

INSPECTION REPORT

ST LUKE'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113550

Headteacher: Mr T Hammond

Lead inspector: Ian Stuart

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 January 2004

Inspection number: 258774

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 controlled
Age range of pupils:	12 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	712
School address:	Ringswell Avenue Exeter
Postcode:	EX1 3EG
Telephone number:	01392 204600
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms C Buswell
Date of previous inspection:	19 January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Luke's Church of England Voluntary Controlled High School is one of five 12 – 16 High Schools in Exeter, four of which are relatively close to each other on the east side of the city; one of them is a Church of England Voluntary Aided School which has, over many years, attracted a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils. Because many parents prefer their children to begin secondary education at the age of 11, the Exeter High Schools lose considerable numbers of pupils to secondary schools outside the city boundaries and to independent schools. As a result of all these and other factors, pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. There are variations within this broad generalisation between different years, but all year groups have entered the school in this category. Although the number of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is broadly average, many pupils have complex special educational needs, and the proportion of pupils with some kind of special educational needs is above average. The most common needs are learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Whilst pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds, the school serves some areas of significant deprivation, and, overall, the pupils' socio-economic circumstances are comparatively disadvantaged. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds with very few speaking English as an additional language; average numbers of pupils join and leave the school during their school career. The pattern of education in Exeter is being reorganised from September 2005 so that St Luke's and the other High Schools will take pupils from the beginning of Year 7 at the age of 11. At the same time, St Luke's will move to new buildings on a new site, next to the new buildings of the Meteorological Office. To coincide with this reorganisation and move to new premises, the school is bidding to become a specialist Sports and Science College. If successful, it is likely to be the first school in the country to have this joint specialist status. At present, it has the Sportsmark, Investors in Parents and the Investors in Education Business Partnership awards.

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18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design; information and communication technology
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	History; citizenship
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Luke's is a good school with the capacity to become still more effective. It gives good value for money. In the last year or so, a strengthened and very effective senior management team has led a programme of improvement that is now paying dividends, particularly in the quality of teaching. There is still more to do in some aspects of the school's work. However, the forthcoming reorganisation of the school to take pupils at the beginning of Year 7, and its move to new buildings, gives tremendous opportunities to build on recent successes. The high quality of the planning for the next few years gives cause for optimism that the school will grasp these opportunities in its aim of raising the achievements of all its pupils.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is very well led by the headteacher, senior managers and governors who have a clear vision for the future development of the school.
- Good teaching and learning in the majority of lessons are now leading to good achievement by most pupils.
- The curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, caters very well for pupils of different abilities and aptitudes.
- The school provides very good care, guidance and support for all pupils, and especially for those with complex special educational needs.
- There are very good and trusting relationships between pupils and staff.
- The atmosphere in the school is not calm enough to promote the best possible climate for learning because of inadequate provision of social areas and facilities for quiet recreation, and insufficient supervision at breaks and lunchtime.
- Inconsistencies in the management of pupils' behaviour in lessons adversely affects learning.
- Punctuality and attendance are unsatisfactory, despite strenuous efforts by the school to promote good attendance.

Because of staffing and financial difficulties for a number of years after the previous inspection, the school's standards did little more than hold their own. However, more recently, improvement has been rapid, and standards are now rising. Teaching is better, as is the breadth of pupils' learning skills; there have been notable improvements in the curriculum and in the school's planning processes. Attendance remains a problem area. Whilst satisfactory overall since the last inspection, six years ago, improvement is now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	D	E	D	C

*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.*

Achievement is now good overall in the school. Standards on entry are well below average, with some variation year by year within that category. The 2003 Year 9 results showed a significant improvement from previous years and reached around average national standards. The impact of the use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, particularly for literacy, mathematics and science, has been very positive in the good achievement. In work seen during the inspection in Years 8 and 9, though still below average, standards are rising with good achievement, particularly in Year 9.

The 2003 GCSE results were below average; compared with their standards in the Year 9 tests two years earlier, pupils' achievements were satisfactory, though there were significant differences

between subjects. In work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, there are many indications that results in 2004 and 2005 will be better with good achievement in evidence. A comprehensive programme to raise standards in Year 11 is helping many pupils to make improvements.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Overall, too many of them are boisterous and noisy in corridors and around the school. The absence of a calm and purposeful atmosphere as pupils move around affects their behaviour when they get to classes. As a result, it is more difficult to teach and learn successfully unless teachers employ effective behaviour management skills; sometimes unsatisfactory behaviour disrupts learning. Attendance is unsatisfactory, and far too many pupils are late for morning and afternoon lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good, and teaching is good overall.

Lessons are well planned; nearly all are taught by subject experts whose detailed knowledge and understanding help pupils in their learning. The best lessons cater well for all pupils in the class, with fast pace and lively activities promoting good learning. Less successful lessons are usually characterised by weaker control of pupils, lower expectations of what pupils can achieve, and insufficient attention given to the range of ability in the class, which is often very considerable. Assessment arrangements are good, though the use teachers make of the information in their teaching strategies is variable. The overall curriculum is very good; in Years 10 and 11, it is innovative and forward looking, providing an inclusive and effective programme for a wide range of pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is highly principled and promotes an inclusive and caring school; he and the very effective senior team are well equipped to take the school forward. The overall quality of middle managers is good, with some very good practice. Many important initiatives are being implemented at present, and these are being managed very well; less successful is the day-to-day management and implementation of school routines, including consistency in enforcing school rules. The work of the governors is very good; they make a major contribution to leadership and positively influence the work of the school. They contribute to the school's very good strategic planning and financial management. Statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are supportive of the school. They feel their children like school and are expected to work hard. Some are concerned about behaviour and the quality of information they receive about their children's progress. Pupils also show good levels of satisfaction. Most enjoy school and feel well supported and well taught, but they also have concerns about behaviour.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Rigorously implement policies that promote a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school.
- Ensure that all teachers consistently apply agreed codes of behaviour in all lessons.
- Continue to develop strategies to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average, compared with schools nationally, for the ends of Years 9 and 11. However, achievement – the measure of how well pupils are doing, taking their progress and capability into account – is good for boys and girls at all levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards rise from well below average on entry, with most pupils achieving well.
- Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show particularly good achievements, and evidence points to improved results at GCSE in 2004.
- Pupils' investigative and research skills, and their use of ICT, have improved since the last inspection.
- Some pupils could do better because of shortcomings in their behaviour and attitudes.

Commentary

1. Pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 8, one year after taking the national tests at the end of Year 6. There are, therefore, no national measures of their attainment at the point of entry. However, all available evidence from test results and from assessment measures used by the school indicates that attainment on entry is well below average overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Standards in other subjects show more variation, with different pupils often having widely different experiences even within the same subject. Overall, however, most evidence points to standards somewhat lower in other subjects than in the core subjects. Some subjects take good steps to assess pupils' standards on entry so that work can be suitably matched to pupils' needs, as well as establishing a base line for measuring progress. The very good practice that is found in some areas, such as design and technology, is worthy of widespread use across the school. Within the broad 'well below average' category, there have been variations over recent years; the group of pupils who took GCSE in 2002, for example, were particularly weak, whereas the present Year 10 are somewhat stronger overall.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (32.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	34.1 (31.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.1 (29.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 175 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the tests taken at the end of Year 9, the overall standards in recent years, until 2003, have been below or well below average. In 2003, overall results were similar to the national average; they were above average in English and below average in mathematics and science. With this noticeable improvement in 2003, the trend in the school's results is now above the national trend. The better results in 2003 partly reflect the academically stronger year group, but also the good achievement of pupils compared with their test scores three years earlier. Achievement in English over these three years was particularly good. Some of the new 'value-added' measures show well above average progress from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 9. In 2003, the difference in performance between boys and girls was the same as is found nationally; in the two previous years, boys did comparatively better than girls.

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	30 (23)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.7 (26.1)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 169 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The overall GCSE results in 2003 were below average. However, within that overall picture, there were marked variations; the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more A*-C grades was well below the national average, those gaining 5 or more A*-G grades was above average, and the proportion gaining 1 or more A*-G grades was well above average. These results partly reflect the lower than average number of pupils with the likely potential to gain the higher grades, but also a degree of underachievement by a number of pupils, especially girls, who had the potential to gain more C grades than they actually achieved. By contrast, many other pupils, including several with special educational needs, did very well. Taken overall, achievement in relation to standards at the end of Year 9, two years earlier, was satisfactory, as it had been the previous year. Because the 2002 results fell significantly, largely because the year group as a whole was the weakest on entry in the school's recent history, the trend in GCSE results has been below the national trend, despite some improvements in 2003. There were some significant differences in achievement between subjects in 2003, with, for example, pupils doing better in English, food technology, history and Italian than they did in their other subjects, and doing less well in ICT and physical education.
- In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average for the ends of Year 9 and 11. However, overall, achievement is good with much improvement in evidence between early work in Year 8 and present work in Year 9. In geography, for example, this represents very good achievement in many classes when methodical teaching and insistence on accurate work lead to rapid progress. The impact of the use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, particularly for literacy, mathematics and science, has been very positive in the good achievement and rising standards seen in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, there are many indications of rising standards and good achievement, with the potential for improved results in 2004 and 2005. The school is putting much emphasis on its strategies for raising standards in Year 11; present indications are that these strategies are helping many pupils to make improvements in their work. There are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls in any year group.
- There are several factors that contribute to how successfully pupils achieve and to whether their standards are improving. The most important factors are the quality of teaching and the degree of motivation and commitment of pupils; these two factors are, of course, usually related, and affect standards and achievement more closely than the year group, gender, or capability of the pupil or, in many cases, the subject being studied. When, however, the quality of teaching and the motivation of pupils are consistently high, as they are in drama, then all pupils achieve very well. Another example is in ICT where, until recently, standards have been low. Now the quality of teaching is good, and often very good, with plenty of very challenging work. This is having a noticeable impact on pupils' achievements and standards are rising rapidly. The degree of challenge is very important for all pupils, but especially for higher attainers. In some lessons, there is not sufficient challenge for higher attainers; sometimes they are not achieving as well as they might because teachers are not catering fully for the very wide range of ability that there is in some classes. There are two other factors that sometimes reduce pupils' achievements. The most significant factor occurs when poor behaviour, low productivity and casual attitudes interfere with the learning not only of the disruptive pupils

themselves, but also of others in the class. The other factor occurs when assessment is not used to the best advantage to help pupils be clear about what they need to do to improve. On the other hand, when marking is regular with good guidance, as it is in science, pupils are able to make better progress and achieve more.

6. Weaknesses in pupils' skills to discuss, investigate, solve problems and carry out research were criticised in the last inspection report. Standards and achievements in these areas are now higher. Investigative and research skills are much in evidence in history and geography, with fieldwork in geography helping pupils' achievements considerably. Good research work takes place in design and technology, and there is evidence of good independent work, often using ICT, in many subjects. Nonetheless, there are still instances where pupils do not sufficiently take responsibility for their own learning. Although elements of the National Literacy Strategy are being well used in many lessons, and pupils' literacy skills are improving, literacy standards are below average. Listening skills are weaker than other skills, but not all pupils read with expression, even if they are technically sound with the vocabulary. As well as English, some other subjects, such as history, put emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills, and this is helping raise pupils' achievements. The National Numeracy Strategy is well used in mathematics lessons, and numeracy skills, although below average overall, are sufficiently developed to ensure most pupils have full access to the curriculum. This is a better position than at the previous inspection when raising pupils' numeracy standards was a key issue.
7. Pupils with special educational needs, who have weak reading and spelling skills, make good progress as a result of the extra help they receive from staff in the Edison Centre, the school's special educational needs base. This applies to pupils withdrawn for individual and small group work and for pupils supported in ordinary classes. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons when supported by teaching assistants; similarly, those referred to the Faraday Centre, the school's base for pupils having difficulties in coping in their normal classes, achieve well. In both centres, pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans and behaviour support plans. They know and understand their targets and work hard to achieve them. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in many ordinary lessons because work is planned and delivered to meet the learning needs of all pupils. However, in a few lessons, there is insufficient planning for the full ability range, and this adversely affects progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall but a significant minority of pupils can be very challenging and this affects learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is below the national average and unsatisfactory. There is a casual attitude to punctuality by some pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show very positive attitudes in many lessons and this leads to good achievement.
- Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, despite good monitoring by the school.
- There is an inconsistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour by some staff.
- The atmosphere in the school is not calm enough to promote the best possible climate for learning.
- The School Council provides good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility.

Commentary

8. Over the past four years, the levels of attendance have increased gradually year on year but, overall, attendance remains below the national average. Despite constant reminders of the need for prompt and regular attendance at school, levels of attendance remain below 90 per

cent and a significant number of pupils do not arrive at school and at lessons on time. Attendance statistics are adversely affected by a few pupils who have a poor attendance history when they join the school. The school works with dedication to draw these pupils into school and provide appropriate learning programmes for them. Not all parents work co-operatively with the school to ensure that their children attend regularly. Some parents do not inform the school of reasons for absence and unauthorised absence is above the national average. Attendance is monitored efficiently and there are good follow-up procedures in place. A number of pupils have a casual attitude to punctuality and arrive late to school and to lessons. Although punctuality is monitored and followed up, not all staff challenge late arrivals, missing the opportunity to reinforce the importance of promptness so that the start of lessons is not missed, nor are lessons interrupted by their late arrival. The Education Welfare Officer works in close partnership with the school and will take legal action in cases of sustained poor attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10.0	School data	1.7
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

9. Although attitudes to work are satisfactory overall, there are many pupils who show good attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons and around the school. There are limited facilities for quiet relaxation at break and lunch time, but most pupils make the best of these difficulties and mix happily together in sociable clusters. A significant minority, however, show indifference to others and can be rowdy and overexcited, causing noise and unrest. At certain points around the school and in outside play areas, firmer supervision and consistent attention to the school's very clear code of behaviour is required, especially at breaks and lunch times, but also at other times when pupils move around the school.
10. The absence of a calm atmosphere around the school affects the behaviour of pupils so that, when they get to class, some of them are slow to settle, and this can lead to unacceptable attitudes and behaviour. In some lessons, especially those that have a lively pace, interesting content and provide a variety of activities, pupils behave well and often show real enthusiasm for their work. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics class, pupils worked very conscientiously alone and in small groups investigating straight line graphs. By contrast in lessons that are not well planned and lack interest, or where the teacher's behaviour management skills are not well developed, a few pupils can become disengaged, behave in a challenging way and interrupt the learning opportunities for the whole class. There is a lack of consistency in dealing with poor behaviour in class; most teachers, but not all, use sensible strategies to manage poor behaviour as it develops, and, if necessary, call into play the support procedures, such as time out. Some parents and pupils are concerned about behaviour in school and the inspection confirms some of these concerns.
11. The school's management is very aware of the need to improve behaviour and, consequently, learning. As part of the very comprehensive care programme established within the school, there are good facilities directed by skilled staff for supporting pupils whose behaviour is difficult. There is good monitoring of behaviour, and sanctions, including exclusion, are used sensibly. When bullying and inappropriate behaviour occur, pupils know that it must be reported and accept that incidents will be dealt with quickly and fairly. Bullying and serious anti-social behaviour are rare and are not major concerns to pupils themselves, but the atmosphere around the school and in some classrooms is not as good as it could or should be. Improving the climate for learning is a major challenge for the school.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	687	57	2
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

12. Aspects of pupils' personal development, such as their spiritual awareness and their respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, are satisfactory. Well-prepared assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development, and, on the two days a week when provision for collective worship is within tutor groups, tutors are encouraged to use the "Thought for the week". However, the quality of this varies considerably. Subjects, such as religious education and music, build in opportunities for pupils to reflect upon spiritual issues; in these lessons pupils demonstrate a sensitive awareness of the spiritual dimension of life. Spirituality is taught and planned within English, especially in Years 10 and 11, where most texts encourage pupils' reflecting and discussing the spiritual aspects of life. A well-understood code of conduct seeks to promote moral development and the principles that enable pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. However, this is not always as strongly reinforced by teachers as it could be and, consequently, some pupils do not always consider the impact that their behaviour has on others. Nonetheless, in a number of subjects pupils are given good opportunities to consider moral issues and most display a good understanding of ethical questions.
13. Most pupils do have a good understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community. An active School Council provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, and there are numerous opportunities for pupils to be involved in charitable events and fund raising. Several subjects ensure that pupils are encouraged to develop a strong sense of teamwork, whilst others take positive steps to ensure that pupils work in groups. There are several residential opportunities which further pupils' sense of belonging to a community. The humanities trip to Blaenavon is a good example, and geography field visits also promote pupils' social development. Physical education, through school teams and other occasions, also makes good contributions, and opportunities through drama, music and school productions for pupils to work together collaboratively and responsibly are strong. There is also a strong sense of social involvement and inclusion in the provision for pupils with special educational needs who are fully integrated in the school. Despite some good features in the school's provision, pupils' appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions is less strongly developed. Art, music, history and geography all play a positive role in promoting cultural development, and subjects such as religious education, food technology and music endeavour to develop a deeper understanding of different cultures. Some subjects are less active in encouraging an active awareness of multi-cultural dimensions. However, the splendid link, which the school hopes to develop further, with a school in one of the townships around Cape Town in South Africa is a valuable and relevant opportunity to promote international understanding and goodwill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good in almost all year groups, though a little weaker in Year 8. The curriculum is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school cares for, and guides, its pupils very well. Partnerships with parents, the wider community, colleges and other schools are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11, though there are more lessons that are less than good in Year 8 than in the other year groups. Assessment is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nearly all teaching is done by subject specialists, most of whom convey their enthusiasm for their subject to pupils.
- Most lessons are characterised by high expectations that pupils will work hard.
- Inconsistencies in the management of pupils' behaviour in lessons adversely affects learning.
- All subjects, and specialist special educational needs provision, contain examples of very good or excellent teaching; good practice is widespread.
- Assessment procedures are comprehensive and effective.
- Not all teachers do enough to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 124 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	28 (23%)	53 (43%)	32 (26%)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)	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.

14. The overall quality of teaching is good, but there are variations. The proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching (two-thirds of the lessons observed) is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection, and the amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching is much lower. The school has put much emphasis on developing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and, overall, these strategies have been successful. Most pupils and parents believe that teaching is good, though many comment that the quality of teaching depends on the teacher. Sometimes, this is indeed the case; two of the keys to reducing, as far as possible, variations in the quality of teaching are the sharing of the good practice that exists in abundance and the elimination of inconsistent routines, particularly in the management of pupils' behaviour. Examples of very good or excellent teaching are found in all years and in all subject areas. This means that subject teams can look to their own practice, as well as that of the school as a whole, in order to see how to improve.
15. A strength of nearly all lessons is the good subject knowledge of the teachers. This subject expertise and understanding help pupils in their learning because teachers' confidence in their subject enables them to give clear guidance, to explain effectively, and, where appropriate, to demonstrate aspects of the subject. Many teachers clearly enjoy their subject and this enthusiasm rubs off on pupils who become motivated and interested to learn. Teachers' good knowledge of their subject also helps in planning the well-structured lessons that follow a logical sequence, with a variety of activities that are characteristic of much of the teaching. As a result, pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding successfully, and can apply their learning to new situations.

16. The best lessons have high expectations of what pupils will learn, proceed at a fast pace with lively activities that fully involve pupils, and cater very well for all pupils in the class. All these features came together in an excellent drama lesson with Year 8 pupils. Pupils responded with enormous enthusiasm and enjoyment to very challenging material presented in a highly stimulating way; they learned to evaluate their own and others' performances, and to bring thought and imagination to their experiences, whatever their capability. Indeed, the teacher's success in challenging all pupils to achieve their best was the key to the excellent learning that took place in this mixed ability Year 8 class. One reason why teaching and learning in Year 8 overall is not as high as in other year groups is that some teachers have more difficulties in meeting the needs of all pupils in the class, sometimes because they have problems in managing pupils' behaviour.
17. Most good and very good lessons are characterised by a fast pace with a variety of activities to enable all pupils, whatever their capability, to apply themselves to learning and to work productively. Objectives are made clear and so pupils know what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what they should achieve by the end of the lesson. Such lessons usually have a good balance between theory and practice, and between the teacher's own input and pupils' working independently or in collaboration with others in small groups with support, as necessary, from the teacher. Whole-class activities in good lessons often contain quick-fire question and answer sessions and short, sharp exercises to maintain motivation and concentration. Over time, pupils' learning is better when they have opportunities to undertake investigative and research work, and there is much evidence of good teaching that enables these skills to be developed in many subjects, including design and technology, geography and history. The use of homework to extend learning is variable in quality, but, generally, it is well used; in English, for example, homework is well used for longer pieces of writing. A feature of many of the best lessons is the opportunity at the end of the lesson for pupils to reflect on what they have learned and to evaluate their progress; this is an area for development in some otherwise very successful lessons as, sometimes, at the end of a lesson, a teacher merely recaps on the main points of the lesson, rather than involving pupils in a sharp evaluation of what has been learned.
18. Whilst teaching and learning in most lessons are good or better, some lessons, whilst satisfactory, have some weaker features. A small number of lessons were unsatisfactory or poor; in all these cases, learning was seriously disrupted because too many pupils behaved poorly. Less successful lessons are generally occasions when the pace of learning is not brisk enough to engage the interest and attention of all pupils. Common characteristics include weaker management of pupils' behaviour, insufficient challenge, not enough independent work with too much input from the teacher, inadequate catering for the needs of a wide range of pupils in the class, and a lack of clarity in pupils' minds of the lesson's objectives. Many of these factors are often inter-related, particularly in the unsatisfactory and poor lessons.
19. Pupils with special educational needs, who have additional help either individually or in small withdrawal groups, generally learn well because special needs staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of these pupils' learning and behavioural needs. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a good range of strategies and resources, including ICT, to ensure pupils learn. Effective assessments mean that teachers set targets for each pupil appropriate to their stage of learning. Pupils understand their targets, know what they are trying to achieve and are involved in assessing how well they are doing. Pupils learn well because lessons go at a good pace and activities are interesting and are frequently changed. Pupils are fully involved in the activities and know what they are trying to achieve. Learning is made enjoyable which means pupils concentrate well and try hard. Because relationships are very good, pupils are confident to try new challenges. Clear target setting means pupils can see the progress they are making which increases their confidence and self-esteem. The daily lunchtime club and the use of a commercial ICT English and mathematics programme further support pupils' learning and progress. The effectiveness of the learning of pupils with special educational needs in ordinary classes is more mixed. Where teaching assistants are present, they usually contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Unobtrusively, they prompt, remind, explain

and encourage, which helps keep pupils' attention on what is being taught; this enables pupils to participate fully and increases their learning in the lesson. However, the success of their work depends largely in the quality of liaison between the class teacher and the teaching assistant. In subjects, such as design and technology, where this liaison is good, pupils' learning is much enhanced; in some cases, liaison is less good, and, in some lessons, where additional support is needed, it is not available to support learning.

20. The school has produced a comprehensive assessment strategy document and, as a result, tracking procedures are effective. The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment are good. An exhaustive analysis of collected data contributes to developments in the curriculum and to teaching practices. As a result, the spectrum of optional subjects in Years 10 and 11 to match pupils' abilities, aptitudes and learning needs is broad; single gender classes have been introduced to assess whether pupils' learning improves through the use of specific teaching strategies in such groups. Departments are provided with a very good range of data, based on national and other tests, from which end of key stage 'projected' attainment is calculated and against which termly performance is monitored effectively. Departments use their assessment information well to determine individual targets and constructive action occurs with respect to underachieving pupils. There is particularly good practice in science, ICT, design and technology and geography where assessment for learning contributes to lesson planning. External examination grades and national test results are analysed rigorously and the resultant action has had a significant influence on standards. The challenge for the future is to ensure that all teachers make consistent use of assessment information in ways that influence their day-to-day lesson planning to cater for the different needs of all pupils in the class.

The curriculum

The curriculum as a whole is very good; it is good in Years 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for the enrichment of learning are good. The provision of staffing is good; learning resources are satisfactory, with some good features. Despite some inadequacies, accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well managed, including an annual review to consider new initiatives.
- The very effective response to curricular issues raised in the last report has now resulted in a very good curriculum, with particular strengths in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a good range of enrichment opportunities.
- Provision for pupils with complex special educational needs is very good.
- The school is well staffed by specialist teachers who have good command of their subject.
- Many classes in Years 8 and 9, particularly in science and mathematics, have more than one teacher; this adversely affects continuity in their learning.

Commentary

21. The curriculum provides good learning opportunities in Years 8 and 9. All the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education are met, and there is good provision for drama. In addition, the weekly lesson in personal, social and health education (PSHE) contributes well to pupils' personal development. There is a good overall balance between the subjects, although the allocation of time for some subjects, for example music and art and design, is a little low. Lessons are grouped according to the wishes of curriculum team leaders. For some subjects, pupils in Year 8 are placed in sets based on attainment in their middle schools; in others, they are taught in mixed ability groups which means there is a very wide range of ability in each class. More subjects use sets in Year 9 to cater better for this wide gap between high and low attaining pupils. There are also some experimental groupings of pupils in single gender classes. In a comparatively small secondary school with a wide variety of grouping methods in Years 8 and 9 and a very broad range of options and groupings in Years 10 and 11, inevitably, some compromises have to be made in the construction of the timetable. One compromise is

that several classes, especially in science and mathematics, have more than one teacher in Years 8 and 9. This causes difficulty for continuity, and a single period with a second teacher is sometimes not the best arrangement for effective learning and adversely affects standards. The school is right to review its curriculum each year, and it needs to regularly evaluate its grouping arrangements in Years 8 and 9 very carefully to ensure that all pupils receive the maximum possible learning opportunities.

22. There is a wide and very good range of opportunities in Years 10 and 11 through the introduction of vocational and skills-based courses, alongside the more traditional GCSE courses. Response to issues raised in the last inspection report has been very good. The current curriculum programme is innovative and inclusive, and provides exciting opportunities for pupils. It provides well for the needs of all pupils, including the gifted and talented. The school has an effective programme of meetings with pupils and parents to help pupils to make an informed choice from the wide range of courses available. There is a particularly good range of vocational opportunities because of the very good liaison between the schools in Exeter, and with Exeter College. All pupils have access to courses within which they have the opportunity to succeed. Some are forward looking and show creative thinking. For example, within modern foreign languages, vocationally based Spanish courses at different levels and Italian are taught alongside the more traditional GCSE French course. As a result, more pupils are enjoying success in a modern foreign language at St Luke's than is found in many other schools. The school, therefore, is making good use of the growing flexibility in the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11; cases of disapplication from the National Curriculum are correctly handled.
23. The range of accredited courses relevant to pupils with special educational needs is appropriate and is being developed further. For example, Year 10 pupils following the ASDAN course are motivated and being challenged to succeed. The inclusive philosophy and practice of the school very effectively supports pupils' learning, enabling them to have full access to the curriculum. Individual education plans have clear targets that all understand. Those who have weak reading and spelling skills receive additional help both by withdrawal for individual work and small group work, and by support in ordinary classes. Numbers of support staff for pupils with special educational needs are high and they contribute very significantly to the very wide range of provision to support pupils' personal, social and learning needs, particularly for those with complex special needs. Whilst their overall deployment and use are very good, there are some classes, especially mixed ability groups, where the absence of a teaching assistant means that pupils with special needs do not receive the additional support they need. However, the deployment of teaching assistants is particularly effective in some subject areas, such as design and technology, where a specific assistant is assigned to that area. Curriculum provision for the very few pupils at an early stage of English acquisition is satisfactory. They receive a planned programme of individual lessons, which helps them to acquire the structure and vocabulary they need for the rest of their studies.
24. There are good opportunities for enrichment through the good range of clubs and activities organised by the school. This term's school production, written by a pupil with music by two teachers, is a major contribution to the school's enrichment opportunities involving many pupils and staff. The physical education and music departments provide a wide range of activities. Most, but not all, activities are well supported by pupils. A number of subjects arrange revision classes in the run-up to examinations, and a very commendable programme of day and residential study activities is giving further opportunities to pupils to hone their skills and enhance their learning. This is part of a comprehensive programme to raise standards in Year 11. There is an Enrichment Week in July, when all pupils can benefit from sampling a very wide range of activities. In Year 11, the curriculum is further enhanced by the opportunity for pupils to undertake a work experience placement. This is open to all pupils, most of whom speak very favourably about the value of their placement. Their reactions to this contribution to understanding and experiencing the world of work during the two weeks of their placement are closely monitored by the school. Further enrichment is provided by specialist topics for selected year groups, such as a European Day for Year 8, and an Industry Day for Year 9.

Events such as these contribute to a broad cross-curricular consideration of important matters and to the overall citizenship programme.

25. The school has ambitious plans to make more effective provision for gifted and talented pupils. Although there has been only limited progress so far, the plans are beginning to be implemented effectively as the school has used additional funding to create two posts for co-ordinating provision for gifted and talented pupils. A register of gifted and talented pupils has been established, in-service training is being planned, and a number of initiatives, such as producing a portfolio of good practice, are being developed.
26. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. Only a very small number of lessons are taught by non-specialists. During the last two years there has been an increased turnover of teaching staff, resulting in the appointment of a number of younger teachers. These have contributed to a renewed sense of purpose in many subjects in their approach towards teaching and learning. All teachers are provided with good opportunities to enhance their expertise through attendance at courses for professional development. The quality of technical support is very good.
27. Resources are satisfactory and have generally been updated and maintained since the previous inspection. In mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education, resources are good and make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning. Vocational education is also well resourced and helps provide a very good curriculum for many of the pupils in Years 10 and 11. The number of computers is average for a school of this size and they are networked in different areas of the school, making it possible for most teachers to book a class session in a computer suite. The use of electronic white-boards is increasing and, during the inspection, proved both stimulating and effective as a teaching tool. Most departments have appropriate spending plans, with ICT high on the agenda. The only unsatisfactory provision is in English where there are not enough up-to-date reading books. The learning resource centre manager is transforming the effectiveness of the learning resource centre (library) so that the range of resources available for individual research by pupils and for curriculum topics is now much enhanced and relevant. There is good co-ordination between the centre manager, senior staff and other staff; she is developing good strategies to increase pupils' use of the centre.
28. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory for the demands of the curriculum, though there are inadequacies in drama and physical education, which restrict the range of activities. Toilets are sub-standard and pupils do not have adequate indoor recreational space at breaks and lunchtimes. However, the caretaker and his staff do an admirable job to make the shabby and ageing premises as attractive and clean as possible. The learning environment is also considerable enhanced by the excellent displays of work in the corridors and in classrooms; the valuable work of support staff is having a noticeable effect.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good care, support and guidance for all pupils. There are very good and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils have good opportunities to express their views, which are valued and respected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection procedures are well managed.
- Very good attention is given to matters of health and safety and the welfare of pupils.
- An active School Council promotes the views of pupils and contributes to the development of the school.
- The comprehensive network of care is very well used to support pupils.
- Arrangements for the induction of new pupils are good.
- Very good links with agencies are used effectively to support the care provided by the school.

Commentary

29. The school has a well-deserved reputation for providing very good care, guidance and support for all pupils, and all staff place great importance on the guidance and welfare of pupils. Child protection matters are well managed with the designated person having the support of two senior colleagues, and there are clear and sensible procedures for medicines in school and the care of pupils who are unwell. Regular inspections of the premises and equipment are carried out; the one health and safety concern identified during the inspection was noted immediately by the school. Although the school buildings and outdoor facilities show signs of ageing, every effort is made to keep them in good order and safe. Toilets facilities were raised as a concern by some pupils and parents; the toilets are dated and there are barely enough of them, but they are kept fresh and tidy during the school day by regular inspections and cleaning. Regrettably, there is some misuse of them, including smoking, by some pupils, and the school needs to be constantly vigilant so that all pupils feel able to use them without concern or anxiety.
30. Staff know pupils well and provide consistently very good advice and guidance to help all pupils to achieve their best. Heads of year and tutors move up the school with the same year group; they build strong relationships with the pupils and a good understanding of pupils' academic and personal development. Pastoral care and academic monitoring are now seen as one unit to support each pupil and the school has worked well over the last 18 months or so to achieve this unity. A valuable new initiative to support this has been the introduction of academic tutor days held twice each year. Tutors meet with pupils and their parents to review progress, set and review targets and discuss any issues that arise. This provides a valuable link with parents; it also strengthens the partnership between the academic and pastoral development of pupils, because their achievement and performance in subject areas and their behaviour and personal development are all considered together. Pupils value the care provided by the school and feel confident in confiding their problems to a chosen member of staff. A few pupils felt that they were not always treated with respect by staff, but the inspection found no evidence of this, rather the opposite, with staff showing courtesy and consideration for pupils. Very good relationships with pupils were a strong feature in many of the lessons seen, as well as in the exchanges between staff and pupils around the school.
31. A number of initiatives and appointments have been made to extend and support the care provided by teaching staff, forming a well linked and very supportive care network. The school counsellor and the pastoral care co-ordinator are very valuable members of the school community, sharing problems and assessing the needs of pupils discreetly and professionally as well as providing advice and guidance for pastoral staff to support pupils in their care in the most effective way. The inclusion manager, based in the Faraday Centre, complements and extends the network by providing specific additional help with behaviour and learning needs and linking the school very efficiently with a range of outside agencies. Staff expectations are high and pupils respond appropriately. The highly structured and rigorously applied behaviour system in the Faraday Centre is well understood by all staff and pupils and very effectively supports the improving behaviour of disaffected pupils. The learning mentor, who works with individual pupils, and the behaviour community nurse, who works in school with individual pupils with severe emotional needs, add considerably to the high quality of support made available to pupils. Indeed, the multi-disciplinary team work is a feature of the special educational needs provision; staff effectively complement each other to provide maximum support. Pupils are treated as individuals and their needs are carefully assessed so that they are placed within the complex network of care in the best position to help them. Many elements of the extended care package provided by the school are new and still bedding in, but are clearly providing a sensitive and flexible response to pupils' complex needs. Management and monitoring of such a comprehensive care network are vital to its ongoing success and the school is aware of this. Currently, management and monitoring, through regular discussion and development meetings of the team, are effective. The strength of the pastoral support for pupils and the commitment of staff is a key feature of the school.

32. Arrangements for settling pupils into Year 8 are sensitive and well-organised and parents value this. Mathematics and design and technology teachers also work with pupils from local feeder schools, getting to know pupils and providing a valuable dimension to their learning. Similarly good links have been developed with Exeter College both in terms of the vocational courses followed by pupils and in providing information and guidance about the opportunities for further education. Good care is taken to inform and guide pupils in their choices for GCSE and vocational studies, and also in their options at the end of Year 11. Parents are well involved in the process and they are provided with good information to support their children in the choices they make about their future. The Connexions service provides help with careers advice, which supports the caring work of the school staff responsible for careers guidance in school.
33. The views and responsibilities of pupils to the school community are evident through the work of the School Council which meets on a regular basis and works in close partnership with the Year Councils. During the inspection, meetings for the Year 10 and 11 councils were observed. Discussions showed a commitment to promoting the welfare of other pupils, as well as the development of the school as a whole. Pupils discussed the arrangements they were making for attending a meeting of the Exeter Youth Forum at Exeter Guildhall and plans for a non-uniform day to support the British Heart Foundation charity. The views and ideas of pupils are sought and valued by the school and contribute to the school's very inclusive and caring ethos.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has extended and improved its links with parents, the community and other educational institutions. Links are continuing to improve and are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views are sought regularly and valued.
- There are good and improving links with other schools and colleges, and also with Exeter University.
- Various community and business links are well used to provide extended learning opportunities for pupils.
- A good range of clear and helpful information is provided for parents.

Commentary

34. Most parents are pleased with many aspects of the school. They are happy that their children like school, make good progress and are encouraged to work hard and do their best. Parents also feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have problems or concerns. Some parents are concerned about homework; the inspection found that homework provision is generally satisfactory though too variable at times. However, the school planner is not consistently well used as a link between home and the school. Its potential as a straightforward, speedy and effective means of communication is not exploited sufficiently, nor does it always serve as a way that pupils, tutors and parents can monitor and evaluate homework in partnership. Nonetheless, the school works hard to maintain and improve its positive partnership with parents, but teachers often feel frustrated that there is not a better response from parents. Parents are often reluctant to become closely involved with the life of the school or to gain from the events and training initiatives that are run. For example, the St Luke's Investors in Parents project to support parents in the transition phase from middle to senior school provided a series of talks on parenting teenagers, but met with only limited support. Parents do, however support achievement evenings and other whole school events well.
35. Parents are kept well informed about what is happening by regular newsletters and information from the school. The prospectus and Governors' Annual Report to parents have improved since the last inspection and provide valuable information. Pupils' annual reports are clear and well structured, setting out helpfully what pupils have studied and how well they have done with their work. However, the targets that are set to help identify how pupils can improve their work

are not consistent and sometimes generalised; this means they are limited in pointing the way to specific improvement. Procedures for dealing with complaints are efficient and effective. The views of parents are valued by the school and sought on a regular basis. New initiatives, for example, academic tutor days, are followed up by a canvassing of parents' views to determine the value and strength of the initiative. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. The arrangements for annual reviews and transition reviews for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need are well organised and managed, and fully involve parents.

36. The contribution of the community to pupils' achievement is good and they are encouraged to join in a range of local events and initiatives. The vocational programme arranged by the school links pupils with a range of local employers for work experience placements, as well as more long term vocational experience. Pupils are generous in their response to charities, both local and national, and perform in productions which are open to the community. Regular visitors to the school such as local clergy and theatre groups, as well as field trips and excursions, bring a valuable extra dimension to classroom studies. Links to local agencies are well used and effectively co-ordinated by the school to extend the very good pastoral and academic guidance for pupils. For example, Devon Youth Service is involved in two projects with Year 10 and 11 pupils to improve achievement, self-esteem and attendance. The education psychologist is working with selected students in Year 8 and 9 in training groups to improve their social skills. There is a valuable international community link that has been forged with the Thandokhulu High School in Cape Town, South Africa. The two schools recently shared an industry day and there are plans for regular links through video conferencing. It is of great value for pupils to learn about and work with pupils of the same age in other parts of the world and understand something about their lives. The school premises are also available for community use and have a range of regular and occasional bookings.
37. The links with local feeder schools and a range of other education establishments is a notably good feature of the school. The reorganisation of secondary education provision will reduce the number of feeder schools to four main ones, but good and expanding links are currently extended to 14 middle schools. School links through the Leadership Incentive Grant, which provides some additional funding and support for schools in challenging circumstances, are being refined and strengthened. Subject departments, as well as pastoral staff, develop a good understanding of the feeder schools and build a good knowledge of pupils before they join the school. The links with Exeter and Bicton Colleges are well developed and very effective in supporting the vocational curriculum for senior pupils. The school is also participating in research projects undertaken by the University of Exeter such as work on understanding adolescent depression. Initiatives such as these are seized eagerly and links to other institutions forged; they are used effectively for the benefit of the pupils and the future development of the school. The school is increasingly well placed to move forward in its growth, balancing carefully the benefits of expansion of new initiatives with the inclusion and careful assessment of the needs of individual pupils within the school community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The school is very well governed, and the headteacher and senior managers provide very good leadership, which gives the school a clear sense of purpose. All statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is highly principled, well established and promotes an inclusive and caring school.
- The senior management team has been re-structured and extended; it is well equipped to take the school forward.
- The governing body makes a major contribution to leadership and positively influences the work of the school and its policies.

- Some aspects of day-to-day management of school routines are not as effective as they should be.
- Developments are well monitored and evaluated; the planning and evaluation cycles of the school and governing body are well linked.
- There is a clarity of vision and sense of purpose which is shared throughout the school.
- Strategic planning and financial management are very good.

Commentary

38. The positive aspects of the leadership and management of the school identified in the previous inspection report have been extended and the school is now poised to undergo major new developments including relocation to a new green field site. The school is also making a bid for joint Sports and Science College status. Careful planning has gone into the preparation for these changes and the school is well placed to move forward with confidence. Recent successes in the school have been recognised by a number of awards, including Sportsmark, Investors in Parents and Investors in Education Business Partnership.
39. The governing body is very supportive of the school, is well organised with a strong committee structure, and is dedicated to providing the very best for all pupils. Through their committees and curriculum links, governors are fully involved in all stages of policy formulation, planning and scrutiny. Governors bring a good range of skills to their role. They have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this enables them to be very influential in the vision they have for the school. Governors are linked with all subject departments, helping to strengthen their knowledge of the school, its staff and its pupils. The planning, development and evaluation cycle of the school is closely linked to the governors' own management cycle, promoting very good governance of the whole school. Governors are able to carry out their role of critical friends very well, providing criticism as well as praise. Very good relationships exist between the governors and senior staff, based on mutual respect, so that ideas and problems are shared and discussed in a full and open manner, new plans evaluated and initiatives carefully evaluated and costed.
40. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, striving for improvement and making the best possible provision for all pupils. He provides very good and dedicated leadership showing energy and enthusiasm for all that the school has achieved and developments that are planned. The headteacher is very well supported by a strong management team who work together well and their leadership is very good. Recent developments in the school have been based upon a very clear assessment of priorities and linked with important senior staff appointments that have strengthened and re-vitalised the senior leadership team. For a number of years, staffing and financial difficulties had held back developments, but these difficulties are now resolved so that improvement is now rapid. Management is good overall, with many very good features. The school has recently extended and improved the arrangements it makes for the care and guidance of pupils with a comprehensive yet very sensitive network of units and specialist staff to augment the care and guidance already provided. The new initiatives are well co-ordinated and monitored. However, less effective than other areas is the management of behaviour in the school. The-day-to day routines for controlling behaviour and supervising pupils are not consistent and there is a variable approach among staff to enforcing school rules; as a result, some pupils are not convinced of the need to respect and follow the school code of behaviour.
41. Staff at all levels share the vision for the future of the school and show a determined commitment to provide the highest level of care possible for all students, and ensure that all gain from their time at the school. Senior managers are able to carry out their roles with autonomy in a climate of mutual respect. They have complementary skills and have brought a new momentum to the development of the school, the promotion of improved standards, more responsive and personalised levels of care and a commitment to inclusion. Behaviour and learning are seen as interlinked keys to enable all pupils to thrive, mature and achieve the very best they can. The strategic plan for the school is clear, evaluative and well-costed. It is

regularly reviewed and takes account of all partners in the school community in its overriding aim to improve standards that pupils attain and their levels of achievement.

42. Subject management is good overall and very good in science, ICT, and design and technology. In most subjects, organisation is good; there is a realistic evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and a clear sense of direction for future improvement. Leadership of special educational needs by senior managers and the special educational needs co-ordinator is very good. The belief in, and passion for, achieving the best for every child, academically, socially and personally is very effectively supported by an exciting vision and innovative practice. Very clear strategic planning has enabled innovative multi-agency working in school to support all aspects of each pupil's development. Support staff are highly motivated to work effectively as a team.
43. Teaching and learning are monitored on a regular cycle and all teachers are observed teaching with well-defined criteria for evaluation; feedback is given and training needs are highlighted in the school's drive to improve standards and the learning experience for all pupils. There is good provision for staff professional development which balances meeting the school's priorities for improvement with the identified professional development needs of individual staff. In the last academic year, there were a number of appointments of newly qualified teachers. The induction arrangements made for these staff and other new appointments are very thorough with a well-structured support programme within the school, sensibly linked to the local authority's provision. The school plays an active part in initial teacher training, working constructively with students from a number of teacher training establishments.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,187,919
Total expenditure	2,174,077
Expenditure per pupil	3,040

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	1,050
Balance carried forward to the next	13,842

44. Financial management is very good. The annual budget is clearly allocated to support planned developments. Financial controls are well managed. At a time when the move to new premises is imminent, care has been taken to ensure that the existing school premises are maintained in a sound condition and all health and safety matters properly supervised. The school has been both astute and successful in attracting important additional funding from local and national initiatives, several of them specifically aimed at schools in challenging circumstances. Newly acquired funding has been used very well to make new staff appointments which have greatly strengthened the leadership team of the school, as well as further developing the care provision for pupils and their academic success. For example, some of the grant is being used to fund initiatives for gifted and talented pupils. The school is eagerly awaiting the move to a new site and premises funded as part of the re-organisation of schools in Exeter. All funds, large and small, are managed very judiciously. Subject departments have an allocated budget but can bid for additional funding from a contingency budget which is carefully administered, balancing all bids against identified priorities in the school. The school is prudent in its use of resources. Through careful evaluation of how successfully identified priorities are met, how effective the education it provides is, and how well it meets the aspirations of parents and pupils, the school applies the principles of best value well.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus was on **English** and **French**, but **Spanish** and **Italian** were also sampled. The curriculum offers a very good range of languages in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2003 in Italian, after only two years of study, were average for the small group entered; pupils achieved well in relation to their overall attainment in the national tests two years earlier. Spanish has only just been introduced into Year 10, and both GCSE and a foundation level vocational course are taught. Four lessons were sampled, and the teaching was predominantly good. Pupils are learning new vocabulary well and successfully using it in their listening and speaking work.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables most pupils to learn well.
- The curriculum is well planned and the National Literacy Strategy is used well in Years 8 and 9.
- Leadership of the department is good.
- Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they might, because of the need to plan work for a very wide range of abilities in most classes.
- The behaviour and productivity of a significant minority hinders achievement in the subject and there are insufficient support staff to help with this problem.

Commentary

45. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 rose significantly in 2003 from below the national average to above it, with well above average progress based on pupils' earlier attainment. Pupils' work during the inspection indicates that present Year 9 pupils are on course to meet the national average. By the end of Year 11, standards are below the national average, and especially so in English Literature. Achievement in Year 11 is satisfactory, when measured against the levels obtained in Year 9 tests. However, it is clear that standards are now improving rapidly by the end of Year 9 and steadily by the end of Year 11. Indeed, when compared with their well below average test scores at the end of Year 6, there is very good achievement for most pupils in Years 8 and 9. This is attributable to the good new programmes of work in these years, following the National Literacy Strategy, the changes in staffing which have taken place in the last two years, bringing in several energetic and lively young teachers, good teaching and good leadership of the department. There has been little significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys and pupils with special learning difficulties achieve well, while the very few for whom English is not a first language achieve satisfactorily.
46. Although most pupils are keen to contribute in class, only a minority speak fluently and are able to communicate in a sustained and coherent manner. Language is often over-colloquial and pupils find it hard to structure their speech and to realise that different kinds of speech suit different purposes. Listening skills are often weak, so that pupils do not always absorb what teachers tell them. Reading skills are technically sound and many pupils read fluently, though many find it difficult to read for comprehension and with full understanding, particularly when reading. They do not often present what they read with expression when reading aloud, despite teachers' constant attempts to help them do so. Most pupils are able to write in a good range of styles for many purposes and many write at length and with interest and effort. However, in the vast majority of classes, there is a significant minority of pupils with behavioural problems who provide a constant level of disruption. This means that teachers have to waste time in dealing

with the problem, thus hindering the achievement of the rest of the class; higher attaining pupils are often held back by the inevitable slowing of the pace of the lesson. There are high quality support staff to help pupils with significant learning needs in lessons, but too few to aid teachers to overcome the problems of disruptive behaviour. When written work is done in lessons, these pupils fail to work with interest and the energy to complete enough written work in the allocated time to help them to practise for test and examination conditions.

47. There is a good range of intervention and revision classes, in the evenings and in the holidays. Some extension activities are provided to stimulate the higher attaining pupils. There are theatre trips and visits to support pupils' learning, a celebration of National Poetry Day and the establishment of a Carnegie Award reading circle. The work of the department contributes significantly to pupils' social and cultural development, particularly in the prominence it attaches to citizenship and to the culture of various times and places as seen through literary texts.
48. Teaching is good overall and some very good lessons were observed. The vast majority of lessons were at least satisfactory. The quality of learning broadly matches the quality of teaching. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and are competent in teaching literacy skills in all required areas. Lessons are well planned for the majority of pupils, though frequently the range of ability in classes is too wide to provide well for the needs of all pupils. Teachers use methods which are varied and calculated to keep pupils' attention focused on their work, with enjoyment, and provide them all with a high level of encouragement. Resources are used to good effect and teachers set and mark homework regularly and productively. Teachers use homework well to enable pupils to complete longer pieces of work, such as coursework. They do not always, however, manage the disruptive behaviour of some pupils well, so that the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow, pupils do not work as productively as they might, the challenge offered to higher attaining pupils is too low and too many pupils do not work with independence.
49. The department's team of stable and dedicated teachers is well led by the head of department, who has a clear understanding of how the subject can improve further, is making effective changes to the curriculum and presents a good role model to both staff and pupils. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Although teaching and learning are carefully monitored and teachers know their pupils and their capabilities well, assessment is not put to the best possible use in ensuring that all abilities are catered for as well as possible. The data available from pupils' records and past performance is too seldom acted upon in order to create the best atmosphere and environment for all pupils to fulfil their potential. Improvement in the six years since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
50. The department's suite of teaching rooms provides satisfactory accommodation, but resources in the form of books are unsatisfactory for reference and research purposes. ICT is being used well in the teaching of English and in helping pupils to improve their literacy skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. The school has been aware of the need to co-ordinate language and literacy work across the curriculum for just over a year. The initial temporary co-ordinator has now been replaced by a member of the English department, who has already taken many steps to ensure that all curriculum areas are aware of and involved in the need for their participation in raising standards of literacy. Many of these measures, such as a full literacy audit of all departments in the school and the provision of specific key word lists for all subjects, are beginning to have an appreciable effect on whole school literacy. Already, there is some good practice evident in drama, science and humanities, as well as in English, though some departments are as yet reluctant to take on what they perceive as an extra workload.
52. Despite improvements, literacy skills throughout the school are below average because of the low level of pupils' attainment on entry to the school; further improvement is necessary. Each tutorial group now has an organised period of literacy every week, with work provided and

monitored by the co-ordinator. Strong support is now offered to pupils entering the school with levels of literacy below the national average and extra-curricular activities, such as an after-school 'Word Play' club are now taking place. These developments are commendable, but, as yet, there is no formal whole school policy; this is the next priority.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is well led and managed.
- Pupils' speaking skills in Years 8 and 9 are below average, and they lack confidence.
- Teachers are contributing well to pupils' cultural development.

Commentary

53. Results in the GCSE examinations at grades A*-C in 2003 in French, with the majority of the year group having been entered, were well below average, but showed an improvement over 2002. Results at grades A*-G were average. Overall, pupils' achievement in French at GCSE was satisfactory in relation to standards at the end of Year 9. A number of pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils, achieved very well, but a number of pupils, mainly lower-attaining boys, achieved less well.
54. Pupils' standards in French when they enter the school are well below average overall. By Year 9, standards in French in work seen during the inspection in Year 9 are below average, although higher attaining pupils are already working at the expected level, and average pupils are working towards this level. Many pupils can, for example, use and recognise the perfect tense. Their oral skills are, however, below average, with some higher attaining pupils hesitant with their answers. Pupils' standards by Year 11 are also below average, though the introduction of coursework is helping to raise standards because pupils are familiar with the topics. In this coursework in Years 10 and 11, pupils display a range of relevant vocabulary and different tenses, with varying degrees of accuracy. Many pupils achieve well, but, overall, their achievement is satisfactory because, at times, they are not pushed hard enough. Over time, they are acquiring a sound knowledge of topic vocabulary, which enables them to complete listening and reading tasks satisfactorily. They gradually learn how different constructions and tenses are formed, with an emphasis on grammatical terms. Pupils with educational needs are well provided for, and support assistants work very effectively with them; as teachers also match tasks to their needs, these pupils generally achieve well.
55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects; they generally manage pupils well, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. The good relationships set the right atmosphere for learning. Lessons start and finish formally, with a greeting in the foreign language, which also sets a positive tone for learning. Many lessons begin with a revision activity to challenge pupils' prior learning. Teachers then tell pupils what has to be learned, so that they know what the focus of their learning will be during the lesson. Teachers check regularly that pupils understand their work, and help pupils with their learning by citing good examples of similar words in French and English; for example, linking *donner* to *donation* meant that pupils had a better chance of retaining the meaning of the word. Planning usually includes different tasks and skills for pupils of different levels of attainment, but often fails to include good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, for example, by their asking questions or reading aloud. Evaluation at the end of a lesson does not always focus sharply enough on what pupils have retained. Because of these factors and pupils' not always being pushed as hard as they might be, overall achievement is not yet as high as it could be. Nonetheless, teachers use resources well and mark pupils' written work regularly, helping pupils to understand how they can improve their work.

56. The department is well led and managed, and teachers contribute well to pupils' cultural development by emphasising various aspects of the culture of all the taught languages, contact with native French speakers, very good displays and visits to Normandy. The curriculum has been enhanced by a very good range of different languages at varying levels in Years 10 and 11. This is a commendable and far-sighted development, in the light of the national trend of the decreasing study of modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, and it provides pupils with opportunities that match their linguistic ability and interests. The opportunity to study a second modern foreign language is open to all pupils. ICT has been developed well, particularly in Years 8 and 9, as a way of motivating pupils through different styles of teaching. Overall, developments since the last inspection have been positive and improvement has been good. With the good leadership and management and recent very positive developments, the department is well placed to improve further the overall provision for modern foreign languages.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been well introduced in lessons, supported by a developing scheme of work which caters well for pupils of all abilities.
- Teaching and learning are good overall; because teachers are aware of the next steps needed in pupils' learning, standards are continuing to improve.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good.
- Monitoring and evaluation of existing and new policies and initiatives are not strong enough to judge their effectiveness.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT within mathematics.
- Displays of pupils' work and other locally produced posters and resources are excellent.

Commentary

57. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were below average; however, pupils' achievement was good in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school, which was well below average. Standards were broadly average when compared to similar schools. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were below average but not significantly so; boys performed better than girls. Pupils' achievements, compared to their standards in the national tests two years earlier at the end of Year 9, were good. Standards in GCSE statistics were broadly in line with the national average. Current standards of work in mathematics across the school are below average though work seen by higher attaining pupils is broadly average with some good features. Achievement is overall good.
58. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 8 and 9. Teachers' good command of the subject is evident in their planning, their teaching methods and their explanations. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and, often, there is a good balance between theory and practice. Good use is made of existing ICT facilities; for example, Year 9 pupils investigated the sum of the internal angles of various polygons. Pupils have the capacity to work independently and collaboratively. However, the absence of key words and statements in pupils' books undermines their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils benefit from 'quick-fire' questions, sometimes linked to the main learning objective as part of the National Numeracy Strategy; however, use of the end of lesson review, to give some understanding of how well pupils are progressing, is underdeveloped. Relationships between teacher and pupil are good and pupils respond well to directed questions; as a result, the pace of lessons is brisk. Homework is set regularly, though the quality of marking and comments about ways to improve are inconsistent.

59. Teaching and learning are also good overall in Years 10 and 11. Innovative teaching methods and high quality resources help pupils to understand new ideas quickly. For example, Year 11 average and lower-attaining pupils regularly experience team teaching which results in effective collaborative working methods and good progress by pupils. Good use is made of 'bite size' activities to help sustain concentration and motivation. Teachers are successful in encouraging and engaging pupils in their work, which reflects their own interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers are aware of the next steps pupils need to take in their learning and anticipate problems early. Work is intellectually demanding; for example, Year 11 higher-attaining pupils could identify and work with recurring decimals, though there were insufficient opportunities for them to practise the newly taught skills. Procedures for assessment are good. Pupils are aware of their GCSE target grades and what to do to improve, though the quality of some pupils' files does not aid review and revision and poor work often goes unchallenged.
60. Leadership and management are good, with good improvement since the previous inspection. Much has been done to address outstanding issues and establish a committed, cohesive and hardworking team of specialist teaching staff. Inventive teaching strategies, including a detailed analysis of data, have resulted in some innovative developments in the curriculum and have contributed to rising standards. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well and schemes of work are currently under review. Sharing good practice is a feature of the department, though the monitoring and evaluation of existing and new policies and initiatives are not strong enough to accurately judge their effectiveness. Opportunities for all pupils to have access to ICT are limited by a booking system. The department has no graphic calculators or interactive whiteboards to improve the pace and depth of learning, and the limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT also restrict the range of learning. However, pupils' displays of work, classroom posters, and the quality of the resource material produced by the department, are outstanding, giving much encouragement to pupils to do well in the subject. Furthermore, by being approachable and prepared to use their time out of lessons to provide additional 'drop-in' support, teachers are giving yet more encouragement to pupils to achieve well in mathematics.

Example of outstanding practice

Learning in a lower attaining Year 9 class was excellent because of stimulating and challenging teaching which met the needs of all pupils.

A brisk mental starter used pupils' imagination to 'picture' the properties of a cube, square-based pyramid and tetrahedron. The weakest pupils were helped by reference to straw models displayed from the ceiling of the classroom. The teacher continued the theatrical illusion with discussion of the compound objects produced. Pupils enjoyed the fantasy, responding very well to a variety of open-ended questions. The main activity followed on from the previous lesson on area, which pupils recalled fully, and which was the foundation to the teacher's delightfully clear explanation of volume, using a simple ream of A4 paper. As a result, pupils ascertained the learning objective for themselves. Anticipating pupils' poor spatial awareness, the teacher spent time illustrating the technique of drawing 3D objects in two dimensions. The concept of volume was reinforced with different exercises, meeting the different needs of a wide range of ability. With pupils clearly well used to working extremely productively, they all became engrossed in the tasks and made excellent progress. Interesting and innovative ways of checking pupils' understanding by the teacher served to sustain concentration and motivation. Working in pairs, pupils were encouraged to be reflective and evaluative of one another's efforts when marking what they had achieved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons, and other departments have systematically planned for the development of mathematics across the curriculum. In almost all subjects, and particularly in science and design and technology, schemes of work identify what pupils are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms. Departments' policies, by and large, reflect the whole school numeracy policy. There are particular strengths in handling data and shape, space and measurement. Overall the contribution of lessons to mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory though uncoordinated. Reference to numeracy is not monitored or evaluated, and an audit of existing

practice and methods is incomplete. However, numeracy is included in the School Improvement Plan within the section on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and a numeracy coordinator has been appointed. Training for all the school staff on raising awareness of numeracy has taken place and is ongoing. 'Booster classes' and arrangements for improving standards of lower-attaining pupils are in place. Additional support using a commercial software package is planned for all pupils in Years 8 and 9; this has the potential to raise standards significantly. Currently pupils' numeracy skills are developed sufficiently to ensure that they have full access to the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good, and there is excellent teamwork.
- Teaching is good overall, and often very good, resulting in good learning.
- There are regular assessments of pupils' work, and standards are improving.
- There are ambitious plans for the future.
- There is still a shortage of technician time, as reported in the last inspection.

Commentary

62. The standard of work in science when pupils enter the school is well below average. In 2003, national test results in Year 9 improved significantly compared with 2002, but were still just below average. Nevertheless, this represents good achievement during Years 8 and 9. Girls, in particular, improved their performance, and their results now compare favourably with those of boys. Results were lower than pupils gained in English, but similar to those in mathematics. Standards are in line with those of pupils in similar schools. There are some discrepancies between test scores and teachers' assessments of pupils' standards.
63. Results in Year 11 in 2003 were well below average, as they had been when these pupils were in Year 9. Their achievement during Years 10 and 11 was, therefore, satisfactory. About one third of pupils gained one of the higher grades A*-C, an increase on 2002. A small group of pupils entered the three separate science examinations. Their achievement was satisfactory in biology and chemistry, but unsatisfactory in physics. Overall, boys performed better than girls.
64. The quality of work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are improving. This was particularly evident in Years 9 and 10. Pupils in Year 8 enjoy practical work, but their written work remains well below average at present, and there is often insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils. In Year 9, standards are now average, and pupils' achievements are good across the ability range. In Year 11, standards remain below average. The improvement in the quality of teaching has not made such a big impact on these pupils, and a significant minority have a casual attitude to their work; overall achievement in Year 11 is satisfactory. By contrast, pupils in Year 10 have a more positive approach to work, and their standards are therefore higher, with good achievement.
65. Teaching is good overall, with many very good features. Teachers work closely together to devise strategies to make learning interesting. They clearly enjoy their work, and this is conveyed to pupils. There are high expectations that pupils should think about their work, and be involved in lessons. The majority of pupils find these methods of learning fun, and therefore respond well. Lesson time is used to the full; very good liaison with the technician means that lessons start promptly, though the shortage of technician time does mean that the support that can be given to teachers is limited, and, on occasions, this restricts learning opportunities for pupils. However, the use of modern technology and computers is improving some specific opportunities for learning. Teachers make a good contribution to the development of pupils'

number and literacy skills. The marking of work is mostly regular, and provides good guidance for pupils on how to improve.

66. The leadership and management provided by a relatively new curriculum team leader are very good. Teamwork is excellent, with a common purpose of improving standards. There are regular assessments of pupils' work to check on standards. There are also frequent reviews of the work of the department by teachers, by governors, and by the local authority. There has also been a survey of pupils' opinions. These reports help to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision, so that, over time, improvements can be introduced. There is also regular observation of teaching in order to discuss and refine teachers' management skills, and increase pupils' learning. All teachers have detailed records of each pupil's test scores; these are used as the basis of target grades to encourage pupils to aim high in their examinations.
67. Since the previous inspection in January 1998, the subject has made satisfactory progress. For some time results declined, but they are now rising again. Since the appointment of the new curriculum team leader, more priority is being given to developing pupils' involvement in their learning, and their interest in science. As a result, there is increasing enthusiasm for the subject and improving achievement. Furthermore, the school is involved in an ambitious bid for specialist status in sports and science, which promises improved opportunities for the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Good, and often very good, teaching means that pupils' achievement is good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy learning.
- Thorough assessment is used well to inform planning and help pupils improve.
- Not all subject areas exploit ICT sufficiently in their teaching and learning.

Commentary

68. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, the teachers' assessments show that standards of boys were average and girls were below average. Current standards are average but with rather fewer than usual pupils reaching the higher levels. However, this represents good achievement by both boys and girls in Years 8 and 9 because they enter the school with lower than average knowledge and skills; they are successfully learning to use ICT in a range of ways to support their learning. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examination were well below average, with poor achievement for both boys and girls. However, current standards show a very marked improvement. Pupils taking the GNVQ in Year 11 are now at above average standards overall, with a good number aiming for the pass with merit level. Standards in pupils not taking the examination are lower; only some pupils, for example, can confidently select from a range of software to make predictions using spreadsheet models. Nonetheless, the standards reached by both boys and girls at the end of Year 11 are now broadly average. This also represents good achievement in Years 10 and 11 with pupils improving their skills in the GNVQ lessons, in ICT lessons taken by all pupils, and in a range of subject areas.
69. A major factor in the present good achievement is the good, and often very good, teaching that is taking place in all year groups. Teachers plan lessons very well to make use of a good range of teaching tools and online resources. The best lessons are very challenging and motivating, with good opportunities for reflection and evaluation of progress. Pupils respond well to the stimulating activities and learning is good. Relationships between pupils and teacher are often very good. Teachers use assessment well to inform pupils how well they are doing, and pupils know how to improve. This is particularly effective in the examination classes; pupils are motivated to work to the deadlines and targets. There are still some Year 10 and 11 pupils in

the non-examination classes, boys and girls, whom teachers find difficult to motivate; such pupils achieve less well despite the best efforts of the teachers. Sometimes, however, lower attaining pupils struggle to progress because, although the classes are small, there is often a wide range of ability and the planning has not always taken this sufficiently into account.

70. The relatively new leadership and management of ICT are very good. The school monitors and reviews its work very well enabling a very good vision for the future development of ICT to emerge. The head of ICT and the senior managers work closely together to analyse data, such as examination and assessment results. This enables effective decisions to be made in developing teaching, the curriculum and resources. The leader is knowledgeable and innovative. Poor results in the GCSE examination last year were due to problems in teaching and motivating pupils, especially girls. It is clear that the school has a willingness to recognise mistakes and move on; the new examination course is both stimulating and motivating to pupils in Years 10 and 11.
71. The school has made very good improvements since the previous inspection. Creating a new and effective management structure has meant standards have been raised and the curriculum coverage much improved. Whilst not all pupils take the GNVQ course, the others are catered for in national certificate courses and in some other subject areas. There are particular strengths in art, physical education, English, science and modern foreign languages, though there is scope for further development in the use of ICT in several subjects, including mathematics, history, geography, religious education, design and technology and drama. The range of software is good and the school network is extensive enough to satisfy nearly all the school's needs. A computer-based independent learning scheme has been successfully trialled and will be used for improving mathematics and literacy skills for all Year 8 and 9 pupils very shortly.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

72. The pupils' competence in ICT is average. In Years 8 and 9, pupils learn good techniques for searching for information on the Internet. They analyse and present this information effectively in various forms. In geography, this might be rainfall graphs; in food technology, it might be a range of diets with pictures and text. In Years 10 and 11 pupils analyse the needs of business using a database and can produce letters, e-mails and invoices. Pupils are particularly adept in manipulating images and making multi-media presentations, for instance in French. In ICT lessons, pupils learn to use a spreadsheet to help with calculations, but the mathematics department is not yet able to take advantage of these powerful tools to extend numeracy skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising at present with very good achievement in Years 8 and 9 and good achievement in Years 10 and 11, as a result of good and often very good teaching.
- Good leadership and management are now taking the subject forward rapidly.
- There are good opportunities to develop investigative skills through fieldwork and some class work.
- There is some effective use of ICT, but this is an area for further development as a learning resource.

Commentary

73. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were well below average overall; boys did better than girls. Pupils' achievement was variable, some doing well and some underachieving. Overall achievement was satisfactory in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Results in 2003 were similar to those in 2002.
74. Pupils enter the school with a range of geographical skills, which, overall, are well below average. Present work in Year 8 shows improvement but, in most classes, is still below or well below average. However, by Year 9, there is a most noticeable improvement in the work of the majority of pupils in many classes. The contrast between Year 8 and Year 9 is most marked in the middle range of ability, though all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making at least good progress. Higher attainers demonstrate strong, evaluative work which is well illustrated. Because they are given good opportunities through fieldwork and extended project work, many pupils carry out successful research work and develop their investigative skills. Overall, standards are on course to be average by the end of Year 9; this represents very good achievement over pupils' two years in the school. By the end of Year 11, standards in present work reach the national average; for most pupils, this is good achievement. Work in Year 11 is progressing particularly well. Some of the GCSE coursework is impressive with above average research and evaluation, with first-rate presentation. In Year 11, methodical teaching, very good marking and pupils' high levels of motivation are enabling substantial improvement to be seen.
75. Teaching and learning are good overall; much is very good. Teaching in the best lessons is dynamic, with fast pace, high expectations and challenge, and a variety of well-planned activities which interest pupils and often excite them. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, and they know what they should be doing, because objectives are made clear and the very good marking means they have a clear understanding of how they can improve. Work is very well aimed at different groups of pupils so that all can succeed at their appropriate level. Pupils respond to this sort of teaching by showing commitment and hard work; as a result, learning is good or very good, limited only at times by weaker language skills. Less successful lessons are well-planned, but suffer from a drop in pace and too much input from the teacher which limits the amount of active learning by pupils. Inconsistencies in managing pupils' behaviour and limited challenge for the more able pupils also mean that learning is only satisfactory in such lessons; time is wasted in controlling pupils and they are not stretched sufficiently.
76. Leadership and management are good, with some very good features. Changes in staffing and in the structures within the humanities curriculum area have opened up opportunities for creative leadership, which is now taking the subject forward rapidly and leading to rising standards. A successful team is being built, and there is high quality use of assessment information. The good scheme of work is, as it should be, a working document that is regularly revised as developments take place. Strong features of the management also include the organisation of fieldwork and the explicit inclusion of citizenship into lesson planning. There is much still to do before ICT plays its full role in the subject, but one teacher is enthusiastically introducing more use of ICT. A positive picture of geography was given in the previous report. Similar strengths are recognised now, but recent developments are bringing more improvement, with the potential for further development as teamwork and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching become stronger. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE examination results show very good achievement by pupils.
- Standards are improving in Years 8 and 9, and standards in the present Year 11 are above average.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- The attitude and behaviour of some pupils restricts learning in some lessons.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

77. In the GCSE examinations, for the last three years, pupils attained standards which were just above the national average. All pupils attained grades A*-G and two thirds of pupils attained A*-C. These results represent very good achievement for the pupils concerned. Standards in the current Year 11 are above the national average. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to analyse complex historical events such as the causes of the First World War. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, do not complete work in such depth, but are able to make links and comparisons because they are well taught and work is matched to their needs.
78. Pupils' standards, as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were in line with the national average and a significant improvement on the previous two years. Present standards in Years 8 and 9 are below average, but pupils are achieving well in comparison to the well below average standards they had when they entered the school. Girls and boys, and those pupils with special educational needs, make similarly good progress. Pupils develop an increasing understanding of the value of different sources, carrying out investigations such as exploring whether life improved during the nineteenth century. The work of lower attaining pupils is held back by lack of detail and often their work is incomplete. In some classes progress is slower because of poor attitudes and behaviour on the part of a minority of pupils.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The best lessons provide challenging and stimulating ideas and encourage the pupils to become independent learners. Teachers have a lively style and put early emphasis on developing pupils' examination skills. Literacy is an important element of all lessons; as a result, pupils use specialist vocabulary accurately. Most use a variety of different writing styles, as well as presenting their ideas in extended writing. Not enough use is made of ICT either as a research tool or for presentation of work. In a small number of lessons behaviour is not managed effectively so that a few disruptive pupils slow the progress of the class.
80. Leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. The members of the department have a clear vision of what they want to achieve but the head of department has many other responsibilities leaving limited time for subject development. Marking is positive but variable and the use of assessment data to track the progress of pupils can be developed further. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well with the level of attainment in all years, except Year 11, being in line with that set out in the local agreed syllabus.
- The subject is well led and managed, with much recent innovation and development.
- The majority of pupils have a mature and sensitive attitude to the values and life styles of others, though not all discussions are effective.

- Staff and pupils do not effectively use ICT, and the more able pupils in Years 8 and 9 are not always fully engaged.

Commentary

81. In 2003 not all pupils were entered for the short course GCSE. Results for those that did enter were well below average, but analysis of the results in relation to pupils' prior attainment indicates that the achievement for those who did enter was satisfactory.
82. Pupils arrive in school with below average levels of knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and customs. By the end of Year 9, they are attaining standards that are in line with those set out in the local agreed syllabus. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and life styles of the major religions that are found in our society. Boys and girls are able to discuss questions of religious faith in a mature and sensitive manner. Most pupils achieve well, but a shortage of work to stretch the more able pupils means that achievement for these pupils is only satisfactory.
83. Current standards in Year 10 are average. Pupil's knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and customs are satisfactory and they have a good understanding of the impact that religion has on people's lives. They are able to discuss moral and religious issues in an open and sensitive manner. In one lesson, a group of Year 10 pupils across a range of abilities were thoughtfully discussing issues surrounding the termination of a pregnancy; they had good skills of evaluation and were able to reflect upon their own beliefs and values. Most pupils make good progress, achieving grades that are at least in line with predictions based upon previous results but for the higher attaining pupils achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 11 are weaker and below average; pupils' earlier experiences of the subject have affected adversely both their standards of work and their attitudes to the subject. Pupils have a shallow level of knowledge and, whilst still fairly open and mature in their approach, their level of response lacks depth and clear evaluation. Predicted grades are a little better than the grades reached last year but only marginally so, with relatively little progress being made.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject that they use well to raise pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned, using a satisfactory variety of teaching methods which challenge and motivate pupils. In the majority of lessons, classroom management was good with teachers creating a positive atmosphere in which pupils felt confident to respond. In a minority of lessons, this was not the case. In these lessons, the strategies used to facilitate discussions did not always involve all pupils. Whilst there was no serious disruptive behaviour, some pupils, especially girls, displayed a low level of motivation and attention and tended towards disruptive behaviour. The use of ICT is still underdeveloped, and so some opportunities for research and other investigative work are not fully exploited.
85. The leadership and management are good, with a strong school commitment to improving the subject. A recently appointed subject leader has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. The department is well organised with a review of the curriculum just completed. Effective assessment procedures are in place with good use being made of school data. Good attention is paid to literacy, with key words on display which are used in teaching. Classrooms are bright and cheerful, creating a positive learning atmosphere. Good extra-curricular provision is made in the after school provision for the full GCSE course. The subject makes a good contribution to pupil's personal development. Since the appointment of a new subject leader there has been a steady improvement in standards and an atmosphere of exciting change. With these recent improvements, improvement since the last inspection can now be judged as good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good, with a team that works well together.
- Assessment and target setting are very effective, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good, and often very good; achievement is good and standards are improving.
- The application of ICT and CAD (computer aided design) is inconsistent and underdeveloped.
- The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 is in need of some improvement.

Commentary

86. In 2003 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher GCSE grades (A*-C) was below average. However, pupils across the range of design and technology subjects overall did as well as might be expected given their prior attainment. Lower achieving pupils did well and the proportion achieving A*-G grades was above average. There were variations in the performance of pupils in the different contributory subjects within design and technology. For example, standards in food technology were above average, but they were particularly low in resistant materials. Nonetheless, all pupils gained a pass, and, overall, pupils did broadly as well in resistant materials as they did in their other subjects. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teachers' assessments of the proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected level 5 or above in Year 9 was well below average and this reflected the very low standards in design and technology when these pupils entered the school.
87. By Year 9, present standards of work are below average but are improving. These pupils started from well below average standards, and their achievement is, therefore, good. Achievement currently varies across the department because opportunities for open-ended design and the progression of challenge, which enable pupils to reach their full potential, need to be more consistently planned in all specialisms. Similarly, opportunities to use ICT to take learning further forward need to be more consistently applied. Generally, pupils research well and develop a specification, but do not always apply graphic techniques well to aid the development of their design ideas. By Year 11, standards of work seen are about average overall, and achievement is therefore good. Although standards vary, they are above average in food technology and in graphic products, where structured work follows the design process more closely. Where standards are lower, pupils do not develop their design ideas well, and some spend too much time on process notes. Where encouraged, pupils can apply ICT well, and use CAD (computer aided design) techniques when developing their ideas, but they do not spend enough time developing and evaluating their ideas. Pupils prototype their products well, for instance in electronics, sometimes using ICT software. In food technology, particularly, pupils record product development well using a digital camera. Pupils are starting to use CAD, but the application of ICT to pupils' work varies across the department and overall is underdeveloped. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make equally good progress. In all years, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall; these factors, and their increasing maturity are also factors contributing to in their good achievement.
88. Teaching and learning in Years 8 and 9 are good overall, helping to ensure that pupils' achievement is good. Lessons proceed at a good pace supported well by technician staff. Pupils learn and achieve well when teachers utilise product analysis methods, and where there are expectations that designs will be different. Pace and understanding are improved where excellent worksheets, produced by teachers, support the basis of subject knowledge, and help

develop well-structured workbooks for pupils. Independent learning in all years is encouraged through research, but not yet through computer Internet access as a matter of course.

89. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are also good overall, and often very good. Teachers' expectations are matched by pupils' increasing maturity and focus on work. Pupils are succeeding because teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are very good, and increasingly teachers are providing clear guidance and a structured approach to project work. This is particularly supporting the achievement of boys and lower attainers. Learning is effective when teachers share exemplar materials, and when analysis of commercial products helps pupils to focus on developing features of their own designs. The specific assignment of a well deployed special needs teaching assistant to design and technology, and good liaison with learning support staff in general is very effective in helping pupils with special educational needs to make good progress overall. However, teachers have not yet put effective strategies in place to equally stretch and support the higher achievers.
90. The very good leadership and management are contributing significantly to the rising standards and overall quality of provision. The department works as a committed team towards their aims. The initial assessment of pupils when they first arrive is very effective in establishing what they can and cannot do so that this information can be used in planning the teaching; throughout all years, there are very good procedures for assessment so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Accommodation is only just adequate for current group sizes, and the application of ICT, including CAD and computer control within systems, varies across the department.
91. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; the different standards attained of boys and girls are now reduced, and resources are now largely appropriate for the curriculum taught. Assessment procedures are now very good. The pace of lessons is good, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually good. There is still some work to be done to improve the curriculum in Years 8 and 9, but the potential for further development is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The National Curriculum subjects of **art and design** and **music** are taught as required and are reported on in full. In addition, **drama** and **dance** are taught, and there is a **media studies** group in each of Years 10 and 11. As a number of drama lessons were seen, and as drama has a significant place in the school timetable, drama is reported in full at the end of this section on the visual and performing arts. The other subjects were sampled; there is a comment about media studies within the English report, and dance is reported within physical education.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good overall, particularly in Years 8 and 9.
- The teaching is good and pupils learn to produce individual and creative work.
- Timetable restrictions hinder some aspects of pupils' progress.

Commentary

92. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average, with fewer pupils reaching the higher levels than nationally. However, achievement in Years 8 and 9 is good as pupils come into the school with well below average knowledge and skills. They make good progress and learn to use a range of techniques to express their ideas and their standards of work steadily improve. They also learn to apply some of the ideas of other artists. By the end of Year 11 standards are also

below average. Standards in the GCSE examination in 2003 were below average. However, boys reached average standards and all passed the examination. Girls were well below average. The department states that there was a large number of disaffected girls taking art and design with a poor attendance record and that these factors, along with some staffing difficulties, contributed to the results that were obtained. Current standards are below average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory, and good for some. Work is well-presented and rich in its range of influences, including the work of other artists, though, at times, it lacks depth and understanding of visual language. Individual and creative work shows considerable talent, but lower attaining pupils struggle with the more academic aspects of the examination course because they do not develop the vocabulary and critical skills needed to assess and improve their work sufficiently. Whilst overall achievement is good because of the good teaching and pupils' good motivation, the short lessons often prevent practical work from developing to its full potential, and the less motivated pupils do not work enough in their own time to overcome this.

93. Teaching is good overall, encouraging creativity and individual talent. It is often challenging and stimulating, and teachers expect pupils to work hard. Teachers plan practical lessons well and short, sharp exercises are effective in involving and motivating the younger pupils. Pupils learn well: they are attentive and teachers insist on good behaviour. Teachers do their best to provide good examples of past work for pupils to discuss and aim towards. The lessons are less successful when pupils have not been given sufficiently clear objectives to aim for or insufficient support with the analysis and development of their work. Because of this, lower attaining pupils in Year 11 especially, are often content to work mechanically, without developing their skills. Teachers are persistent in encouraging pupils and emphasising deadlines so that the overall pass rate for GCSE is good. As a result, the number of failing pupils is very small.
94. Leadership and management are good. The subject head of department has ensured that standards have been raised despite the limitations of time and resources. He works well with senior managers to assess, record and analyse pupil performance. Pupils are clear about how well they are doing and know what they have to do to improve. The department has developed the use of computers and digital cameras in an innovative and imaginative way; this helps support less able pupils as well as inspire the higher attainers. The creative aspects of the curriculum encourage pupils to develop their own ideas and build on their interest, as well as improving their understanding of a range of art and artists. However, the current timetable means that some pupils only get 50 minute lessons, which seriously limits the progress that less well-organised pupils can make.
95. The improvement since the previous inspection is good. The teaching has improved and the curriculum broadened to include more three-dimensional work. The head of department has improved the structure of the examination course so that less motivated pupils have a clearer idea of the coursework needed and the deadlines to meet; this is helping to raise standards.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising. Pupils enjoy their lessons; they behave well and work hard.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good in Years 8 and 9, and very good in Year 11.
- Leadership is good.
- Curriculum time is limited in Years 8 and 9 and pupils do not have enough time to develop practical skills.
- Numbers learning instruments are lower than the national average and there is no option group in Year 10.

Commentary

96. At the end of Year 9 standards are below the expected level for most pupils. On entry to the school pupils' standards are well below national levels and they have had very different musical experiences. However, overall, achievement in lessons is good for pupils of all levels of ability. Because of the nature of the work being taught during the inspection week, no performances or compositions from pupils in Years 8 and 9 were heard. Pupils need more curriculum time to develop skills in practical work; however, most can use technology to work on arrangements of pre-programmed patterns, and they demonstrate some understanding of structure, texture and harmony. Skills in using the technology are satisfactory. The listening tests set annually by the department show less good progress with pupils' scores rising only slightly.
97. At the end of Year 11, results in recent GCSE examinations have been well below the national average. However, the current Year 11 group is achieving much higher standards. Results in the mock listening examination are broadly in line with national standards; approximately half the pupils are achieving the higher grades for performance. However, not all of the group has an instrumental lesson which adversely affects progress. In the better work from the tapes heard during the inspection, pupils showed good understanding of their chosen styles and structures were clear. In other work, pupils demonstrated control of melody, harmony and rhythm but structure too often relied on repetition of motives, with more development and clearer structures being needed. However, in one lesson, during which some pupils were developing their ensemble or solo work for GCSE, some high quality work was in progress, much of it capturing cultural and stylistic nuances very well. Achievement was at least good for all, and very good overall. Whilst overall standards were at least average, many were above the national average.
98. In instrumental lessons, pupils learn keyboard, guitar, strings, percussion and woodwind instruments. Standards of playing are in line with national levels overall with a few achieving above the standard. Numbers involved are below the national average.
99. Teaching and learning are good; they are good in Years 8 and 9, and very good in Year 11, but there is no course taught in Year 10. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and their skills in music technology are particularly well used to demonstrate and explain tasks. The clear explanations ensure that pupils make good progress through these tasks. The software programmes are well chosen for the pupils' abilities, and their interest is sustained by helpful teacher support as they work on their arrangements in pairs and alone. This support enables pupils of all levels of ability to make equally good progress. Questioning is well used to check understanding and responses are valued which helps pupils to develop confidence. Relationships are good and pupils behave well and work with interest. They are encouraged to reflect on music. Concentration is mostly good but some tasks need to be broken down into smaller segments and more time to consolidate learning is needed in the final part of lessons. Teaching and learning in the one lesson observed in Year 11 were very good. Careful and sensitive help, thorough preparation and first-rate relationships made for a very good learning experience.
100. The subject leadership and management are good, enabling good improvement to have taken place since the last inspection. The curriculum has been improved and developed since the last inspection and a wider range of topics, addressing all areas of the National Curriculum, is now studied. Some of these topics need further development to include performing, composing and listening to ensure a wider understanding. All pupils in Years 8 and 9 now have a weekly lesson, but curriculum time is limited which restricts the development of practical skills. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection and a detailed, thorough data base has been developed. The department should now build an archive of recordings of performances and compositions in Years 8 and 9 to aid planning for improvement. Resources are mostly good. Pupils have opportunities to use technology in their work, but the hardware

needs to be permanently linked to keyboards to allow pupils to sequence in their own ideas and to demonstrate their work to the class.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching is leading to very good achievement in all years.
- Management is very good, but the unsatisfactory resources for the subject limit the range of what can be done.
- The subject promotes pupils' social and cultural development very well.

Commentary

101. Three lessons of drama were observed, one in each of Years 8, 9 and 11; other work, documents and resources were scrutinised. Since most pupils enter the school with little or no experience of drama and pupils' oral skills are weak, standards are well below average at the end of Year 9 and below average at the end of Year 11. Achievement, however, is very good in both years, with pupils making very good progress in the skills of stagecraft, self-presentation and an understanding of performance work.
102. This high level of achievement is made possible through the very good teaching of the drama co-ordinator, which has many excellent features, not least a driving enthusiasm and love of the subject, which is transmitted to all his pupils. In drama lessons, disruptive behaviour does not exist; pupils work purposefully and well under the calm, but energetic, supervision of the teacher. As subject co-ordinator, he ensures that pupils' written coursework at GCSE matches their level of acquisition of performance and stagecraft skills. His high level of expertise in the subject enables pupils to learn quickly, responsively and to work at a very challenging level on material such as Commedia Dell 'Arte' with Year 8 pupils. Pupils learn to evaluate their own and others' performances, and to respond to stimulus with thought and imagination.
103. The subject is very well managed, with excellent schemes of work ensuring continuity and the coverage of desirable skills. Pupils are constantly assessed to assist their learning. However, resources, particularly ICT resources such as lighting and sound are currently unsatisfactory, limiting the range of what can be done. The co-ordinator carries a very heavy workload, teaching across all year groups, as well as running many extra-curricular activities and dramatic productions. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and significant in its effect on improving literacy skills, especially oral work. The subject adds considerably to pupils' knowledge and understanding of social and cultural matters and of areas of citizenship. Above all, it does great service to the school and its pupils in the way in which it fosters pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have declined in recent years and many pupils have underachieved, but areas of weakness are now being tackled.
- The quality of teaching and standards in dance has improved.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

104. Pupils' standards in physical education when they start the school are below average. Overall, by Year 9, they are also below average. For the majority of pupils, this represents satisfactory achievement. However, girls reach average national standards in dance and achieve well. They are able to choreograph dances in different styles and practise to improve. The boys have some understanding of factors that affect fitness, but are generally not confident to answer questions using technical vocabulary. They are able to sustain satisfactory levels of exercise but show little refinement of movement especially in gymnastics. A minority of boys are underachieving because they do not concentrate sufficiently hard to refine their performance.
105. Overall standards reached by pupils in Year 11 following the core course in physical education are also below average. Their skills are a little more refined and they achieve satisfactorily. They are able to apply basic strategies and tactics but their spatial awareness and knowledge of training principles are not well developed. A minority are able to evaluate and make effective coaching points that lead to improvement. There are no specific differences between standards for boys and girls, which very much depend on the quality of teaching in lessons and pupils' attitudes. Some pupils also take the GCSE course in physical education. Results in 2003 were well below average and many pupils underachieved. At present, standards reached by pupils following the GCSE course in Year 11 are higher; however, they are below average, with a significant minority underachieving. Pupils' notes are a satisfactory resource for revision and should help their achievement over time, although, at present, their depth of knowledge under test conditions is not good. Standards for the pupils in Year 11 following the GCSE dance course are also below average overall. This is because many do not attend sufficiently often and, when they do, have poor attitudes. Those who are consistently present reach average standards and achieve well; some of them are above average in their practical work. They have a good grasp of the set piece and show refinement of moves with good control and understanding of dynamics. These same pupils have a good understanding of theoretical aspects.
106. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are satisfactory; overall, teaching is too variable. In the best lessons, expectations are clearly expressed and pupils are challenged intellectually and physically. Question and answer sessions require the pupils to evaluate performance and make informed suggestions about how they might improve. In a minority of lessons, however, expectations are not sufficiently high for good quality work and behaviour. Some girls show poor attitudes and have little inclination to refine their skills. Boys are occasionally over-exuberant and do not have the self-discipline to improve. Nonetheless, there are positive signs. Reasons for the deteriorating results in GCSE are now being addressed successfully. Until recently, there was insufficient regular testing and examination practice to consolidate pupils' knowledge. Lower attaining pupils were not given enough focus on key words and facts. But new strategies are already starting to have an impact in raising standards and attitudes. There is good use of ICT to encourage pupils to research and revise their topics. The quality of teaching in GCSE dance is good. Areas of weakness are quickly identified and are now being addressed in the current Year 10 group. Teachers mostly know their pupils well, especially those with special educational needs. Tasks are adjusted if necessary in practical lessons and these pupils achieve satisfactorily.
107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is clear commitment to providing a caring environment for the pupils and to improve existing practice. There has not been enough rigorous monitoring and evaluation in the past to identify areas of weakness sufficiently early. Use of data to accurately predict results and to set targets is now improving. Teachers' assessment systems are good and help to inform the planning. Dance GCSE has been successfully re-introduced and standards have risen. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in which the pupils enjoy success at local level. Individuals also enjoy success at county, regional and national levels. But some factors work against success. The grouping arrangements for Year 8, whereby different classes are put together for different lessons each week, make it difficult to teach activities consistently, and, whilst accommodation is just

satisfactory, the gymnasium is not an attractive working environment and it is difficult to teach basketball and badminton effectively. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, but plans for sports college status, with much enhanced facilities and extensive community involvement, give very great potential for future development if the opportunities are grasped.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

108. A very wide range of business and vocational courses are taught in Years 10 and 11; some are taught in the school, whilst a significant number are taught at Exeter College. It was possible to sample a number of the courses, to hold discussions with relevant staff in the school and at Exeter College, to examine documentation and pupils' work, and to talk to many pupils. Of the wide variety of vocational courses, some, such as the Spanish and ICT courses, were sampled within the subject areas and contribute to overall judgements in those areas. Health and social care, leisure and tourism, businesses and economics, business administration, and the ASDAN course (a vocational course for lower attaining pupils) were also sampled. Pupils are motivated and interested, enjoy the courses and, as a consequence, achieve well. Improving communications between the school and the colleges ensure that such things as attendance and progress are carefully monitored.
109. Pupils are thoroughly engaged in the well-delivered **Health and Social Care** course at Exeter College. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use a good variety of teaching methods to challenge and motivate the pupils. In particular, the Year 10 pupils produce work of above average standard. Their folders indicate a very good knowledge of the subject and early assessments indicate that they are well on target to achieve grades that are above those predicted by previous tests. Visits are made to relevant work related placements.
110. The pupils enjoy the well-structured **Leisure and tourism** course at Exeter College, which involves some good and effective use of ICT. Pupils' work is carefully monitored and good guidance is given on how to improve. A well-qualified teacher, who has a good knowledge of the subject, provides well planned lessons to which pupils respond enthusiastically. Their folders contain work that indicates good achievement. Attention is paid to the development of key skills through the use of such things as graphs and statistical analysis.
111. Pupils with a very wide range of abilities take the **Business and economics** course. Previous examination results have been below the national average. However a carefully analysis indicates that individuals who might otherwise have obtained very low grades did achieve well in this course. Well-planned lively lessons, which are taken by a teacher who has a very good background in the subject, proceed at a good pace. The work seen in Year 11 varies considerably, but achievement of all pupils is good with the more able students on target for higher grades.
112. Well planned lessons in **Business education**, with good supportive teaching, enable pupils to develop the necessary skills and understanding to move forward. An enthusiastic approach by the teacher ensures that most pupils are engaged in the lesson. Despite a caring and positive approach by the teacher, a small minority of girls do not co-operate in lessons and are underachieving.
113. In a stimulating environment, teachers prepare lively and dynamic lessons in the **ASDAN course** that encourage lower attaining pupils to produce projects that are relevant and interesting. A group of pupils are developing good computer skills as they use a desktop publishing programme to produce a first aid booklet. Pupils are given very good feedback on how to improve upon their work and are achieving well.
114. Discussions with pupils from other courses indicate a high level of satisfaction, although some are concerned about the repetitive nature of the work that is done in the construction course that features a large amount of bricklaying. There is no timetable provision in school for those

pupils who are studying at Exeter College. In contrast with pupils from other schools on the same courses, pupils do not have time and support at school to complete coursework assignments nor to use computer facilities to do research for tasks that are set in college. As a result, some pupils are put at a disadvantage. Since the last inspection the school has increased the number of courses available and taken steps to ensure that communication between the providers and the school have considerably improved.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught by a fairly small team of teachers during a weekly timetabled lesson. In addition, tutors contribute to PSHE in some tutor periods. Pupils use PSHE time to explore many aspects of their personal development; some of the PSHE lessons are used to teach specific elements of the citizenship programme of study. Planning for citizenship is good and ensures full coverage of the statutory curriculum. When classes are well managed, learning is good, though there are occasions when poor teaching means that little or no learning takes place. Overall, PSHE contributes well to pupils' personal development. Some further developments, such as the school's current work towards the Healthy Schools Award, arise from PSHE work.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship into the curriculum has been well planned.
- Pupils have found the themed days stimulating and relevant.
- Where citizenship is taught through other subjects, it is not always made clear to the pupils that the focus is citizenship.
- Marking, assessment and reporting are still at an early stage.

Commentary

115. Standards of work seen in the few citizenship lessons taking place during the inspection were average in Years 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11. In these lessons, pupils were concentrating on the skills of communication and enquiry although some written work will follow. Work in pupils' books shows a developing understanding and appreciation of the course of study. Some departments, although not yet all, are ensuring that pupils signify in their books work which is part of the citizenship programme of study. This lack of an explicit focus on citizenship means that pupils' achievements in citizenship are reduced because this particular element of the lesson is not always clear.
116. Citizenship is delivered in the curriculum in three ways. There are taught lessons in citizenship within the personal, social and health education programme; many topics are taught within other subjects of the curriculum and there are whole-day school events for different year groups. The various elements of citizenship are successfully woven together into an integrated whole. This means that different sorts of events, including, for example, visits from the Police Youth Affairs Officer and the local Member of the European Parliament, pupils' participation in community action through the School Council, and the school's links with a school in a South African township, are part of a coherent programme of citizenship. Themed days have taken place in the areas of business and enterprise for Year 9 and the European community for Year 8. The next event will be an environmental day for Year 10. Pupils have enjoyed these events and found them worthwhile, and have recognised their contribution in equipping them to become informed citizens.

117. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. As a result, pupils' achievements are satisfactory, as they are in all strands of their work in citizenship. In the best lessons, lateral thinking is encouraged and pupils respond enthusiastically to well-managed class discussions. Pupils can recall topics they have covered in citizenship and consider the subject to be worthwhile. ICT is used regularly to support pupils' independent learning and skills of enquiry. Recently pupils used the Internet to investigate funding opportunities for school councils.
118. Leadership and management of citizenship are good. A co-ordinator, backed up by a member of the senior leadership team, has conducted a thorough audit and has successfully established citizenship as a National Curriculum subject. The co-ordinator has also established a good system whereby pupils can track their own progress on their citizenship logs. The teachers have had specific training for citizenship and the team responsible for the taught citizenship lessons meets regularly. The themed days are well-organised providing very good elements of citizenship. Lessons and marked work will be monitored in the summer term. As yet, assessment does not help pupils to monitor their progress in citizenship, other than in keeping a record of topics covered.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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