

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BLESSED EDWARD OLD CORNE**

Worcester

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 11699

Principal: Sean Devlin

Lead inspector: Grace Marriott

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 258572

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:             | Voluntary aided                |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11-16                          |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                          |
| Number on roll:              | 1040                           |
| School address:              | Timberdine Avenue<br>Worcester |
| Postcode:                    | WR5 2XD                        |
| Telephone number:            | 01905 352615                   |
| Fax number:                  | 01905 763041                   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Ian Imray                      |
| Date of previous inspection: | February 1998                  |

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Blessed Edward Oldcorne is an average sized, mixed 11-16 Roman Catholic comprehensive school in Worcester. It has just over 1000 pupils on roll with similar number of boys and girls in most year groups, though not in Years 9 and 11 where there are more boys than girls. The pupils come from a wide geographical area and a broadly average range of home backgrounds. Most pupils are of white UK origin and very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties for which the school has a special centre. Pupils start the school with average levels of attainment. The school has recently been awarded specialist status for mathematics and computing.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                 |                | Subject responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| 3674                           | Grace Marriott  | Lead inspector |   |
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| 18178                          | Ian Matthews    | Team Inspector |   |
| 32331                          | Peter Barnes    | Team inspector | English, English as an additional language                      |
| 32320                          | Jane Gaffney    | Team inspector | Mathematics   |
| 32367                          | Jo Pike         | Team inspector | Art and design, Science   |
| 31238                          | Gordon Clubb    | Team inspector | Information and communication technology, Design and technology |
| 25073                          | Stuart Jordan   | Team inspector | Geography, History  |
| 22953                          | Peter Dacombe   | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages  |
| 30128                          | Shirley Stanley | Team inspector | Music, Citizenship, Personal social and health education        |
| 23307                          | Neil McDonough  | Team inspector | Physical education, Vocational courses                          |
| 17171                          | Mary Last       | Team inspector | Special educational needs, Speech resource centre               |
| 33324                          | Joanne Fulwood  | Team inspector |   |

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Blessed Edward Oldcorne is a very good school which is providing its pupils with a very good all-round education.** The teaching is good, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. The school strongly promotes high achievement. The principal provides excellent leadership and together with staff and governors has created a shared sense of purpose based on the school's mission statement of '*commitment to gospel values and personal achievement*'. The school provides a very wide range of opportunities for pupils, links with the wider community are excellent, and those with parents are very good. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- As a result of the good teaching pupils are achieving well in most subjects, very well in some subjects and at GCSE where results in 2003 were well above average
- Mathematics and art are satisfactory but not as strong as other subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Where lessons are less effective, teachers are not using the school strategies to manage pupils' work and behaviour
- Pupils feel valued and encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability, they take part fully in all aspects of school life
- Congestion in the corridors creates situations where the school is less successful at achieving its own high standards of care for pupils
- Pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work

**The improvement since the last inspection has been good** and the strengths reported then have been maintained. Standards are higher and the school has won a number of achievement awards. Boys are doing better and pupils with speech disorders now have good access to the curriculum. Standards in English and music have risen and ICT has improved very significantly. The weakness in the teaching of art has not been fully resolved. The school has successfully applied for specialist college status from September 2004.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with: | all schools |      |      | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
|   | 2001        | 2002 | 2003 | 2003            |
|   | B           | C    | A    | A               |

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

**Pupils achieve well overall.** In Years 7 to 9 achievement is good in English, ICT, the humanities, languages, music, design and technology and physical education (PE). In mathematics, science and art, achievement is satisfactory but has been affected by staffing difficulties. Achievement is better still in Years 10 and 11 mainly because teaching and learning are stronger in these years. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average in English, modern foreign languages and physical education and above average in almost all other subjects.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their overall personal development, are very good.**

Their attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good. They are prepared to work hard and show a sense of responsibility. A few students are less well behaved but this does not disrupt the education of others. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is also very good.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good education.**

**The teaching is good** with a high proportion of very good and excellent lessons. The range and quality of activities stimulate pupils' interest in what they are learning and develop good skills. Most teachers manage and motivate classes very well so that students make good progress. In the very small number of unsuccessful lessons, classroom routines are less rigorous, activities are often mundane and poor behaviour is not well managed.

The very good curriculum promotes high standards and good achievement. The provision in languages and ICT is particularly good and the range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. The school takes very good care of its students and the 'Sanctuary' (a special resource centre) provides an effective programme which helps some pupils to improve their attitudes and behaviour and benefit more from the education the school offers. Pupils with speech and language needs receive effective support, though staffing difficulties beyond the school's control make it difficult to provide speech therapy for some pupils. Regular reports provide parents with good information about their children's progress and how to help them.

**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good overall.** The principal's leadership is excellent and is focused on providing a very good, all-round education. The leadership team, directors of studies and area leaders provide committed and effective leadership and management. The school is well supported by a good governing body.

**PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents express a high level of confidence in the school. Pupils are also very positive. They enjoy school and feel that matters such as bullying if it occurs, are dealt with rapidly and that there are staff whom they can trust. They are regularly consulted over matters of school policy.

**IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that all teachers are using the strategies for good teaching which the school has successfully introduced in most subjects
- Raise standards and achievement in those subjects in Years 7 to 9 which are not as good as in Years 10 and 11
- Manage the movement in corridors and staircases more effectively to ease congestion

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with average skills, knowledge and understanding. Achievement is **good** throughout the school, though slightly better in Years 10 and 11, mainly because teaching and learning are stronger in these years.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in English, history, music, modern foreign languages and physical education and above average in all other subjects
- In Years 7 to 9 current pupils are achieving well overall and very well in PE
- In the core subjects in Years 7 to 9, achievement in English is good and in mathematics and science it is satisfactory
- Current pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well overall and very well in English and PE
- Standards and achievement in art are satisfactory but not as good overall as other subjects

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)

1. In 2003 national test results at the end of Year 9 were average overall and better than average in English. When compared with schools whose pupils achieved similar results in Year 6 tests, results were below average overall mainly because results in mathematics were well below those of similar schools. Results have fluctuated somewhat from year to year, with no clear trend. Over a three year period, girls have done better than boys in English, boys have done better in science and there is no significant difference in mathematics. The school achieved its targets in English and science in 2003 though not in mathematics.

2. Pupils are achieving well overall in Years 7 to 9. Standards seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 were above average in English, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and PE. In these subjects pupils are achieving well, and in PE they achieve very well, compared to their starting point in Year 7. In design and technology, history and geography where standards are average, pupils are nonetheless achieving well because their attainment in these subjects was below average at the start of Year 7. In science, higher-attaining pupils are achieving well, but lower-attainers are not doing as well because they have too much unfinished work. In mathematics and art, standards though average have been affected by staffing difficulties. Though achievement in modern languages is good overall, it is satisfactory where pupils are taking a second foreign language because they spend significantly less time on this than they do on the first language. The teacher assessments in modern languages were lower than the standards seen because they were based on out-of-date criteria. This is now being put right.

##### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 — average point scores in 2003*

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 34.2 (35.4)    | 33.4 (33.3)      |
| mathematics   | 34.8 (36.0)    | 35.4 (34.7)      |
| science       | 33.6 (34.3)    | 33.6 (33.3)      |

*There were 209 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

##### Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

3. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection and were well above the national average in 2003. They were also well above those of similar schools, which indicates that pupils

made very good progress and achieved very well. The school considerably exceeded its targets for 5 or more A\* to C passes and for the average total points score.

4. Girls have done better than boys in almost all subjects but the boys' results have improved. The school results are improving at a faster rate than the national trend and in 2003 the percentage of pupils achieving an A\* to C grade and the average point score were better than the national in all subjects except religious education. Results for English, science, history, drama, music and physical education were all significantly better than the national results. Pupils did best overall in history and drama and worst in art, mathematics and religious education.

5. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average in English, modern foreign languages and physical education and above average in all other subjects except art where they were average. There was no significant difference in the standard of work of boys and girls. Pupils are achieving very well overall and in English, modern foreign languages and PE they make particularly good progress. For example in English, pupils develop very good analytical skills and are confident enough to tackle difficult subject matter such as audience expectations in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In art achievement is satisfactory though still affected by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003**

|   | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 69 (53)        | 52 (50)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 95 (93)        | 91 (91)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 100 (98)       | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 39.1 (34.7)    | 34.7 (34.7)      |

*There were 203 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNV'Q assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

6. The national literacy strategy has been successfully incorporated into the curriculum, resulting in the systematic development of pupils' literacy skills. These are generally above average because spelling, punctuation and grammar are reinforced across subjects, with a particular emphasis in science and modern foreign languages on writing in a variety of forms and for different audiences. General levels of numeracy are also above average because teachers identify clearly where numeracy skills can be developed and plan accordingly. For example in geography pupils use graphs to present and interpret information. Pupils are very competent in using their ICT skills. For example, in Year 7 they were successfully using software to design and rotate three-dimensional figures. Most departments include good opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in their learning, though this is not consistent in mathematics and little use is made of ICT in art.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, especially in improving their self-confidence and willingness to tackle work. Recent results from spelling or reading tests and pupils' progress towards their grades in National Curriculum targets show that at least two thirds are making good progress. Several pupils have increased their expected National Curriculum grades by more than two levels during Key Stage 3. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress overall because work is generally well matched to their particular needs. In art, they are able to take GCSE a year early. Pupils with speech and language difficulties are well supported by learning support staff and make progress in lessons. For some pupils, formal assessment of their longer term progress has been difficult because of the lack of specialist assessment by a speech therapist which is beyond the control of the school.

8. The school has few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. They are well supported and achieve well in relation to their starting point. The emphasis on language and literacy

in virtually all lessons helps these pupils to improve their understanding of English and their ability to use it accurately.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes are **very good** and their behaviour is **good**. The school makes very good provision for personal development. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The ethos of the school values and encourages each individual and promotes high self-esteem
- Attitudes are generally very good and behaviour is good
- Where teaching is weaker, behaviour tends to be satisfactory rather than good
- Congestion in the corridors leads to some poorer behaviour
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very well promoted
- Pupils are very willing to take responsibility, with an outstanding contribution from prefects
- High levels of attendance contribute to pupils' success

### **Commentary**

9. The school is largely successful in creating a community where each individual feels valued and encouraged to achieve to the best of his or her ability. Pupils respond very well to the good opportunities for taking responsibility which the school provides. This is particularly evident in Year 11, where almost all are prefects.

### **An example of excellent practice - the prefect system**

**The prefects make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school and strongly support the school's provision for pupils' personal development.**

*'Each of you is a unique individual with many talents and we need you to use those talents to work with us for the good of the other pupils in the school.'* - the introduction to the invitation for pupils in Year 10 to apply and be interviewed for a post as one of several different types of prefect. Almost all apply and receive appropriate training. 'Counsellors' make themselves available to those feeling lonely or needing support and help to sort out, for example, bullying. 'Environers' work with pupils to improve the school environment. 'Mentors' mostly support Key Stage 3 pupils with their academic work. They listen to pupils read or help with numeracy and will provide support for ICT. 'Activators' set up academic, social or sporting activities at lunch times and after school. For example they referee football matches, run a cinema club or play chess. 'Chaplaincy' prefects help the chaplains in their work. 'Senior prefects' are nominated by all adults in the school. They have oversight of the work of prefects and help to ensure the smooth running of the school.

10. In most lessons, pupils' attitudes are very good and sometimes excellent. Behaviour is also often very good. Attitudes and behaviour are closely linked to the quality of teaching. This was very evident, for example, in a Year 8 science lesson, where use of the whiteboard was highly motivating and pupils were totally absorbed in the lesson. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour in lessons and manage pupils well. Some pupils find it difficult to behave and some teachers are less skilled at managing them or do not make their lessons sufficiently varied and interesting. The school is trialling a new scheme which analyses poor behaviour, so that the pupil and staff can see what is going wrong, and then suggest appropriate strategies for encouraging improvement.

11. Around the school pupils generally behave well. They are calm and orderly in the dining hall and play or stroll together happily at break times. Pupils have open access to the school and are encouraged to take care of the environment. They show a good level of responsibility in responding to this challenge. Sometimes the corridors and stairs are very congested and this leads to pushing and less good behaviour. Pupils say that instances of bullying and racial harassment, when they rarely occur, are quickly and effectively dealt with and that the 'bully box' and prefect counsellors help in this.

12. Levels of attendance are consistently well above the national average and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and appreciate the wide range of activities on offer. They are proud to receive certificates and prizes, for their form or as individuals.

13. Punctuality is good. Pupils travel from a wide area and rely on buses to get them to school, which can delay them sometimes. The school does not mark pupils as late unless they arrive after 9.05am, except when it is their year group assembly. This means that a few less punctual pupils are not being marked late when they miss tutor time which is regarded as an important part of the PHSE programme.

14. The school's commitment to Gospel values permeates all it does for pupils. The way adults relate with pupils and the example they set fosters a very high level of respect for others. Adults are very positive and constructive in their comments, thereby raising pupils' self esteem.

15. All pupils are valued. This is especially evident in the very low exclusion rates and the efforts made to keep pupils in school. The work done in the Sanctuary enables pupils who find it difficult to cope with school to continue their learning in a quieter and very supportive environment.

16. Pupils are helped to grow spiritually through the care and support they are given, as well as through the opportunities to take part in liturgy. Opportunities for spiritual development are sometimes missed in lessons when pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect, for example on a work of art.

17. Pupils raise considerable sums of money for a range of charities, usually planning the fund-raising, such as holding a cake sale, themselves. They are very aware of the needs of others and have links with a school in Africa that they support. Through carefully planned assembly themes and thoughts for the day, pupils are encouraged to consider moral and social issues, both within the school community and in the wider world.

18. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well, particularly through the teaching of languages, music, religious education and food technology. Muslim pupils and their faith are supported and respected and a room is set aside for prayer and fasting during Ramadan. The school is aware that pupils have limited first hand experience of living in multi-cultural Britain and is working to broaden their perspective.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

| Authorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data:       | 5.9 |
| National data:     | 7.2 |

| Unauthorised absence |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data:         | 0.4 |
| National data:       | 1.1 |

**Exclusions**

**Ethnic background of pupils**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British                             |
| White – Irish                               |
| White – any other White background          |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean           |
| Mixed – White and Black African             |
| Mixed – White and Asian                     |
| Mixed – any other mixed background          |

**Exclusions in the last school year**

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 935                  | 24                                | 1                              |
| 4                    |                                   |                                |
| 25                   |                                   |                                |
| 2                    |                                   |                                |
| 2                    |                                   |                                |
| 1                    |                                   |                                |
| 9                    |                                   |                                |

|   |                      |                                   |                                |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 2                    |                                   |                                |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 44                   | 2                                 |                                |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                | 2                    |                                   |                                |
| Categories used in the Annual School Census         | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 5                    |                                   |                                |
| Chinese   | 6                    |                                   |                                |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 2                    |                                   |                                |

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** education. This is based on good teaching which captures pupils' attention, motivates them to do well and provides them with guidance to improve their work. The curriculum is very good and the school also makes very good provision for the care and welfare of its pupils. The partnership with parents and other institutions is very good.

### Teaching and learning

The teaching is **good** overall and much of it is very good or excellent. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Well over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better and two thirds of the teaching was good or better, and resulted in good learning and achievement. Staffing difficulties have had an impact in art and mathematics but teachers are working hard to overcome these.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good teaching skills and knowledge of their subject
- In the good and very good lessons, teachers carefully plan a variety and range of activities which stimulate and motivate pupils and meet the needs of individuals
- Teaching was consistently very good in music and physical education
- In the weaker lessons, pupils are not challenged enough and learning is less successful
- Teachers use the very good assessment system to help them plan effectively
- Pupils have good guidance on their progress and how to improve their work

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good       | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor     | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| 9 (7%)    | 41(31%)   | 40 (30.5%) | 35 (27%)     | 5 (4%)         | 1 (0.8%) | 0         |

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. These may not total 100% because of rounding.*

### Commentary

19. There are some variations between subjects. The teaching is very good in music and physical education, and in geography in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in English, modern foreign languages, history, ICT and design and technology. It is also good in geography in Years 7 to 9 and science and leisure and tourism in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in art and mathematics and in science in Years 7 to 9. The good and better lessons in all subjects usually have a number of different types of activity. They proceed at a fast pace with teachers having high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. In the best lessons, pupils are quickly engaged in starter activities and then move on to activities which capture their interest and keep them motivated.

20. Assessment is an integral part of the school approach to motivating pupils, and most teachers use the results of assessment very effectively to ensure that teaching is well directed to meet pupils' needs. In most departments, constructive comments from teachers ensure that pupils understand what is good about their work, what they need to do to improve it further and what grade they are aiming for. Teachers use questions to probe understanding and diagnose errors and misconceptions. Plenaries are used very well to establish whether pupils have met their learning objectives. In one French lesson, pupils used evaluation cards to identify what they had learned and what they needed to spend more time on. Pupils have a clear view on how they are doing in different subjects and courses.

21. The best lessons break the learning down in manageable steps and activities and styles of teaching change as the lesson progresses. In a 90-minute science lesson, pupils started with a whole class activity where a diagram on the floor was used to demonstrate kidney function. They then worked in groups on a practical investigation, moved on to individual work and then worked again in groups for a discussion and problem solving activity. At the same time the teacher successfully introduced methods which would reflect the different interests of boys and girls. This approach was particularly well applied in the excellent lessons, where pupils made very good progress. Homework is normally used well to support learning. It is set regularly, is relevant to the work covered in the lessons and provides suitable extension and practice.

22. Relationships with teachers and behaviour and attitudes are good, because of the quality of many of the lessons. Teachers provide constant encouragement by meeting the needs of individuals, for example, by responding positively to pupils' answers. There are occasions however where simple answers are met with a 'that's excellent' response, when it would be more appropriate to probe the pupil's answer more deeply.

23. Planning is often of a very high quality. For example in physical education, staff use a lesson database, which gives clear guidance on resources and teaching methods, provides a list of key words to use during the lesson and provides teachers with activities which allow them to meet the needs of different pupils. The lesson evaluation helps staff to share good practice. As a result of the teaching, pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and learn well.

24. In the satisfactory lessons, mostly in Years 7 to 9, the approach was usually less rigorous and activities were often mundane and pupils made more limited progress. In some lessons, worksheets were over-used. At times, classroom management was less effective so that the teacher had to spend time dealing with irritating, rather than serious, misbehaviour. In the very small number of unsuccessful lessons, although the lesson structure was appropriate, the work was not well-matched to pupils' needs, the content was boring and failed to motivate, or pupils spent considerable time doing work which they had done before. When some finished quickly, they had no work to move on to which gave them opportunities to misbehave.

25. The school is strongly committed to including pupils with a range of special needs in all lessons. Students with both physical and academic needs are making good progress because they are generally well taught. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons and they often withdraw pupils for individual help. A major feature in many lessons is the teacher's use of key vocabulary, which is often displayed on the board and a formal approach to decoding text helps them to read worksheets in all subjects. There is some inconsistency in the teachers' approach to lower attaining pupils and, particularly where the whole class is required to do the same task, some pupils remain too dependent upon adult help. For pupils with special educational needs, assessment is satisfactory and improving. There is no established procedure for tracking the pupils' progress over time and combining the results into meaningful data. The special educational needs action plan identifies this issue as a priority. Pupils with speech and language difficulties are well-supported and the school is compensating as much as possible for the difficulty in providing speech therapy for some pupils.

26. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is generally good. Where this is most effective, as for example, in geography and French, extension materials are carefully targeted at individual needs whilst in art the most able are entered for examinations at the end of Year 10. The teaching of pupils

with English as an additional language is good. They are effectively supported in lessons and the school ensures that they are well integrated. They achieve well because teachers employ good questioning strategies to draw out understanding and learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers lack the strategies to offer the best support.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **very good**. It meets all statutory requirements and provides a very good range of opportunities for pupils. The provision for extra curricular activities is excellent. There are also some very unusual features in Years 10 and 11, particularly in the breadth of choices on offer.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of the full range of pupils very well
- It provides an exceptional range of opportunities for languages and includes other subjects such as astronomy and classical civilization
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has been well structured
- The curriculum has vocational course options in Years 10 and 11, an improvement since the previous inspection. These could be developed further to include a greater range of pupils
- The provision for enrichment is excellent

### **Commentary**

27. Curricular provision in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very good and pupils have good opportunities to develop the basic skills required in preparation for Years 10 and 11. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is well designed and provides a very good range of subjects. There are some unusual features, particularly in modern foreign languages, where pupils may choose from three languages, and in sport. In addition, pupils may study astronomy and sample subjects such as Russian and Japanese. The school also offers a range of vocational courses although these tend to be selected by lower attaining pupils. These pupils have additional opportunities through the successful link course programme with the local college of further education. Provision for vocationally related courses for the higher attaining pupils is limited.

28. The PSHE programme is well structured and covers not only the major aspects of PHSE, but also citizenship and the compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11. The scheme of work is detailed and comprehensive, dealing effectively with important and sensitive issues such as bullying, alcohol and drugs. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Expert visitors enhance the PSHE curriculum and the school organises visits abroad to France, Germany and Spain and Italy. Several subject areas enrich their provision by providing 'drop-in' clubs which offer study support and extension activities. For example, after-school lessons for GCSE are provided in most subjects including GNVQ as well as activities and clubs for example, in Russian, astronomy and Japanese. Music offers a wide range of activities for all years and opportunities for older pupils to organise groups. In physical education, pupils are offered an extensive range of opportunities including girls' rugby.

29. All pupils have equal access to activities within school and pupils with special educational needs have many opportunities to receive additional support and help through formal group teaching and informal discussion. Work on computer aided learning, reading workshops, the use of older pupils as reading mentors, opportunities for individual counselling and a wide range of exciting activities in lessons all contribute to developing the pupils' interest in learning and their success. Pupils with speech and language difficulties are well supported by trained learning support staff. Although about half of them should be receiving assessment and/or support from a qualified speech therapist, recruitment difficulties beyond the control of the school have meant that the terms of their statements are not being fully met. The school is working hard to minimise the impact of this. The 'Sanctuary' provides very well for pupils who have particular difficulties or who are at risk of exclusion by providing a constructive and well-structured environment which enables the pupils to cope significantly better in mainstream lessons.

30. Curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. Support assistants provide help for pupils with English as an additional language and they are also able to take GCSE in their home language if appropriate. There are regular 'More Able' child days and the wide range of options in Years 10 and 11, including astronomy and classical civilization, further enhance opportunities. Gifted pupils may sit GCSE examinations early in art and in ICT. Talented pupils are not as systematically provided for across the school although good practice exists in some areas, notably physical education and science. However, the excellent range of extra-curricular activities helps pupils to develop their talents in a wide variety of areas. In some subjects, action plans to provide for more-able pupils are incorporated into planning although this best practice is not yet consistent across the whole school. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported and have good access to the curriculum.

31. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. In English and science it is good and in physical education it is very good. There are some curriculum areas though where it is unsatisfactory. In humanities the department is split between a new part of the school, where accommodation is good, and old, temporary classrooms. Staff have to work hard to overcome the disadvantages of the unsuitable accommodation. In music the provision for practice and instrumental rooms is inadequate. Singing is taught in a room without suitable ventilation. This is limiting the development of performance skills. At the change of lessons some of the corridors become overcrowded. This congestion results in unsatisfactory behaviour from some pupils.

32. Resources are generally adequate for all pupils, enabling them to achieve at least satisfactorily. In English some text books are out of date and need replacing. In physical education the resources are very good. In general teachers and support staff are sufficient in number, are appropriately deployed and there is a very good match of their range of skills, qualifications and experience to what is assigned to them. There are specific staffing problems in art and mathematics. Here the national shortage of teachers has resulted in the use of unqualified teachers and those teaching outside their specialist subject. The difficulties in providing speech therapy have been dealt with to some extent by training support staff. The school is working hard to overcome staffing difficulties. Technicians and other staff provide good levels of support which effectively meet the needs of the pupils and staff. This is particularly the case in the areas of ICT, mathematics, science and design and technology.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes **very good** provision for the care and support of its pupils. Their personal and academic development is **very well** monitored. Pupils are consulted and involved very fully in the work of the school.

### **Main strengths**

- Induction arrangements are excellent
- The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils has a very high priority
- Very good systems for monitoring pupils' progress lead to very constructive support and advice
- Older pupils take considerable responsibility for providing support and activities for other pupils
- Pupils are actively involved in discussing the work of the school

### **Commentary**

33. The school has an excellent system for ensuring that new pupils are confident and happy to come to the school and that all their teachers know as much as possible about them. From Year 5, pupils are invited to the school for special events and during Year 6 they come for two induction days, working on mathematics, English and science.

34. Child protection procedures are securely in place and due regard is paid to health and safety. First aid procedures are caring and effective. Pupils are very effectively, but discreetly, supervised so that they develop a sense of responsibility. The school has good systems for monitoring internet access.

35. This is a very inclusive school, where all, including those with disabilities and difficulties, can find support and advice based on detailed knowledge of each individual. Pupils are very confident that there are a number of adults to whom they can turn for advice and support. Every pupil has an in-depth interview at least once during the year with the director of studies for their year group. Their books are looked at and progress is discussed.

36. Pupils are involved in reviewing their own work through the termly reporting system. Comprehensive assessment procedures track pupils' progress towards individual targets each term. Directors of studies and key stage co-ordinators ensure that underachieving pupils are identified and receive appropriate advice and guidance. Those pupils in Years 9 and 11, who are allocated mentors, have fortnightly meetings to discuss and review their personal targets.

37. Older pupils said that they were very happy with the advice they had been given about option choices for Key Stage 4. Year 11 pupils receive good careers advice and are moving on to post-16 education with confidence. The school makes very good use of a wide range of support. A counsellor is readily available and older pupils also make a very useful contribution in supporting younger pupils. Each year group has a chaplain, from a nearby parish, who works with both pupils and their teachers. They move through the school with the year group and so know them very well. External agencies, such as the school nurse and education welfare officer, also work closely with the school to meet pupils' needs. At present, the school does not have access to a speech and language therapist.

38. Pupils are very involved in discussing the work of the school. From time to time the school surveys a large proportion of pupils to ascertain their views. Form tutor groups discuss matters which concern pupils and some of these ideas go forward to the year group meeting. Anything of a whole-school nature is taken to the half-termly school council meeting, which consists of two pupils from each year group. Here, the principal listens to and shares information with pupils. This is a very good forum for exchange of ideas and pupils feel they have influence, for example, over the food in the canteen and improvements to the environment. The academic board meets each term and discusses issues such as coursework deadlines, while chaplaincy meetings give pupils the opportunity to help plan liturgy.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school maintains **very good** links with parents and with partner institutions. It has **excellent** links with the wider community.

### **Main strengths**

- Information for parents about the curriculum and about their children's progress is very good
- Very good links with primary schools enables the smooth transfer of younger pupils
- Older pupils benefit from the very good links with local colleges
- Excellent links with the wider community broaden pupils' experience and opportunity

### **Commentary**

39. Parents express a high level of confidence in the school. They are very well informed about its work through a range of well-presented information. A particular strength is the detailed description of the curriculum for each year group, what homework will be expected and the length of time each topic should take. This enables parents to take an active role in supporting their child if they wish.

40. Information about their children's progress is regularly reported and discussed. Pupils have two interim reports, where they grade their own attainment and effort in each subject before seeing how their teachers have graded them. These are followed by very detailed end of year reports which include advice on how to improve. Teachers are very honest in their assessment of pupils' progress and regularly meet parents to discuss this.

41. The school provides many opportunities for parents and the community to see its work, for example, at plays and performances and open evenings. Over a number of years, the school has built up very close relationships with the junior schools it serves. This ensures that it receives as much information as possible to help in deciding where children should be placed and what support they may need. The school also, for example, offers six 'able pupil days' each year and supports several schools with ICT expertise.

42. Older pupils are being offered a work-related curriculum and vocational courses which are run in conjunction with the local technology college. Pupils go to the college to do some of their lessons and college staff also come to teach at the school. Pupils move on into post-16 education with confidence because of the very good relationships the school has with the colleges.

43. Pupils gain great benefit from the school's outstanding range of links with the wider community. They can take part, among other things, in music and drama festivals, in Worcester City's Youth Parliament and in public speaking competitions. Older pupils all take part in work experience and commented how this was almost always very relevant to the career they are considering. Co-operation with a local ICT company has contributed to the specialist school status recently awarded.

44. Other local businesses provide prizes and awards which motivate pupils to succeed. The school works closely with other agencies to promote pupils' health, safety and well-being. The principal and many members of staff are actively involved in initiatives and organisations that are of direct benefit to the school as a whole or to groups of pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good** at all levels and focused very strongly on promoting high achievement and very good personal development for all pupils. The governing body is well-informed and provides good support.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The principal provides excellent leadership and is enthusiastically supported by a very effective leadership team
- The governors are very well informed and committed to promoting the vision for the school's future
- Planning for the future development of the school is very good with a clear focus on raising standards and achieving the school's aims
- Leadership and management of the subjects are very good overall and excellent in music
- Performance management is very good, as are arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development of staff
- Some timetabling and staffing issues result in split classes and non-specialist teaching which have an effect in some areas on achievement

### **Commentary**

45. The school has a good governing body which is currently going through a period of transition. The core of very experienced governors, who are led with great commitment and understanding by an experienced chairman, make a major contribution to the running of the school. The experienced governors provide a suitable challenge to help shape the direction of the school. They are involved in planning, have a clear sense of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are effective in monitoring progress. Relationships with the school leadership team are very good. New governors are enthusiastic. They are being trained and are rapidly taking on responsibility.

46. The principal provides excellent leadership, and the governors are very clear that he has improved an already good school. He has a clear vision for school improvement based on Gospel values and personal attainment that is reflected in a commitment to high achievement, inclusion and equal opportunity. This is understood and shared by the whole staff. Senior and middle-leaders,

whose skills and expertise complement each other's very well, form a very effective team dedicated to drive up standards. They inspire and motivate staff and pupils to give of their best.

47. Very good management ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The senior leadership team are readily accessible and ever present around the school. The management of pastoral care is very good. Recently, directors of studies have been appointed to combine these responsibilities with those of monitoring pupils' academic progress. This is making work in these areas more effective.

48. The leadership team has a very good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses because it has effective procedures to monitor progress in achieving school and subject targets. Each member of the team is linked to one or more subjects, ensuring the consistent implementation of school policies. Overall, area leaders manage departments very well, sharing the same emphasis on improvement as the principal. Leadership is excellent in music and modern languages and very good in science, physical education, ICT, humanities, English, special educational needs and design and technology. Leadership and management of art are unsatisfactory.

49. Leadership and management are strongly focused on raising achievement. Monitoring systems are very effective and the outcomes are used very effectively to inform planning, for example, through the identification of emerging priorities that will provide the basis for the next planning cycle. National initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 strategies have been welcomed and implemented purposefully. The clear planning cycle involves governors at an early stage.

50. The school uses the full range of data to analyse performance at the end of Years 9 and 11. Issues, such as the underachievement of boys have been clearly identified and a range of effective strategies implemented through the school improvement plan. The progress of individual pupils is tracked and underachieving pupils identified and supported.

51. Staff performance management is firmly embedded and has proved very effective in bringing about improvement, and as a basis, together with the requirements of the school improvement plan, for in-service training. The successes and achievements of staff are recognised. Arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development of staff are very good. This enables both experienced and inexperienced staff to become familiar with systems and procedures very quickly. If staff are experiencing difficulty, they are well-supported. Very good links with higher education training institutions have been established. Good support and experience are provided for trainee teachers in a number of subjects. The links have been helpful in the recruitment of new staff which is very well managed. Any remaining deficiencies reflect national shortages, for example, the difficulty experienced in appointing a speech therapist and here the school has worked hard to minimise the effect on pupils' progress.

52. Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and the named governor is well informed and supportive. The very strong commitment to inclusion is reflected in the quality of general provision, the work of the speech resource and the 'Sanctuary'. The development plan for special educational needs reflects school priorities. Links with those outside the school who can help are effective. A clear policy results in a consistent approach to students with particular needs across all departments. The co-ordinator provides detailed documentation that identifies pupils' general learning needs. All learning support staff are aware of pupils' difficulties and areas for improvement. Progress is monitored effectively and this contributes to the good achievement of these pupils.

53. Financial control and management of the budget are very good. The most recent audit report confirmed a high level of efficiency of financial controls. In the past, the school had accrued a considerable surplus. However, this is reducing rapidly as buildings and facilities are improved. In 2003-2004 much of the surplus was used for the new classrooms and most of the remainder is earmarked for further essential building improvements and to cushion the impact of rising staff costs.

### ***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

| Income and expenditure (£) |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Total income               | £2955439 |
| Total expenditure          | £2730489 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | £2631    |

| Balances (£)               |  | £35858  |
|----------------------------|--|---------|
| Balance from previous year |  | £693095 |
| Balance carried forward    |  | £728952 |

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The school provides courses in English Language and literature, French, German, Spanish and Italian and extra-curricular courses in Japanese and Russian. English, French, German and Spanish were inspected in depth and the other courses were sampled.

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11    |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Standards   | Above average    | Well above average |
| Achievement | Good             | Very good          |
| Teaching    | Good             | Good               |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Very good |

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are well above the national average
- Excellent management ensures consistently high standards
- An extensive extra-curricular programme supplements lessons
- Work is not always targeted precisely enough at pupils' needs

#### Commentary

54. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations for English and English literature were well above average and continue a rising trend. At the end of Year 9, results were above the national average and those of similar schools. Girls performed better than boys but the difference is less marked than the national position.

55. Pupils join the school with average skills in English. By the end of Year 9, all pupils achieve well and are making good progress. Standards are above national expectations. Pupils write in a variety of forms for different audiences. Reading is generally fluent and expressive and written work shows insight and imagination. Speaking and listening opportunities are provided in all lessons and pupils listen attentively and thoughtfully; their spoken contributions could often be developed further.

56. By the end of Year 11, all pupils have made very good progress and standards are well above average. Analytical and written skills are highly developed and pupils are confident enough to tackle difficult subject matter such as audience expectations in *Much Ado About Nothing*. In the higher and middle-ability classes, written work is thorough and shows insight, with a clear focus on examination criteria. Spelling and punctuation weaknesses in the work of lower-ability pupils adversely affects the quality of some coursework assignments.

57. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons show good challenge and move at a good pace. In Years 7 to 9, they engage pupils with a variety of interesting tasks. In a very good lesson on persuasive language in *Henry V*, the teacher enthused pupils with an understanding of the power of language and how rhetorical devices could motivate an audience. The teacher's brisk questioning meant all pupils made good progress. Homework was used appropriately to extend learning. The variety of activities within lessons, though good, provides few opportunities for pupils to develop independence as learners. In the few less

successful lessons, teachers did not plan sufficiently for the wide range of ability within a group and special educational needs information was not used to inform planning. Pupils are clear about their current performance and how they should improve and assessment data is used effectively to monitor progress.

58. In Years 10 and 11, teachers are particularly well informed about the requirements of the courses they teach. They set high expectations and lessons are challenging and demanding. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. In the best lessons, aims are shared with the pupils, the pace of learning is brisk and teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles to actively involve the whole class. In less successful lessons, pupils were unclear about the reasons why they were doing something and the range of tasks was too limited. Across all groups, work is consistently marked to a very high standard and includes detailed comments and targets on how pupils should improve. Homework is set regularly and appropriately. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including theatre visits, drama performances and workshops, provides excellent support to timetabled lessons and successfully enriches pupils' experiences of English.

59. The leadership of English is very good and is firmly focused on raising standards and leading by example. Management is excellent. Up-to-date schemes of work and detailed lesson planning ensure smooth day-to-day running. Excellent use of assessment data to track student progress and very good monitoring of teaching ensure a consistently high-quality experience for each pupil. The department is continually improving with a well-developed team ethos and high expectations of performance. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. GCSE results and boys' attainment have improved. The use of computers in English has improved and standards of marking are much better. The systematic improvement of spelling still remains an issue.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The national literacy strategy has been successfully incorporated into the curriculum resulting in the systematic development of above average literacy skills. Keywords are identified and reinforced in all lessons and clearly displayed. Writing frames are used well in history and geography where work is carefully structured to ensure lower-attaining pupils can access the curriculum effectively. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are reinforced well across subject areas. In science and modern foreign languages emphasis is put on writing in a variety of forms and for different audiences. The library is welcoming and well organised. Very good displays across subject areas help promote literacy development.

### Modern foreign languages

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

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11    |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Standards   | Above average    | Well above average |
| Achievement | Good             | Good               |
| Teaching    | Good             | Good               |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Excellent |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' results in GCSE examinations are well above average
- Key Stage 3 teacher assessments are based on out-of date criteria and standards are higher than the reported results
- Well-structured teaching helps pupils to achieve well

- A wide range of languages provides pupils with choice and diversity
- Excellent leadership promotes a very positive image for language learning

### **Commentary**

61. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average in French and German. In Spanish they were very high, with all pupils gaining A\* - C grades. In Italian in 2002, pupils' results were also very high. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were significantly below the national average in 2003. However the reported levels are not an accurate reflection of current standards, which are above average.

62. In French in Years 7 to 9, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Vocabulary and appropriate grammar are covered well. Most exercise books contain clear, well-organised material from which pupils are able to learn easily. Different tenses are introduced from Year 8 and by Year 9 pupils in higher sets can describe what they did at the weekend, for example, in some detail. In the second language, the time allocation is lower than in French and as a result standards are average.

63. At the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. Pupils in higher sets are working on demanding reading and listening tasks. Written coursework is of a high standard with examples of good levels of accuracy and choice of phrase. Standards in speaking, however, are not as strong as in the other three skills. Pupils following certificate courses are achieving appropriately and make good use of ICT in their presentations. Pupils learning second languages make rapid progress. Overall, pupils achieve well.

64. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well structured with clearly explained objectives and lively starter activities which engage pupils quickly. For example, in a GCSE lesson, the teacher began by asking pupils to remain standing. The teacher wrote a bold A\* on board and asked pupils what they would need to do achieve that GCSE grade. One at a time, pupils suggested a wide range of points, each of which was greeted with great enthusiasm by the teacher. The pace of this exercise was rapid and after a couple of minutes all the pupils were seated, ready to start work after a motivating preface to the lesson. New approaches in some Year 7 French classes are helping pupils to improve the standard of their creative writing. ICT is used purposefully by both teachers and pupils. In the best lessons, teachers use the target language extensively, and pupils' listening skills develop rapidly. Where pupils are given regular opportunities to practise speaking in pairs or small groups their confidence builds up quickly. These approaches are not used consistently and this is affecting standards, especially in speaking. The curriculum is excellent, with French as a core subject and a choice for pupils in their second language. Japanese is offered as an extra-curricular option and also some beginners' Russian. Assessment is used well to plan lessons and motivate pupils, but the criteria used to judge attainment at the end of Year 9 is based on out-of-date information and hence is inaccurate. This is being put right.

65. Leadership is excellent. There is drive and commitment to promote the value of language learning and the enjoyment to be derived from it. This is reflected in the quality of the curriculum, the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including exchanges and trips abroad, and the willingness within the team to take on new initiatives. Management of the area is very good; for example, timetables have been swiftly re-organised to cope with changes in staffing. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards at GCSE have risen significantly and the number of pupils taking a second language has gone up. The gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Satisfactory     | Good            |
| Teaching    | Satisfactory     | Satisfactory    |

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                     | Satisfactory |
| Management                     | Good         |
| Progress since last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and results at the end of Year 11 are above average because the teachers have planned very carefully for examination requirements
- Performance data is used very well to monitor pupils' progress and identify underachievement
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported
- Marking and other feedback to pupils does not give them enough information to know what to do to progress to the next level or grade
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have too few opportunities to do investigational and problem solving activities
- The use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning of mathematics needs further development

### Commentary

66. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average. Girls performed slightly better than boys. These results are an improvement on the previous year, and are in line with results prior to 2002. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were average when compared to all schools nationally, but well below average when compared to similar schools. Boys' and girls' performance is broadly similar. Difficulties in recruiting teachers have had some impact on standards.

67. Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. Progress is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, whilst pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, and they make the same progress as other pupils in their class. Pupils of average and below average ability in Years 7 to 9 do not have well-honed problem solving skills because there are too few planned opportunities in lessons to develop them. Most pupils are able to present mathematical solutions in a clear and logical way.

68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have generally very good subject knowledge and are very clear about GCSE examination requirements. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations, based on their very good subject knowledge, capture pupils' interest and imagination. Activities are presented in contexts which are meaningful and relevant. In a lesson introducing the use of pie charts, pupils were invited to suggest how a cake could be shared fairly between families of different sizes, before going on to learn a more formal method. The teacher's high expectations and the use of a number of short, focused activities led to a very positive response from the pupils. In an algebra lesson, more able pupils were highly motivated by a challenge to discover how to position five terms in a pyramid arrangement to produce the biggest total. In less successful lessons, exposition is dull and does not help pupils to understand underlying concepts. In these lessons, pupils carry out calculations mechanically and do not appreciate why a method is appropriate. Pupils' work is marked diligently but includes few comments on what pupils need to do to improve. Some pupils do not understand what they need to do to progress from one grade or level to the next, and often do not have personal targets. ICT is used successfully in some lessons to make mathematics more meaningful to pupils, but this good practice is not universal.

69. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, and management is good. Teachers in the department have clear roles and they work together well as a team. Data analysis is now being used well to track the performance of all pupils, but most effectively in Years 10 and 11. The provision in mathematics is improving. LEA intervention funding is being used creatively and effectively to improve the attitude and achievement of average and below average pupils in Years 8 and 9. The work of the department is regularly monitored, and strengths and weaknesses accurately identified. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are above average. Classroom notice boards display the “numeracy thought for the week”. Form tutors in Years 7 to 9 help to deliver a programme of numeracy activities. Teachers in most subjects identify clearly where opportunities to develop numeracy skills arise, and plan appropriately. For example, in music pupils are taught numeracy through work on rhythm, and in geography pupils interpret information presented graphically and make predictions about future trends. Calculators are used appropriately by all pupils.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Satisfactory     | Good            |
| Teaching    | Satisfactory     | Good            |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative activities in lessons capture pupils' interests
- Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above the national average
- Teachers work well as a team and share good practice
- Teachers' marking in Years 7 to 9 does not give enough advice to help pupils improve

### Commentary

71. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were above the national average. Girls and boys did equally well. Year 9 national tests were in line with national average, but below those of similar schools.

72. Standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils can set up experiments, identify appropriate factors to manipulate and interpret their results accurately in written conclusions. High attaining pupils evaluate their findings. All pupils use word equations to explain chemical reactions, with high attaining pupils using chemical symbols and diagrams. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, though high attaining pupils achieve well. The achievement of low attaining pupils is satisfactory but hampered by incomplete work.

73. In Year 11, pupils achieve well and standards are above average. Pupils of middle and high ability write detailed explanations showing good understanding of the structure and properties of plastics. They use diagrams to predict the genetic characteristics of offspring. Pupils' graphical skills are good and in their practical work they regularly use line graphs and identify the relationships these show. Low attaining pupils give briefer explanations.

74. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. Some teaching was excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and result in pupils making good progress in their learning. Lessons start promptly with a short starter activity, to check pupils' understanding and make clear what they will learn and starter activities frequently make effective use of the interactive whiteboards. A Year 11 lesson on phototropism in plants, started with a short accelerated video clip of brambles growing. This instantly caught pupils' attention. Another lesson on the revision of the electromagnetic spectrum involved a range of teaching techniques, including discussion, visual presentation and questioning, which ensured that all pupils were involved. Lessons end with pupils reflecting on what they have learnt. In a Year 10 lesson, a quick test in the style of 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' was used very effectively to check pupils' understanding. Pupils are taught key scientific words and their science vocabulary is good. Where teaching is weaker, teachers allow pupils to chatter while they are talking so important points are missed and time is not used as efficiently.

75. Marking in Years 10 and 11 is diagnostic and tightly focused on preparing pupils for the examination. Pupils know their grade and how to improve. In Years 7 to 9, marking is not always thorough enough and does not give specific guidance on how to improve. Misconceptions are not always picked up, and pupils with unfinished work are not followed up. This is particularly true for low ability pupils.

76. Leadership and management are very good and show a determination to raise achievement. Very effective use is made of data analysis to identify weaknesses and take action. The teachers work very well as a team. They share ideas and are willing to innovate. There is no regular formal monitoring of teaching to ensure consistency and further share good practice. The schemes of work are well structured. Pupils have good opportunities outside lessons to take part in revision sessions. The recently started science club provides pupils in Years 7 and 8 with opportunities to enjoy some novel activities. More able pupils relish the challenge of taking astronomy as a GCSE examination. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The quality of teaching has improved and examination results have risen.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11    |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Standards   | Above average    | Well above average |
| Achievement | Good             | Very good          |
| Teaching    | Good             | Good               |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Very good |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality teaching results in pupils achieving well and reaching above average standards in the GNVQ ICT course
- The GNVQ course followed from Year 8 is well suited to the interests and abilities of the pupils and is raising standards
- The very good assessment procedures are understood by pupils and are raising levels of achievement
- Only having one hour a week for ICT lessons means that pupils have problems recalling work from one lesson to the next

## **Commentary**

77. Results at the end of Year 9 are consistently above the national average. Results from the GNVQ course in 2003 were well above average. Three quarters of the pupils in Year 11 gained the equivalent of GCSE A\* to C grades. All of the pupils in Year 10 also completed the course in 2003 with two thirds of them achieving the A\* to C equivalent grade a year earlier than expected.

78. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and pupils in all year groups have better than average skills. They start studying the GNVQ course in Year 8 with an intended completion in Year 11. Pupils show confidence in using the computers. This represents good achievement given pupils' average attainment on entry to the school and the fact that they only have one hour of ICT a week which slows the rate of achievement. Pupils produce good slides with text, pictures and sounds. Each pupil can competently combine a number of slides to form a well produced presentation. These presentations are good overall and range from very good to average. Those who successfully complete the GNVQ course before reaching Year 11 study for the Key Skills qualification. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also above average, but those pupils who have already completed the GNVQ course at the end of Year 10, consider the Key Skills qualification to be less important.

79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Good planning and good teacher knowledge of ICT enables lessons to be presented in a way that ensures good learning opportunities. Lessons start promptly and teachers make use of ideas from the Key Stage 3 Strategy to improve pupils' interest and in developing a sharper focus for learning. Teaching is often very good. The use of a computer-controlled white board in lessons impacts very well on pupils' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. Younger pupils are sometimes excited by what they can do. For instance, in a Year 8 class pupils were enthusiastically programming the light sequence for a fictional pelican crossing. In the very good teaching, reference to marked coursework at the start of lessons is very good because it enables pupils to improve. The assessment procedures overall are very good as they allow the pupils to monitor their own progress towards their target grade. This is raising the level of achievement. Whole class discussions taking place at the end of the lessons widens pupils' knowledge through the sharing of ideas.

80. The teachers work cohesively as a team. Innovative courses have been introduced and a rigorous assessment process is integrated into lessons. The focus of the department is on raising standards. The leadership and management are very good. At the time of the last inspection the provision for ICT was criticised. All of the issues from the previous report have been tackled well. Standards have improved. The quality of teaching has improved. Progress since the last inspection has been very good.

## **ICT across the curriculum**

81. Although not all subjects have fully implemented the use of ICT to promote learning there are examples of good practice in many subjects and the provision is good overall. Pupils are very competent and confident users of ICT. For example, good use was seen in design and technology where pupils in Year 7 used the pro-desktop software to design and rotate three dimensional figures. There was very good use of ICT in English where assignments requiring its use are threaded through the curriculum. In mathematics the pupils have good access the computers, however their use is not consistent and the ICT is not enhancing learning. The lack of ICT in art is a weakness.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Good             | Good            |
| Teaching    | Good             | Very good       |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good teaching and achieve well. The very good marking tells pupils how they might improve their work
- They develop a good range of subject skills but in some classes have too few opportunities to practise these or to use ICT
- The subject makes a very considerable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of citizenship
- Pupils' contributions are valued and their positive relationships with teachers encourage self-confidence
- Split classes increase the workload of teachers and constrain the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9

### Commentary

82. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national expectation and examination results at the end of Year 11 were above the national average in 2003. Pupils did as well in geography as in most other subjects, with girls outperforming boys.

83. Pupils' attainment on entry is below national expectations. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well. By the end of Year 9 they can express their sound understanding of the places and themes covered using the correct terms. They have a good range of skills but not all groups practise these enough. Those with particular learning needs, including the gifted and talented, make similarly good progress as teachers know them well and, most often, tailor the work to meet their needs. For example, in an excellent lesson on earthquakes, lower attaining Year 11 pupils made very good progress to achieve a very clear understanding of their effect in countries at different stages of development. Higher attaining pupils in the same year were quick to understand the structure of the earth and how plates moved, supporting their answers with knowledge learned in science lessons. Achievement is good and standards above those expected at this stage.

84. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn effectively. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons move at a brisk pace, good use being made of the time available. Detailed planning enables pupils to build upon existing knowledge to extend their understanding. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to enrich explanations with good examples, making links with other topics. Pupils have the skills necessary to work independently and practise these through challenging enquiry work. For example, lower attaining pupils in Year 8 used their ICT skills very effectively to research flooding in Bangladesh. However, difficulties of access to computers limit the opportunities for pupils to practise their skills during lessons.

85. Respect for the environment and an understanding of the associated problems are strong features of the learning and contribute much to pupils' personal development and understanding of citizenship. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on water supply pupils learned of the impact of human

activity on natural resources. Learning is enhanced through fieldwork, though the resulting work can be too descriptive and opportunities for practising skills, including numeracy, missed.

86. Thorough marking tells students how to improve their work and their progress is monitored closely through regular assessments. More opportunities for self-evaluation are being introduced. Homework is set regularly, marked promptly and used well to support learning.

87. Leadership is very good. Priorities for development are clear. The curriculum is managed very effectively and schemes of work are updated regularly. The Key Stage 3 strategy is in place. The timetable requires teachers to share classes. This increases their workload and, despite good co-operation, has a negative impact on learning. Teaching and learning are monitored rigorously and evaluation is systematic. Some of the accommodation is in very poor condition and is due for replacement. Progress since the previous inspection has been good as teaching has improved and now includes a wider range of activities and teaching strategies, including greater opportunity for independent learning.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Good             | Good            |
| Teaching    | Good             | Good            |

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                     | Good         |
| Management                     | Good         |
| Progress since last inspection | Satisfactory |

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good and enthusiastic teaching engages pupils' interest, work is well matched to their needs and as a result, they achieve well
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship
- Teachers' marking is very good so pupils know what they must do to improve
- Pupils' contributions are valued and positive relationships with teachers encourage self-confidence
- Split classes increase the workload of teachers and constrain the progress of pupils

## Commentary

88. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. Results at the end of Year 11 were very high compared with the national average in 2003. Pupils did better in history than all other subjects, boys and girls doing equally well.

89. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is below average. At the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations and achievement is good. All pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of chronology. The work of pupils shows a good grasp of the relative importance of events and individuals, for example, in their studies of the British rule in India. Pupils have a very good understanding of change, as in a Year 7 lesson, when they balanced the benefits and effects of the Black Death. In Year 9, all are able to trawl sources to provide evidence in support of their inferences. The extended writing of the higher attaining pupils is a particular strength, being well researched and structured.

90. In Years 10 and 11, standards and achievement are above the level expected, though not as high as last year's exceptional results and pupils are achieving well. Pupils have a good knowledge

of facts and can use their skills to analyse causes and effects of events. Year 11 pupils studied the depression and 'New Deal' in the United States. They understood how and why events had been interpreted differently.

91. The teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge, their understanding of course requirements and enthusiasm ensured that pupils were interested, attentive and capable of sustained concentration. They provided rich descriptions, relating one period or event to another and providing interesting details about important figures. In a lesson on anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, this harrowing topic was treated with balance and sensitivity. Pupils practice literacy skills, including speaking and listening. They develop the skills necessary for essay work and independence from Year 7. Higher attaining pupils analyse sources critically and support their conclusions with evidence.

92. Pupils collaborate very well, as when Year 8 pupils addressed the question, *Robespierre, hero or villain?* Visits, locally and further afield, for example, the tour of Civil War sites in Worcester, build upon pupils' interest and further enrich the course. A further strength is that pupils' contributions are valued and their positive relationships with teachers encourage self-confidence. In a few weaker lessons teachers tended to dominate and pupils were not actively involved. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, one example of many being the Year 11 study of reform and women's suffrage in the early 1900s.

93. Assessment is very good. Pupils' work is marked regularly, promptly and to a high standard. Pupils know what they must do to improve, though those in Years 7 to 9 are not sure of the levels they have achieved. Homework is set regularly and supports learning.

94. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Schemes of work have been revised and the national strategy is in place. Shared classes increase the workload of teachers and constrain the progress of pupils. Scattered accommodation causes problems for teachers who have transformed even the shabbiest classrooms with wonderful displays. The high standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained so that improvement is satisfactory.

## TECHNOLOGY

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

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Good             | Good            |
| Teaching    | Good             | Good            |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The assessment procedures are very good and are providing the pupils with an incentive to improve
- There are some examples of very good teaching and these are stimulating the pupils' interest and raising standards
- The teachers expect high standards of work and behaviour; the pupils are aware of these expectations and respond appropriately
- The teachers work closely with the pupils in lessons providing good one-to-one tuition which raises standards
- The examination results in textiles, food technology and resistant materials are not as good as those in graphic products



## Commentary

95. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment below national expectations. By the end of Year 9 attainment is in line with national expectations. Results at the end of Year 11 in the 2003 examinations were above average overall, but vary within the individual subjects that make up design and technology. They are better in graphic products than in other subjects. Boys achieve better than girls mainly because they do well in graphic products which more boys take than girls.

96. Current standards are on a par with the results and this represents good achievement overall. The pupils enjoy technology and this was clear from the way in which they rushed to the subject rooms and, in one particular instance, the way that they left the lesson excitedly talking about looking forward to returning next week. The teachers have developed good working relationships with the pupils. This means that there is a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons and that the classrooms are pleasant places in which to learn. The pupils are aware of the high expectations of the teachers. They work hard and behave well.

97. Teaching is good across the department with examples of very good teaching. Where it is most effective, teachers share the lesson aims with pupils; they ensure that lessons have a brisk pace; have good technical knowledge of their subject and use a range of teaching styles to ensure that pupils remain engaged and motivated. In a food technology lesson for example, the teacher explained the aims of the lesson, pupils discussed food hygiene, had the practical experience of making pasta individually and then, working in pairs, passed the pasta through the cutting machine. This variety of approaches stimulated enthusiasm and led to very good learning.

98. Planning, control and organisation of learning are good in most lessons. Teachers provide a high level of individual support and guidance for pupils. In a graphics lesson the teacher sat with a pupil and they discussed the different ways of making the object being designed. This made the pupil talk about the work and improved understanding of the topic.

99. The pupils understand what the examinations will demand. The teachers relate their marking to how work in the examinations is marked. Teachers include advice on what the pupils should do to improve. These assessment procedures are very good and are raising standards. They have been carefully developed over time and have a significant element of pupils' self assessment. This means that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve.

100. The focus of the department is clearly on raising standards. The teachers work well as a team and are mutually supportive. The leadership and management of technology are very good and this has resulted in good improvement since the time of the last inspection.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were inspected in depth and the work in drama was sampled. Dance was inspected as part of physical education. GCSE results in **drama** are well above the national average. Two lessons were observed and in these the teaching was excellent. High expectations, good pace, exemplary relationships and effective use of peer assessment result in excellent achievement. Pupils can identify dramatic techniques, explore different dramatic conventions, improvise and critically evaluate their own work. Pupils enjoy drama and respond maturely and sensibly to the very good opportunities provided for social and moral development.

## Art and design

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Average         |
| Achievement | Satisfactory     | Satisfactory    |
| Teaching    | Satisfactory     | Satisfactory    |

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership                     | Unsatisfactory |
| Management                     | Unsatisfactory |
| Progress since last inspection | Satisfactory   |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment and enthusiasm of teachers is leading to above average standards in some classes
- Lack of coherence in the team leads to variation in standards and achievement which are average overall
- GCSE examination results are above the national average
- Higher-attaining pupils are offered good extension opportunities by entering them in Year 10 for GCSE
- The course provision in Year 10 allows students to take two similar art subjects. This leads to unnecessary repetition of experience

### Commentary

101. The results of the 2003 GCSE examinations were above the national average. This is similar to the results over the last three years, though the number of pupils gaining higher grades is falling. Boys performed better than girls. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national average.

102. Standards are average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory although there is considerable variation between classes, mainly because of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Where the teaching is good, pupils are achieving well. In a Year 7 lesson with low ability pupils, the teacher made effective use of very good subject knowledge in discussing *Hundertwasser's* work. The pupils' responses were highly perceptive and their subsequent shell drawings incorporated the artist's style successfully. In a Year 10 graphics lesson, pupils worked on their autobiographical designs. The teacher provided very good one to one guidance, going through the pupils' portfolio with them, recording key points for improvement. Their painting skills were above average. They made good use of tonal effects, and their brushwork was well executed. In both these classes, good teaching had produced standards and achievement which were better than expected.

103. Higher attaining pupils are well prepared for the GCSE examination and successfully take the examination a year early before moving on to study AS level in Year 11. For these pupils, teaching is of good quality and well directed toward achievement. A strong assessment process makes a significant contribution to this success.

104. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils' behaviour deteriorates, and they produce work of below average standards. Some teachers are non-specialists, and the guidance they give pupils is not structured enough. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils enlarged their Egyptian drawings to develop into paintings. Because they had not been taught how to do this, three fifths of pupils had limited success. Drawing and painting skills were below average. Pupils do not use computers in art lessons. The range of media is limited, although some work in 3D is undertaken. Trips to exhibitions and visiting artists enrich pupils' experience.

105. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the schemes of work are well designed to link the understanding of art with the development of skills and techniques, although opportunities to use ICT are limited. Currently three GCSE options are offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils can choose to study two art options for GCSE, and this leads to repetition of experience.

106. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory because standards overall have been maintained and achievement and teaching are satisfactory. The school has also tackled some of the issues from the last inspection. However there are weaknesses which mean that leadership and management are currently unsatisfactory. The department does not work as a cohesive team and the management of new teachers is not effective. Successful ideas are not shared between teachers and advice for non-specialists is not structured and supportive enough. Standards and achievement are still variable, as is the quality of teaching.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Above average    | Above average   |
| Achievement | Good             | Good            |
| Teaching    | Very good        | Very good       |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Excellent |
| Management                     | Excellent |
| Progress since last inspection | Very good |

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved and are above average at Year 9 and at Year 11. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Pupils are achieving well as a result of very good teaching
- Leadership and management are excellent
- Assessment systems are excellent
- There are insufficient computers when more than one class is taught at the same time
- Accommodation for teaching has improved but the practice areas are inadequate and access to ICT is limited

## Commentary

107. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above average and continue a rising trend. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Standards achieved by Year 9, based on teacher assessments were above average. Girls' attainment is considerably higher than boys'. A significant minority of pupils in Year 9 are working at high levels in playing and performing.

108. By Year 9, pupils have gained above average skills in playing and performing; they use keyboards and computers well and a significant minority play their own instruments in lessons. Their technical vocabulary is good and is used well. This represents good progress as many pupils, on entry, have a limited knowledge of the elements of music and little or no experience in playing instruments. By the end of Year 11, pupils' practical and composition skills are well developed. Listening skills are good. The department works hard to give pupils additional opportunities to play and perform. However, one third of pupils opting for music in Years 10 and 11 do not receive instrumental tuition. In addition, the limited amount of space available for ensemble work is having an adverse impact on standards.

109. In all years pupils benefit from the teachers' very good knowledge of the ways in which pupils' learn. Planning for progression is very good. A very good range of activities, including brisk starter

activities, captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers are aware of the need for additional strategies to keep less able pupils in Years 7 and 8 focused during the last few minutes of lessons. A strong feature of all lessons is the way in which pupils show an interest in activities, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods.

110. The department makes a valuable contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils in all years study music from *Around the World* as seen in one Year 8 lesson on the music and instruments of India. In many lessons pupils are considering the mood of music and how it makes them feel. Behaviour of pupils is very good and often excellent because of the high expectations of the teachers.

111. Leadership and management are excellent. The revised schemes of work are imaginative and successful in engaging pupils. Thorough assessment systems and target setting enable pupils to have knowledge of their learning and how to improve. Resources have improved overall but some keyboards are worn and there is a need for more ICT. Since the previous inspection the department has made very good progress. Standards are considerably higher and the quality of teaching is much improved. There has been an exceptional increase in the uptake for the GCSE course.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

|             | Years 7, 8 and 9 | Years 10 and 11 |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Standards   | Average          | Above average   |
| Achievement | Satisfactory     | Good            |
| Teaching    | Satisfactory     | Good            |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is very good with excellent features which results in very good achievement
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour contribute to their learning
- Extra-curricular provision has a very good impact on learning
- The marking of pupils' work at Key Stage 4 and the agreement on standards on Key Stage 3 need more development

### Commentary

112. Teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. GCSE results in 2003 for were well above average and all pupils achieved at least a grade C. Most students are below average on entry. However, by the end of Year 9 standards are above average and by Year 11 they are well above average. From a low starting point achievement is very good across the school. In Years 7 to 9 in gymnastics, pupils show very good balance technique and are effective in group-work performance. In hockey, pupils have good stick control and demonstrate good body position in defence and attack. In rugby, pupils have a good understanding of 'rucking' technique and offside rules.

113. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are confident in performing technical trampolining sequences, in football they have good ball control and good handling skills in rugby. They make very good progress in becoming independent learners and are able to take responsibility for organising practise drills for small groups. In GCSE practical lessons pupils demonstrate very good standards of achievement. They have good understanding of sports science. Pupils make very good progress in GCSE lessons. They understand the importance of speed and agility training and relate this to a range of

sports and use digital recording to assess their skill development. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They come prepared for lessons and are very well behaved.

114. Lessons are carefully planned to take account of all pupils' needs and are evaluated thoroughly. Teachers have high expectations and assessment ensures that pupils are challenged to improve. Very good use of resources ensures that lessons are interesting and teaching maintains pupils' motivation. Teachers make very good use of the plenary to assess learning. Praise and encouragement is a feature of teaching style. Most pupils succeed and benefit from their achievements.

**An example of excellent teaching seen in a Year 11 badminton lesson**

**Speed, agility and quickness (SAQ) training is predominantly used in major team sports such as football and rugby for specific training.**  
 The teacher cleverly linked its use to badminton. Pupils were also aware of the importance of core stability (central body control) and understood how its

115. Teaching makes a good contribution to the spiritual ethos of the school through emphasis on inclusion and development of the individual. Literacy is a key element of lessons through reference to key words. Cultural development is enhanced through the Haka, and Asian and African dance themes. Homework is regularly completed and coursework is of a good quality.

116. Leadership and management are very good and provide clear direction for future development. All staff are appropriately qualified and have clearly defined responsibilities. Performance management and monitoring are an integral feature of the department.

Departmental documentation is very good. Staff are hard working, well motivated and committed to improvement. This has a good impact on learning. The marking of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11, and the systems for agreeing teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 both need further development. Within the curriculum there is a very good range of activities. An emphasis on equal access to sport includes rugby, football, dance and martial arts for girls and boys. The extensive extra-curricular programme provides pupils with opportunities to progress at all levels of sport. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

**BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The school is developing courses in vocational areas. Most were sampled and leisure and tourism was inspected in more depth.

**Leisure and tourism**

Provision in leisure and tourism is **satisfactory**.

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
|             | Years 10 and 11 |
| Standards   | Average         |
| Achievement | Good            |
| Teaching    | Good            |

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                     | Very good |
| Management                     | Very good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good      |

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is good and results in good achievement
- The relationships between pupils and teachers is positive
- The external support from the local college has a good impact on learning
- A few pupils are not fully focused on learning

## Commentary

117. A relatively small number of lower-attaining students are studying leisure and tourism. The first group is due to take the examination in 2004. Standards in Year 11 are average and because of the low starting point, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils have developed a range of skills in understanding the travel industry and through involvement with the school production they have experience of marketing. They have developed skills in enterprise through work experience at the travel agency attached to the local college.

118. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils generally work hard and are eager to learn. They work well in groups and ask relevant questions. Pupils are mostly attentive and well behaved, though a few are not as willing to take part in the lessons. Teachers work hard to provide interesting activities and to motivate pupils. Good relationships between pupils and teachers have a positive impact on learning.

119. Leadership is purposeful and provides clear vision for the future development of the course. The partnership with the college is effective in providing training for teachers, support with assessment and good work experience for pupils. College resources are used effectively.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The personal, social and health education programme is taught by tutors during the first short tutor period in the morning and again during a whole school tutor session later in the week. This period of time covers all PHSE, citizenship and the compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11. Sampling of these sessions, discussion with pupils and analysis of documentation showed that the programme is well-structured and effective. It is responsive to issues which are of particular concern to pupils and parents.

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                     | Satisfactory |
| Management                     | Satisfactory |
| Progress since last inspection | n/a          |

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- An up-to date audit of subject departments to show where they contribute to citizenship has been carried out. The school is fully aware of where citizenship is covered
- Systems for the monitoring, assessment and recording of citizenship are in place but monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning has not yet been taken into account
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of being good citizens through taking responsibility and contributing to the community
- Pupils were not always made aware of the relevance to citizenship of work in lessons

## Commentary

120. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching or standards in citizenship as too few lessons could be observed. In addition to the formal teaching in PSHE lessons, the school has identified many opportunities for work in different subjects to make contributions to citizenship. When opportunities to promote pupils' learning in citizenship arise in lessons, they were generally used to their best advantage. In a Year 10 discussion on recycling,

some pupils wished to pursue their interest by wanting to be environmental prefects. Year 7 pupils were identifying dangerous situations and how to deal with them. Year 9 pupils were enthused in discussion and writing about local issues and what they think should be changed. In some lessons, however, although relevant topics were being taught, pupils were not made aware of the significance of the work to citizenship. Pupils were often uncertain about the meaning of citizenship and when it is being taught.

121. There are many other opportunities for the development of citizenship in the school as for example, the very successful prefect system and the associated work of prefects in paired reading, mentoring and work in extra curricular activities. The leadership of citizenship is satisfactory because there is a clear vision as to how the subject should be developed. The management of citizenship is satisfactory because there are systems in place which should make the provision effective. These include a scheme of work which clearly identifies how the National Curriculum for citizenship is to be covered and assessed. The monitoring of the delivery and assessment of citizenship has yet to be implemented. The school is aware that though much has been done to implement the requirements for citizenship, it has still much to do for this to be fully effective.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i>  | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| <b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>                       | <b>2</b>     |
| How inclusive the school is  | 2            |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 3            |
| Value for money provided by the school                               | 2            |
| <b>Overall standards achieved</b>                                    | <b>3</b>     |
| Pupils' achievement  | 3            |
| <b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>        | <b>2</b>     |
| Attendance   | 2            |
| Attitudes  | 2            |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions                        | 3            |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development            | 2            |
| <b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>               | <b>2</b>     |
| The quality of teaching  | 3            |
| How well pupils learn  | 3            |
| The quality of assessment  | 2            |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs                           | 2            |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities     | 1            |
| Accommodation and resources  | 4            |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety                             | 2            |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils                              | 2            |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views                  | 2            |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents                 | 2            |
| The quality of the school's links with the community                 | 1            |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges                   | 2            |
| <b>The leadership and management of the school</b>                   | <b>2</b>     |
| The governance of the school   | 3            |
| The leadership of the headteacher                                    | 1            |
| The leadership of other key staff                                    | 2            |
| The effectiveness of management                                      | 2            |

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