve their drawing skills, their accuracy when applying measurements for cutting lists and their planning for making. The use of ICT to support learning is also improving.
96. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Pupils are engrossed in making and are able to modify their work, as a result of good evaluation techniques. Evidence of enthusiasm for technology is seen in the introduction of a textiles club as a result of a request from pupils.
97. Teaching and learning are good overall and there is some very good teaching. Teachers' good planning of lessons integrates assessment opportunities and makes sure that work is matched to pupils' needs. Teachers are very good role models and

stimulate creativity through their personal enthusiasm. Behaviour management is good because teachers' expectations of standards of work and behaviour are clear, and quality is emphasised consistently. Group work and independent problem solving enable pupils to explore ideas through researching into other designers' thinking. This was clear in a textiles lesson when pupils scaled up their jungle patterns and went on to be inspired by the use of computer-aided sewing machines to enhance their designs.

98. Management is satisfactory. At present the department is under temporary leadership. A deputy headteacher supports the acting department leader and they are keeping the department functioning well. There are, however, elements of inconsistency, for example marking, because the monitoring of policies is patchy. Technical support is very good and key to the smooth running of the department. Technicians are often effectively involved as teaching assistants. Vocational subjects are central to the department's long-term vision and further development is planned. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning leading to improved achievement.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Good management of the subject and capacity for further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Improvement of literacy through a wider variety of writing styles.
- Continue to improve assessment by refining the use of National Curriculum levels and increasing constructive comment.
- Increasing the use of ICT to improve pupils' presentation and development of skills.

99. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Teacher's assessments in 2002 show that the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 and above was below average overall and well below for boys. Girls, however, showed an above average 70 per cent at the expected level 5 and above, with an appreciable proportion at level 6 and above. These assessments show a steady upward trend over the last few years. Work seen during the inspection shows that in higher attaining classes, pupils at the end of Year 9 are attaining in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average and overall standards at the end of Year 9 represent good levels of achievement. From the work seen during the inspection and the high standard of teaching seen, a continuation of improving standards can be expected.
100. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below the national average and numbers of pupils taking the subject are very low. In GCSE examinations in 2002, 10 entrants achieved an overall average performance in relation to the grades predicted on their earlier attainment with five above and five below the predicted grade. As with standards at the end of Year 9, standards at GCSE have shown an upward trend. Bearing in mind the small numbers involved, pupils taking geography are still not doing as well as in some subjects they take. In the last two years, all pupils taking geography have gained a pass at grades A*-G. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades has also improved, with the gap between boys and girls performance narrowing. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

101. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 gain a good knowledge of basic mapping and number skills. They can measure line and angle in exercises involving the drawing of plans; they use co-ordinates and recognise and use map symbols. They also learn to construct and interpret simple graphs. Writing skills are very varied but most pupils make satisfactory notes and there are some good examples of extended writing in higher attaining classes, seen in a Year 9 lesson on the features affecting migration. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from well-prepared, appropriate materials and guidelines for their written work. They are encouraged to improve their literacy through attempting extended and imaginative writing, for example writing a report for the Sunderland Echo on the San Francisco earthquake. However, generally, pupils are not given enough written work or sufficient opportunity for imaginative writing. Teachers help to improve pupils' literacy by encouraging the use of technical vocabulary. In Years 10 and 11 pupils learn to hypothesise, gather data, analyse it and reach conclusions, seen in well-controlled and organised coursework considering local inner-city issues. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed knowledge of geographical patterns and processes in work on settlement and population, and in Years 10 and 11 understanding grows of more complex graphing methods and geographical models in work on flood hydrographs and demographic transition models. Interest in ICT in the department is high and teachers plan for its use in lessons and homework, but as yet there is little evidence of its use in word processing or database work in pupils' books. Presentation is not a strong feature of boys' or girls' work.
102. Attitudes are generally very positive. Pupils behave well in lessons and they respond well to the patience and good humour shown by teachers. They talk easily about what they are doing and relationships are generally strong and productive. Generally girls work better than boys, seen particularly in higher attaining classes, but sometimes the opposite is the case in verbal responses during question and answer sessions.
103. Teaching is good overall and teachers constantly reinforce pupils' knowledge and check their progress by regular assessment. Lessons are enjoyable and instructive. Teachers manage their classes well. They have high expectations of their pupils that promote achievement. Lessons are well planned to maintain high levels of concentration so that the majority of pupils work at a good pace. Homework is set regularly and much of it refers pupils to use of the Internet, but occasionally some of it is lacking in challenge. Teachers' good knowledge of their subject enables them to extend pupils' learning, to capture their interest and to ensure their understanding. In addition, good questioning is used to make sure that all pupils are included in the work, a strong feature of the department. Good use of audio-visual aids and varied activities to promote learning, including an improving range of fieldwork, help to maintain interest in the work and ensure progress in lessons.
104. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement. Standards are higher and literacy skills, in particular, are better. Teaching is better planned and lessons are better delivered than previously, with pupils able to make more useful contributions. In other areas, such as fieldwork, attainment and achievement, there is steady and sustained improvement, aided by good management, clear aims and the capacity of a hardworking team to improve still further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers promote a partnership in their learning.
- Teachers manage pupils well and this results in good behaviour that enables teachers to use more active learning methods.
- The use of group and paired work is encouraging the development of pupils' confidence and social skills.
- The use of ICT to support learning is developing pupils' skills and enhancing the interest of boys.

Areas for improvement

- The local area and culture are underused as resources to develop pupils' understanding of their own community's history through first-hand investigation and communication.
- Assessment has improved, but is not yet used effectively to identify progress in the key elements of history and areas for development.
- Marking does not inform pupils well enough about how to improve.

105. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are below the expected level nationally and this is reflected in the teachers' assessments. However, a significant proportion of pupils is reaching, and in some cases exceeding, the national average standard as a result of good teaching. Overall, pupils' achievement is good.
106. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were just below the national average for the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A*-G, but the proportion gaining the higher grades A*-C was well below average. Girls are achieving a much greater proportion of the higher grades than the boys. There has been a steady rise in results over the last three years.
107. Standards in history in Year 9 are below average. This represents good achievement given pupils' standards at the start of the course. A significant minority of pupils are attaining average standards. The majority of pupils recognise key features of the events they study and can select and extract information in response to questions. Their work on the Titanic disaster indicates that they recognise that there may be several factors contributing to an event; higher attaining pupils are beginning to suggest that some may be of greater significance. Pupils' are beginning to make links between events such as the reaction to the Treaty of Versailles and the outbreak of World War II. However, their analysis is very limited and the majority require the support of the teacher before they make such links. Higher attaining pupils can make simple reasoned judgements after considering different views, for example the wisdom of an invasion of Britain. Lower attaining pupils do not consider the relative value of these differing views or use them to build a reasoned argument. The oral work of many pupils is restricted by a limited range of vocabulary, which leads to misunderstanding or lack of fluency in response. There is limited evidence of the analysis of information by pupils unless guided by teachers.
108. Standards of work of pupils following the GCSE course in Year 11 are below average. This represents good achievement given their standard at the start of the course. Pupils have a secure overview of the main features of the topics covered and most pupils can respond clearly and accurately to written questions. The responses of lower attaining pupils are more limited and include little explanation but those of higher attaining pupils may include several factors that complete the explanation. Pupils use

information from different periods to identify changes over time, although most require prompting to do so. Some pupils are disadvantaged by their absences from some lessons, which results in gaps in their knowledge and a lack of continuity in their information. Teachers plan coursework well and this enables pupils to achieve a satisfactory standard that demonstrates understanding of the key events studied. Higher attaining pupils show appreciation of the different factors contributing to events such as 'Bloody Sunday' in Ireland and can identify the long-and short-term causes of the discontent in Ireland. Lower attaining pupils include relevant detail but their explanations are brief and descriptive rather than analytical. Teachers' good use of questioning helps pupils to develop their oral work in class, although the majority provide brief responses that include the minimum of explanation. There is limited evidence of independent thinking or enquiry. The teaching of Roman Britain is a feature in the department; however, the rich sources of evidence in the community that would enable pupils to develop an interest and pride in the culture and traditions of the North East of England in the 20th century are underused.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A strength of the teaching is the very good relations that teachers have with their pupils. This enables them to involve pupils actively in their lessons, whilst maintaining a calm working atmosphere. Instructions and explanations are clear and careful preparation of materials ensures pupils work with the minimum of fuss. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and generally ensure that all pupils participate in the oral work of the class. Pupils' responses are treated with respect and this encourages them to contribute. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and explanations and delivery are generally adapted well to the needs of individual pupils. The use of ICT enhances the work of the department and raises the interest and participation of pupils, in particular that of the boys. Marking is not a strong feature of the department except when coursework is being undertaken. Though encouraging, it does not include enough information about how pupils might improve their work. Teachers do not ensure that pupils correct or complete unfinished work and, as a result, incomplete or inaccurate information remains. Teachers take care to encourage the oral work of the pupils and to provide opportunities for discussion and the use of different styles of reading. Guidelines for writing support the development of essays and projects, resulting in attractive work.
110. The management of the department is good, particularly in Year 7 to 9 where there has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Clear systems have been developed that enable the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress. These systems contribute to the improvement of teaching because the outcomes of this monitoring are shared across the department. History is taught in an attractive suite of rooms. The lack of display outside the rooms and around the school is a missed opportunity to celebrate success and extend learning outside the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Effective revision of the schemes of work.
- Good assessment policies that track progress and achievement over time.

Areas for improvement

- The appointment of a permanent overall manager for whole school ICT.
- Continued improvement of the equipment available to pupils.

- Better use of National Curriculum levels to improve pupils' motivation.

111. In 2002, staffing and equipment problems adversely affected standards at the end of Year 9 and results in GCSE examinations. Teachers assessed pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 as below average. In GCSE examinations, results were below the national average for the award of grades A*-C but above for grades A*-G. Girls did better than boys but pupils' performance in other subjects was better than in ICT.
112. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 but scrutiny of files and class work and discussion with pupils in Years 7 to 9 show good achievement in relation to their well below average standards when they joined the school. Since September, when pupils came to the new school, improvements in staffing and facilities have begun to have a positive effect on standards. For example, in the ICT club in the library, pupils were confident with computers. They worked independently, demonstrating their skills in word processing, investigating information on CD-ROMs, manipulating images and modelling ideas. However, the network failed early in the inspection week and throughout the inspection week teachers had to modify their planning and pupils were frustrated by the lack of computer use in lessons. Work in folders shows that many pupils gain expertise at home; some are using more sophisticated programs than those available in school.
113. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the end of Year 11. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in relation to pupils' earlier learning. However, pupils have experienced problems over their time in the school that have affected their attitude to ICT. This was evident in the limited ICT in pupils' files. Network problems last year caused the present Year 11 to lose all their saved coursework. Consequently, they have found it difficult to maintain the interest and enthusiasm necessary to improve their standards. The new teaching team have immediately introduced a modified approach to the GCSE coursework demands, and 'catch up' sessions are being offered to classes, to get them back on track. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because their work is planned to match individual needs. In discussion, pupils recalled programs that helped them to produce a successful multi-media slide show presentation. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is good because they are appropriately challenged with extension work.
114. Teaching and learning in specialist ICT are good, enhanced by the planned programme of computer use in subjects across the curriculum. However, since the start of the autumn term pupils and teachers have lost confidence in the system because the equipment has been unreliable; in many cases achievement has suffered and does not fully reflect the quality of teaching. Teachers structure their planning well, with clear aims for lessons. They manage their classes well overall. Pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory. When they are not, teachers make effective use of the school's support system. For example, some pupils in a Year 10 lesson were disenchanted by the equipment situation and behaviour suffered, but the teacher's use of the schools 'on call' support system quickly rectified the situation. Good opportunities for monitoring pupils' progress help to identify problems and support planning for subsequent lessons. Teachers miss the opportunity to share the content of National Curriculum levels to help pupils understand what they need to improve. Homework is set when appropriate but response to homework is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9.

115. Management of ICT is satisfactory. Since September 2002, a deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for whole school ICT and a teacher has been appointed to manage specialist ICT teaching. Since the start of the spring term with a full team, departmental issues are starting to be resolved, for example monitoring of teaching and broadening approaches to vocational ICT. A clear development plan focuses on the good cross-curricular ICT and assessment work.
116. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The disturbance of recent months, caused by moving to the new site and problems with staffing and equipment, has settled down and ICT as a specialist and cross-curricular skill is being consolidated.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They manage pupils well. Relationships are good.
- Gifted and talented pupils now study two languages in Years 7 and 8.
- Some outstandingly good teaching.
- Achievement in Spanish is good.

Areas for improvement

- Departmental leadership and management.
- Pupils do not always know how well they are doing.
- There are no study visits to France to bring the subject alive to pupils.

French

117. Standards in French are well below average throughout the school. Pupils' achievement is in line with their prior attainment. In 2002, teachers assessed pupils in Year 9 as working well below national standards and this was confirmed by work seen during the inspection. There is a greater difference than usual between the standards of boys and girls, and this has been a trend in recent years. In 2002, nearly four times as many girls as boys attained level 5 or above. At GCSE, the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well below the national average. Again, girls did significantly better than boys. At A*-G, results were in line with national averages and all boys entered were awarded a grade. Girls achieved less well in French than in their other subjects, whereas boys gained similar grades. Some higher attaining pupils did not achieve their expected grades and the reasons for this have been analysed and action taken. There has been a fluctuating trend in recent years, but results at A*-C were much lower in 2002.
118. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is well below average in Years 7 to 9. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 and 8 are working at an average standard, but most other pupils do not reach this because they find it difficult to retain language. Boys' attainment is often lower than that of girls because they find it harder to concentrate and take less care in their written work. In a Year 9 lesson, some boys allowed their concentration to slip and as a result they were unable to work at the same standard as the rest of the class. In some lessons, boys are very keen to speak French and do well at this skill. In another Year 9 lesson, boys were particularly keen

to answer the teacher's questions about French television programmes. They spoke confidently and with good accents.

119. In work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, attainment is well below average. A higher attaining group in Year 11 attained above average standards because of their positive attitude and enthusiasm. They worked well together and were able to infer meaning from a text. Girls read aloud in good accents but boys were more reticent. Lower attaining pupils in Year 10 do not reach average standards because they have great difficulty in recalling basic vocabulary such as numbers. As a result, they are unable to put together an accurate sentence about school subjects, either in writing or orally.
120. Attitudes are satisfactory and often good. Behaviour is usually good and teachers manage pupils well. In a Year 7 lesson, attitudes and behaviour were very good because pupils were excited by the work they were doing on describing a famous local footballer. They were all keen to complete the work, which had varying degrees of challenge, and to read aloud in French.
121. Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good or better. Occasionally it is excellent. This is a great improvement since the previous inspection. All teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. They are adept at managing pupils and, as a result, learning matches teaching. The amount of French used in the classroom varies. In a Year 7 class, French was not used as the main language of communication. Consequently, pupils were unsure about how to say basic words like 'he' and 'she' in French. Although they made satisfactory progress in the lesson, they did not fully develop their speaking skills and through this develop confidence in understanding. In another Year 9 lesson, boys particularly enjoyed completing a graph about television viewing which followed on from discussion and listening to a tape. The pupils were inspired with confidence because the lesson was well planned, with clear time guidelines. Marking is regularly completed, but pupils do not all know how well they are doing because marks are recorded in different ways. Some pupils record their scores in assessment tests in their exercise books, but there is no consistent policy for this. Homework is often 'learning', and its use is inconsistent. In Years 7 to 9, gifted and talented pupils make better progress than other pupils because both teachers and pupils have high expectations. They show a developing command of grammar and tenses. This provides a sound springboard for future progress.
122. More up-to-date resources are used with Year 7, but as yet there is no scheme of work. Although other schemes are thorough, they do not provide any time guidance for completion. Neither do they highlight opportunities for developing the cultural aspects of language or civilisation. There are currently no educational visits planned. Although there has been a great improvement in teaching since the previous inspection, management of the department remains unsatisfactory because standards have not improved enough and assessment is unacceptably variable. Pupils are not aware of National Curriculum levels and guidance on how to improve is patchy. There is a lack of clear educational direction. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

Spanish

123. Gifted and talented pupils are taught Spanish in Years 7 and 8. Three Year 11 pupils also study Spanish. The teaching of Spanish is good and sometimes excellent. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are encouraged to speak the language. They behave

impeccably and are keen to make progress. An equal amount of time is now spent on Spanish and, as a result, pupils are able to reach the same standard in this as in French. The small number of pupils entered for GCSE all gain higher grades. Pupils are well motivated and now have a solid foundation on which to build.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.*

*Note: The inspection took place in unusual circumstances in that both permanent members of staff were absent on long-term sick leave. The school managed this situation extremely well and found three good teachers of music to cover the subject, so that the inspection went ahead without difficulty.

Strengths

- Very good accommodation provides a good place in which to work.
- Very good resources support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment related to National Curriculum levels.

124. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, and in Year 11 are average, representing good achievement in relation to pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school.
125. Teacher's assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show boys' standards as well below average, girls' standards well above average, and overall standards as broadly average. This does not match inspection findings and suggests the need for a more rigorous approach to assessment related to National Curriculum levels. Of the six candidates entered for GCSE examinations in 2002, only one obtained a C grade, and the rest were below this.
126. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. Knowledge and understanding of composing are below expectations. Pupils have little understanding of how to perform on keyboards, and knowledge of composers and styles is minimal. Class singing is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to good teaching and make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress. However, the Year 8 gifted and talented class who receive their music lessons after school do not make the progress that might be expected, because of very poor attendance. A small proportion of pupils enhance their musical attainment with tuition on guitar, steel pans, brass instruments, keyboards and voice.
127. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 11 are close to average. The present GCSE group perform adequately with voice or instrument and have a reasonable grasp of elementary composing techniques and basic harmony. Knowledge of composers, styles and musical structures is underdeveloped. More practice on these aspects and score reading is still required. The Year 10 group have commenced their course with below average attainment in all aspects and will need to work hard to achieve satisfactory grades.
128. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour during the inspection, with one exception, were very good. The exception was an extremely badly behaved Year 9 class which took all of the exceptionally gifted teacher's skill to manage with some degree of effectiveness

so that some learning did take place. Personal development and relationships in that instance were poor, but in all other lessons observed were good.

129. The quality of teaching provided by the supply staff is consistently good. One lesson seen with pupils who have special educational needs was excellent. Lessons are well planned and relevant to pupils' needs so that they maintain interest and concentration throughout the hour-long lessons. A Year 11 lesson, for example, with pupils who were clearly anxious about their GCSE prospects, was expertly handled. The teacher allayed their fears, showed them what to do, in this case composing an Irish jig, praised their achievements and instilled confidence. Because of this very positive approach, these pupils made very good progress and developed promising compositions. A Year 8 class learning about the elements of pitch (how high or low the sounds are), tempo (the speed of the music), dynamics (how loud or soft to play) and structure (the plan of the music) excelled themselves in a concentrated practical lesson with a dynamic teacher who made demands which took them well above their normal response and inspired enthusiasm and excellent learning. The level of inclusion in this lesson was exceptional. The quality of learning in all years is consistently good.
130. Since the previous inspection, standards have remained below average but the environment for music has been transformed. The new purpose-built accommodation is very good and there are very good resources. Balancing these factors, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and promotes good learning.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Extra-curricular sport is very good with excellent facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Modifications to the apparatus in the gymnasium are desirable.
- Continue to develop challenging and relevant practices in games and gymnastics.

131. In 2002, teachers assessed pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 as above average with all pupils reaching the national average. These standards match inspection findings. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 was below average whilst the proportion obtaining A*-G grades was above average. Work scrutiny and observations in Year 11 show that current standards in Year 11 are higher. However, there is a significant difference between boys' and girls' standards at GCSE level because girls are producing better theory work. In the majority of lessons, lower attaining pupils achieve to their potential because tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities. Talented pupils develop their expertise through the very good extra-curricular opportunities and inter-school fixtures. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school.
132. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9, standards are above average in dance and hockey. Dance is a real strength because of the enthusiasm generated by both the pupils and the teacher. The quality of movement is high and the creativity

developed by the pupils from different stimuli is spiritually uplifting. In hockey, the pupils show a good understanding of the basic strokes and perform above average passing and receiving techniques. Most of the pupils in a small group game of hockey showed knowledge and understanding of tactics and strategies. In Year 7 gymnastics, the basic skills are weak and this has an adverse effect on sequence work. Many pupils have little control of rolling activities. In Year 8 progress has lifted the standard above average in netball passing and catching. Dance in the same year has reached a very high standard with pupils' own poetry and music stimulating expressive phrases of movement. Swimming throughout Years 7 to 9 is of an above average standard because teachers cater very effectively for pupils of all abilities. Pupils achieve well during Years 7 to 9 because of the opportunities offered by the facilities and the staff.

133. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 11, overall standards are above average. Pupils maintain a good level of achievement in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. The GCSE groups are performing practical work, especially dance, above the standard required and theory work is improving. Boys have progressed in their written work but the girls still perform better in the theoretical aspect of the course. Pupils' standards in core physical education are above average in swimming, boys' football and aerobics. Girls' football has just been introduced in Year 10 and basic skills are being developed satisfactorily. The opportunities offered by the new facilities have increased the options in Year 11 and the standard of work has progressed. Inconsistent attendance and non-participants in the Year 11 programme are a slight concern because they make it more difficult to attain high standards.
134. Attitudes to the subject are very good overall and the pupils respect the new facilities. The pupils co-operate with each other in lessons and work well independently when the opportunity is provided. There is an enthusiastic response in Years 7 to 9 to physical education which contributes positively to learning. Pupils are able to concentrate and focus on developing their basic skills in games and their creative skills in dance. The demand for extra-curricular activities such as football, dance, swimming, netball and hockey reflects a growing enthusiasm towards the subject and the new accommodation. Pupils' overall attitudes have a positive effect on learning and disruptions to lessons are rare.
135. The quality of teaching is good overall. Although teachers show an in-depth knowledge of the subject, there are times when more appropriate and challenging activities would enhance pupils' progress. Where there is challenge and opportunity the pupils progress rapidly. The teaching of dance is particularly strong in providing the stimulus for pupils to develop high quality, expressive sequences of movement. The staff, including the swimming staff, organise and manage the lessons effectively and relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. Planning is good in most lessons but progress was hindered in a gymnastics lesson seen during the inspection because tasks were not matched appropriately to pupils' abilities. When some of these faults were corrected in a later lesson, progress was improved. The GCSE course is well taught and the use of ICT has improved pupils' theory work. The practical aspects of the course are taught well by co-operative team teaching and some expert knowledge, for example in dance and swimming. Progress in these activities is rapid. Pupils with learning difficulties are given opportunities to progress through the appropriate matching of tasks to ability and effective support by teachers. Teachers work hard and show enthusiasm in the extra-curricular programme where demand from pupils of all abilities is high.

136. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the breadth and balance of activities are very good. The units of work are generously timetabled. ICT links are developing and as a result the presentation of pupils' theory work is improving. Teachers offer clubs and team practices in the extra-curricular programme and approximately one third of the school's population attend the sessions with nine staff organising the programme. Assessment procedures are very good and meet the criteria set out in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Leadership and management are very good and documentation has been clearly presented and acted upon. Monitoring through performance management of teaching and the sharing of teaching expertise with all the staff is in the development plan. The head of department is an excellent role model for pupils and staff. The indoor accommodation is excellent and promotes progress because of the learning opportunities available. The outdoor facilities are being developed and when completed should provide the school with one of the best physical education sites in the country. Resources are very good but the gymnasium has limited fixed apparatus.
137. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. There is now very good leadership in the department. Extra-curricular opportunities in sport are very good. GCSE results are improving and pupils achieve well throughout the school. Documentation is very good and indoor facilities are excellent. Areas for improvement should be centred on selecting relevant and challenging activities in a minority of lessons and modifying gymnastic fixed apparatus.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The curriculum has been developed so that all pupils can gain a GCSE qualification in the subject.
- ICT is being used increasingly to support pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- There is a significant amount of underachievement in Years 10 and 11, mainly by boys.
- The criteria for assessing pupils' work are not explicit enough for pupils to know what they have to do to improve.

138. Standards in religious education are below average overall and well below average for many pupils. Only a few pupils have been entered for public examinations in recent years. The current Year 11 pupils are the first to follow the GCSE short course in religious education.
139. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9 standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory, given their very low level of attainment on entry to the school. Pupils have a reasonable knowledge of some of the principal beliefs and practices in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The regular focus in lessons on key words and symbols means that pupils have a good understanding of religious language. Teachers' use of video excerpts and artefacts helps lower attaining pupils to make satisfactory progress in understanding religious practices. Only the higher attainers in Year 9 are reaching expected standards of writing in their guides to Islam for primary pupils. Most pupils are not writing in any detail, with little sense of their intended audience, and their work is limited to only a few aspects of the faith. It is clear from books that many pupils did not finish their projects for homework. Similarly, the majority of pupils struggled with their investigation of the evidence for the Nativity. Their work was mainly narrative, rather than analysis, finding difficulty comparing biblical accounts with popular myths and reaching only superficial conclusions. Pupils do not understand the historical links and the main differences between the three religions studied.
140. In work seen, by the end of Year 11 standards are below average overall but pupils' achievement over the course is satisfactory in relation to their earlier learning. Pupils' performance in the recent examinations was well below average by GCSE standards. Many pupils – boys in particular – lack the motivation to revise their work, so are unable to recall relevant religious teachings in answer to examination questions. Only pupils in the higher attaining classes are explaining adequately, in their writing, the arguments for and against the existence of God and explaining their views of religious teachings on a range of moral issues. In class discussion, pupils show satisfactory understanding of the arguments surrounding euthanasia but many are not taking the subject seriously at an academic level when it comes to practising questions to develop examination technique. Boys, in particular, are underachieving from lack of interest. Pupils' coverage of the course in notes and handouts is satisfactory at a factual level but their retention of knowledge over the course is less secure.
141. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are satisfactory overall but without much enthusiasm. Interest was greater among Year 7 pupils identifying artefacts from four

religions and Year 8 pupils working out rituals observed by Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca. Year 9 pupils were lukewarm about the prospect of exploring Judaism. A significant number of pupils, mainly boys, express little interest in the subject in Years 10 and 11, which produces a degree of passivity in lessons and underachievement in tests. The department still has a lot to do to convince these pupils of the relevance of their studies and win their interest. It is having some success by making greater use of ICT to research topical examples of moral issues. Behaviour is mainly good in lessons, as teachers manage their classes well. Pupils co-operate in paired work and show suitable respect in their handling of artefacts and in their reactions to religious practices shown on video.

142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Increasing use is being made of ICT both in the presentation of information to classes and in developing pupils' ability to find out information for themselves. Project work and investigations have been developed to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage more developed work. Higher attainers are rising to the challenge but many pupils are not spending enough time on homework to complete assignments. Consequently, the range and extent of pupils' writing in the subject remain fairly narrow. Smaller classes and the presence of learning assistants mean that lower attainers receive the extra tuition they need to make satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers make good use of questioning to involve pupils in class discussion. The best lessons gain pupils' interest through stimulating use of religious artefacts or video case studies of people facing moral dilemmas, then set pupils to work on the material, expecting them to think for themselves. A few lessons lack sufficient pace and variety of activity to extend pupils' learning beyond the basic objectives set. Marking is satisfactory in most years, but pupils receive little constructive feedback on how to improve their work in Year 11.
143. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and the teachers are working well as a team to develop the subject, embracing ICT to enhance pupils' learning. Non-specialist teachers are well supported in planning their lessons. Departmental administration, documentation and resources are efficiently organised. The departmental development plan is a comprehensive document, setting out the priorities for planned improvement. There is work to be done on the schemes of work for the new GCSE course, which need to extend the range of learning styles to engage the interest of all pupils in their studies. The subject's contribution to citizenship education also needs to be clearly stated in the schemes of work. Textbook resources are barely satisfactory for the study of individual religions, and the absence of interactive whiteboards, in otherwise well-equipped new classrooms, frustrates the efforts of a department that is keen to use this technology.
144. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The major change has been the increased time for the subject in Years 10 and 11, which has allowed the department to introduce the GCSE short course for all pupils. ICT is now being used effectively as a strategy for tackling boys' underachievement. Assessment procedures are improving and include pupils' self-review of their work at the end of topics. There is still a lack of explicit subject criteria for judging pupils' work and progress. A start has been made to enhance the curriculum with visits to places of worship. Pupils' attainment has still not improved significantly and there remains a lot to be done to raise interest and motivate pupils to achieve their best standard of work in the subject.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **good**.

Strengths

- The breadth of provision.
- The co-ordination and strong links with the EAZ.
- Links with local services and the college increase the range of opportunities for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Limited accommodation for this type of course.
- Access to the widest aspects of ICT.
- Opportunity to introduce vocational skills in Years 7 to 9.

145. Vocational subjects in the school are undergoing rapid development in line with the school's vision and government initiatives. Pupils have the opportunity to study care industry subjects, such as child development and health and social care, and service industry subjects such as leisure and tourism, motor vehicle maintenance and business education.
146. Standards are broadly average. Pupils enjoy the independent approach to teaching and learning. They must think individually and plan their own approaches to their work, which raises confidence. Challenging, personal involvement in learning leads to satisfactory and sometimes good achievement in relation to pupils' standards at the beginning of courses. Pupils with special education needs are supported well and match the achievement of their peers because of the detailed interaction and feedback from teachers, throughout the modules of work. Fewer higher ability pupils choose to study vocational studies.
147. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some very good teaching in leisure and tourism and child development. Teachers have specialist knowledge that supports learning; for example, teachers have previously worked outside teaching in the health service. Planning makes good use of local services and visitors to the school which sets learning in a real context and extends pupils' understanding.
148. Management of vocational courses is good and very well organised. It is a new role and the team leader makes productive use of the expertise of the EAZ director, the head of careers and a deputy headteacher, to implement the innovative development plan.