

INSPECTION REPORT

STAINDROP COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Staindrop, Darlington

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114302

Headteacher: Mr B Kinnair

Lead inspector: Mr John Paddick

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 January 2004

Inspection number: 258786

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 587

School address: Cleatlam Lane
Staindrop
Darlington
County Durham
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Telephone number: 01833 660285
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Ruth Renton

Date of previous inspection: 14 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Staindrop Comprehensive School is a small secondary with 587 boys and girls on roll in the age range 11-16. It is becoming increasingly popular and cannot offer places to all of the families who would like their children to enrol. The school draws its pupils from 26 primary schools but most come from Staindrop, Evenwood, Toft Hill, Ingleton, Gainford and Cockfield. However, increasing numbers are coming from further afield. Boys slightly outnumber girls in most year groups. Pupil mobility is low and there are only extremely small numbers of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are no pupils with English as an additional language and no refugees. The school has gained Schools Curriculum, Investors in Children and Artsmark awards.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school represents the full range found nationally but it is consistently below average overall, particularly in terms of literacy. Above average numbers of pupils have special educational needs and formal statements, mostly connected with dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural characteristics. The school attracts pupils from families that span the national range of social and economic circumstances but there are significantly more from socially and economically challenged backgrounds than normal.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| 10308 | Mr J Paddick | Lead inspector | Citizenship |
| 13762 | Mr N Shelley | Lay inspector | |
| 18676 | Mr R Meakin | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| 11508 | Mr C Griffin | Team inspector | English English as an additional language |
| 33056 | Mrs A Spears | Team inspector | Science |
| 27803 | Mr J Clark | Team inspector | Information and communication technology |
| 32672 | Mr S Hammond-Evans | Team inspector | Art and design Design and technology |
| 23926 | Mr D Howorth | Team inspector | Geography Vocational subjects |
| 19452 | Mr A Pearson | Team inspector | History Physical education |
| 23709 | Mrs A Powell | Team inspector | Modern languages |
| 20490 | Mr P Wilson | Team inspector | Music |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Staindrop Comprehensive is a very good and very effective school providing very good value for money. Teaching and learning are good overall with many very strong features. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and GCSE results are above average. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good and is largely responsible for their very good attitudes. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities for a small school. Leadership and management are very good overall.

The school's **main strengths and weaknesses** are:

- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- The school meets the needs of all its pupils very well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall with many very good features but also some points for improvement.
- There is a very small proportion of unsatisfactory or poor lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- Arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.
- The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

The school's effectiveness has improved very well since the previous inspection. Standards have improved faster than they have nationally, particularly at GCSE, and the school has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified in 1998. Teaching in French has improved considerably since then and is now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

In the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 in 2003, overall results were average compared to those of the country as a whole. Results were average in English and mathematics and above average in science. This represents good achievement because pupils enter the school with below average attainment. The results have improved more rapidly than they have nationally, and are much better than the average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds.

GCSE results have also improved at a faster rate than they have nationally. In 2003, results were above average compared to the country as a whole and improved considerably compared to 2002. They represented good achievement from the below average starting point in Year 7 and were better than average for schools having similar results in the national tests in Year 9.

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

*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.*

Currently, achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils join in Year 7 with below average overall levels of attainment, particularly in literacy. However, teachers are successful in raising overall standards to average by Year 9 and to above average by Year 11. In Year 9, current standards are well above average in art, above average in mathematics and science, and average in all other subjects. In Year 11, standards are well above average in French, and art, above average in

English, mathematics, science, and citizenship, and average in all other subjects apart from history, where they are below average but rising. However, pupils' spelling needs attention.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Their attitudes are very good and support learning. Behaviour is good. Attendance is above average compared to the country as a whole.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides education of good quality. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good overall. It is good in all subjects apart from art, where it is very good, and design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), where it is satisfactory. **In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good overall.** It is good in all subjects apart from art, where it is very good, and in design and technology, where it is satisfactory. Hence in the majority of lessons, pupils learn relatively quickly and standards rise at a good rate. Only in a very small number of lessons in ICT, design and technology, and science, where teaching is not good enough, is there any significant underachievement. Teaching has many strong points, especially in relation to planning and a good variation of activities and styles to keep the pupils interested and focussed. However, marking, especially for the correction of spelling, and the general use of ICT to enhance learning need to be improved.

The school supports pupils' personal development very well through its programme of help and guidance. The curriculum is designed well and regularly revised so that it provides effectively for all of the pupils, including those who have special educational needs, those in public care, and those who benefit from alternative approaches. Provision for pupils' welfare is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good overall. The headteacher's leadership provides a very clear vision about the educational standards and the pupils' attitudes that the school seeks. Good management at all levels, especially in subjects, ensures that these standards and attitudes become a reality in almost all respects. The governors rigorously monitor the work of the school, set challenging targets, and understand its strengths and weaknesses very well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are positive about the school and recognise that it provides education of good quality. Pupils' views are very positive and they correctly feel that they are getting a good deal. They say that they are happy and feel safe, and that bullying is not a problem.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Raising the quality of teaching further by:

- Eliminating the small number of unsatisfactory and poor lessons in design and technology, ICT and science.
- Improving marking, especially in relation to spelling.
- Increasing the use of ICT to enhance learning in most subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Current standards are broadly average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. They represent good achievement because pupils enter the school with below average attainment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE have improved faster than they have nationally.
- Results in GCSE physical education and art, and in GNVQ ICT, are well above average.
- GCSE results are above average overall and represent good achievement.
- Pupils with special educational needs do well at GCSE.
- Current standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11, representing good achievement.
- Pupils' spelling requires attention.

Commentary

1. The quality of the school's Year 9 National Curriculum results rose considerably between 2000 and 2003. In this period, results improved at a quicker rate than the national trend. By 2003, results were average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. This meant that the results were average overall compared to the national picture, and represented good achievement because pupils enter the school with below average attainment. The 2003 results were well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds but still fell short of governors' rather ambitious targets. Girls did better than boys in English but by a smaller margin than they did nationally. In mathematics, boys and girls did equally well as nationally, whereas in science boys did better than girls, although nationally there was little difference.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 34.0 (32.6) | 33.4 (33.3) |
| Mathematics | 35.8 (36.7) | 35.4 (34.7) |
| Science | 34.8 (35.4) | 33.6 (33.3) |

There were 117 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Currently, overall standards are broadly average in Year 9 and represent good achievement. In mathematics and science, standards are above average, and in English they are average. The good achievement in English to reach average standards is very important because pupils join the school with below average verbal attainment. This improvement of their competence in English enables pupils to make good progress in their other subjects, and in all of them, standards are average, except in art, where they are well above average. There is no significant underachievement in any subject. In Years 7 to 9, pupils satisfactorily consolidate and develop their skills in mathematics in other subjects. The development of pupils' ICT skills is satisfactory overall but nevertheless still rather weak in some subjects. Pupils' spelling requires attention because it does not receive sufficient emphasis.
3. The school's GCSE results have improved more quickly than nationally. Results in 2003 were above the national average and represented good achievement. Above average numbers of pupils gained five results in the range A*-C and well above average numbers at A*-G. Well

above average numbers of pupils were also successful in gaining at least one graded GCSE result. Overall, the GCSE results of 2003 were well above average for schools taking their pupils from the same type of backgrounds. Girls outperformed boys by slightly more than they did nationally. In 2003, the general quality of the school's results improved compared to 2002 and exceeded governors' targets. Particularly strong results were recorded in physical education, where they were very high compared to the national average, and in German and English literature, where they were well above average. Results were very low in French owing to the legacy of earlier underachievement mentioned at the previous inspection. They were below average in ICT as a result of staffing difficulties. However, both of these problems have now been eliminated and current standards are much higher.

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 | 59 (42) | 52 (50) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 96 (98) | 91 (91) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 99 (100) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 36.9 (34.7) | 33.8 (34.7) |

There were 104 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good in most subjects. Many pupils, who enter the school with well below average standards in literacy and numeracy, have their achievements raised by precise diagnosis of their needs and clear specific education plans. Particularly good work by the SEN staff quickly improves literacy levels from the moment the pupils join the school in Year 7. This enables the pupils to access the work in all of their subjects. However, the shortage of classroom assistants in some areas, especially for the small number of pupils who present challenging behaviour, does sometimes limit progress. By Year 11, most pupils with special educational needs reach their potential. They are all entered for GCSE where they do really well, achieving creditable grades in a range of subjects. In 2003, one pupil with a specific learning difficulty had achieved so well with support that he gained passes in seven GCSE subjects at grades A* to C. The small number of pupils in public care is progressing well too. They are supported and monitored with extreme care and precision as they move through the school.

5. Current standards are above average overall in Year 11 and represent good achievement. Standards are above average in all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science. They are well above average in French, art and food technology. Standards are above average in the recently introduced course in citizenship, where the pupils all benefit from a very good continuing experience of active involvement in the subject. In all other subjects apart from history, where they are slightly below average but rising, standards are average. Literacy, numerical and ICT skills continue to support pupils' learning satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils' spelling requires attention. Gifted and talented pupils are receiving good attention. There has been an increase in the number of pupils producing work consistent with the highest GCSE grades A and A* since the previous inspection. Currently, there are particular strengths in this direction in the work in Year 11 in English, French, German and art but weaknesses remain in mathematics and science.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Provision for the development of pupils' personal development is very good. Attitudes and relationships are very good. Pupils benefit from the very good learning atmosphere that pervades the school. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are all good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for the development of pupils' personal development is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- Behaviour in school is good and bullying is not a problem.
- Pupils are keen to accept responsibility.
- Relationships in school are very good.
- Pupils' attendance is above average.
- A very small number of pupils present challenging behaviour.

Commentary

6. Attendance last year was above the average for secondary schools and unauthorised absence was below average. The procedures for monitoring and minimising absence are well implemented. Absence owing to family holidays is higher than most other schools. Punctuality is usually good. However, poor weather and difficulties with transport cause pupils to miss schooling or arrive late on occasions.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| School data | 7.6% | School data | 0.4% |
| 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.

7. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They enjoy coming to school because they find it friendly and welcoming and because they feel valued and well supported. In lessons, pupils are co-operative, they show interest and enthusiasm and are very keen to do well. Relationships in the school are very good and there is much mutual respect. Pupils are keen to accept responsibility and to work hard to make school a better place. Prefects carry out their duties with maturity and work closely with senior staff to ensure that pupils behave appropriately. Behaviour overall is good. Pupils behave very well around the school and the vast majority behave very well in lessons. However, some instances of inappropriate behaviour do occur in a few subjects, mainly among a small minority of boys in Year 9. There is very little bullying at the school and the school has very effective systems in place to deal swiftly with any incidents and to provide effective support. Year 9 mentors, School Council members and prefects all play an important part in the school's drive to stamp out bullying altogether. The number of exclusions is below the average for similar-sized schools and, when they occur, they are fully justified. By the time they leave the school, most pupils have developed into mature and responsible young adults.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – White and Asian |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 583 | 32 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1 | 0 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|

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

8. The provision made for pupils' personal development is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is now good. Powerful spiritual elements in assembly are often followed up by moments of reflection in subjects such as history to allow pupils to consider in silence such topics as the Holocaust. The statutory requirements for collective worship are almost fully met. The work in many subjects also contributes well. The provision in religious education is a particular strength and there are very good contributions from English and geography, for example, when pupils explore religious dimensions associated with environmental issues.

9. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is now very good. The way that pupils conduct themselves so well in school bears testimony to the success of this work. Increasingly, pupils learn to assume responsibility and this is a particular strength. An example is the excellent provision of assistance by older pupils in the Heron Club for potentially vulnerable younger children. The effectiveness of the work of Year 9 pupils as mentors, and Year 11 pupils as prefects is reflected in the way in which their efforts are appreciated by younger pupils, to whom they also act as good role models. This strength is also reflected in the work of the successful School Council. Special provision in physical education enables pupils with behavioural needs to learn to take more responsibility for their actions, for example, through teamwork and co-operation with others. Pupils also respond well to the very wide range of opportunities provided for active citizenship within the school and outside it in the community.

10. Provision for cultural development is good and pupils experience and participate in a broad range of cultural activity in lessons and out of school hours. Pupils participate in a good range of educational visits and social trips. Participation of all pupils in these activities is carefully monitored to ensure that all benefit, but especially those who live in challenging circumstances, who are often enabled to go free of charge. However, the school recognises that more opportunities could be provided for pupils to appreciate the cultural diversity of modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in almost all subjects.
- A high proportion of all teaching is good or better.
- There is a good proportion of very good and occasionally excellent teaching.
- Teaching is very good in art, modern languages and food technology.
- There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Marking for spelling accuracy requires attention.
- The use of ICT, although satisfactory, could be strengthened further to enhance learning.
- There are not enough classroom assistants to help with the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

11. Since the previous inspection, teaching and learning have improved very considerably. The vast majority of the previous unsatisfactory teaching has been swept away and the quality of teaching and learning is now good throughout the school. During the inspection, 105 lessons were observed, of which 71% were good or better. Only five were of an insufficiently high

standard. Of these, two were in ICT, two were in design and technology, and there was one very poor example in science.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 105 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 2 (2%) | 29 (28%) | 43 (41%) | 26 (25%) | 4 (4%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) |

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

12. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in English, mathematics and science. It is also good in all other subjects apart from design and technology and ICT, where it is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are very good in art, shown by the very good quality of work displayed around the school. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved substantially in French and is now good. The school has considered carefully how to improve the boys' performance relative to girls and has been successful in some subjects, particularly English, food technology and art.
13. Teachers employ a wide range of approaches that keep the pupils interested so lesson time is used well. Pupils learn well because class management is good and teachers plan carefully to ensure that they build securely on previous knowledge. The incorporation of numerical and literacy aspects to lessons is satisfactory. Although the use of ICT to enhance learning is satisfactory overall, there are still weaknesses in some subjects, such as mathematics, science and modern languages. Ideas from the national strategies for improving standards in Years 7 to 9 have been enthusiastically incorporated into lesson planning. Consequently, lessons usually have a 'starter' to check previous learning, and then continue with a variety of carefully timed activities to ensure that pupils are making progress throughout. The depth and extent of learning are checked at the conclusion of lessons through effective plenary sessions. However, there is insufficient attention given to the correction of spelling and grammar in pupils' written work.
14. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Relationships with teachers and classroom assistants are very supportive and encourage pupils to want to learn. Teachers make effective use of the assistants who provide valuable support to individual pupils. However, in some subjects such as science, geography and history, there is insufficient classroom support to enable all of the pupils to make the progress that they might. In many subjects, tasks are modified to ensure that weaker learners are challenged effectively so that they can progress satisfactorily. In some subjects, these pupils are given the same work as other pupils but tasks are 'talked through' well by the teacher who then keeps a close eye on progress. Some very good teaching of small groups of pupils raises standards of literacy and improves numerical skills. The success of this work is reflected in the fact that all pupils with special educational needs are successful at GCSE.
15. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are also good overall. As in Years 7 to 9, they are good in English, mathematics and science. They are also good in all other subjects apart from art, where they are very good, and design and technology and physical education, where they are satisfactory. Two excellent lessons were observed during the inspection. They were both in Year 11. One was in food technology and the other was in drama. The good relationships between pupils and teachers help to generate a good learning atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils are generally keen to do well and rise to the challenges of GCSE. Since the previous inspection, teachers have improved the provision in many subjects for the highest attaining pupils, including those with particular gifts and talents. This is demonstrated in these pupils' production of work consistent with the highest grades at GCSE, for example in art and English.
16. Assessment is good with some significantly strong features and some weaknesses. The school gives its assessment procedures a high profile and they have improved since the

previous inspection. They make an effective contribution to the school's improving standards. A strong feature is the target setting that is based on extensive pupil performance data. Each department is provided with a detailed, progressive profile of every pupil's prior achievements and their predicted attainment. The data is updated on a regular basis. The use of this data for monitoring and tracking pupil progress is good in most subjects, and very good in SEN and art. In almost every subject the marking and assessment of work results in pupils being aware of what they need to do to improve. Despite the overall effectiveness of the assessment system, marking requires improvement in many subjects, particularly in citizenship, and generally in relation to the correction of spelling.

17. The identification and assessment of the needs of SEN pupils are excellent. Since September 2003, pupils have been much more closely involved in developing their plans and targets and in their review of progress. The requirements for statutory assessment and review are met meticulously. Targets on pupils' individual education plans are realistic and used well by subject teachers.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. The wide range of courses in Years 10 to 11 is a very good feature. There are very good programmes of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Accommodation, resources and staffing are good overall. Levels of support staffing are insufficient in some areas. The indoor accommodation for physical education is inadequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a very good programme of extra curricular activities.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and for employment.
- The curriculum in individual subjects is planned well.
- Staffing, resources and accommodation are generally good.
- There is not enough classroom support for SEN or sufficient technical support for art and design and technology.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation for physical education adversely affects learning.

Commentary

18. There has been good improvement in curriculum provision since the previous inspection. The school has consolidated its strengths, expanded its range of courses and improved provision for ICT and special educational needs. Staffing weaknesses in ICT and music, identified in the previous report, have been eliminated.
19. There are considerable strengths in the planning of the curriculum, which contains a remarkably wide range of courses for such a relatively small school. The breadth of provision in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment, from those seeking mainly academic courses to those seeking vocational and work-related learning. The school is currently implementing plans for further improvement in September 2004. Year 9 pupils are selecting options from a highly innovatory 'four pathway' menu, each route tailored to meet the learning requirements of a different group.
20. Extra-curricular activities are very good. The strong programme of visits and trips is rigorously monitored to ensure that all pupils participate adequately as they move through the school. Out of hours learning is provided through holiday schools and lunchtime 'booster' classes for examinations. There are good opportunities for involvement in the arts through productions and ensembles, and a good range of recreational and competitive sport. The Heron club provides

very good support for potentially vulnerable pupils entering secondary education, using older pupils as mentors.

21. Provision for the library is good and supports learning well. The ratio of books to pupils is better than in most schools. Books are organised in an accessible and inviting way. Staff enthusiasm in this area draws more than a third of Year 7 pupils to the lunchtime 'bookbusters' club. Pupils engage in a range of reading activities and meet successful authors. There is good and effective liaison with the English department to promote reading further.
22. The personal, social and health education is planned and taught well. A good programme for citizenship and careers activities prepares pupils well for the next phases of their lives. Pupils having special educational needs benefit from good curricular provision. Well-planned programmes help them to improve language skills. Skilled classroom assistants help these pupils to make very good progress in some lessons but the number of available hours for this work is too low to enable them to make all of the progress that they might. The curriculum in most subjects is planned well to enable all pupils to make good progress. It is very good in art. However, the curriculum in design and technology is too narrow because pupils are not enabled to use a sufficiently wide enough range of materials in resistant materials.
23. The quality and sufficiency of accommodation and resources are good. The buildings are well maintained both inside and out. The display around the school is very good and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning by providing a stimulating and pleasant environment. The only weakness is in physical education where indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory and adversely affects learning. Accommodation for science is now satisfactory, an improvement since the previous inspection. Levels of resources are good. The number of computers available for pupils to use is above the national average, a considerable improvement. Almost all teachers are specialists in their subjects with a good mix of experienced and newly qualified. The previous weakness in music has been resolved. There is good technician support for practical subjects, except for art and design and technology where it is inadequate.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for pupils' care and welfare are very good. The quality of support, advice and guidance is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a high regard for their teachers.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are excellent.
- Pupils are very well supported personally and academically.

Commentary

24. Pupils are very happy at school and feel safe, valued and supported because of the way they are treated. They greatly value their teachers and the opportunities that are available. The strength of relationships throughout the school is an impressive feature that contributes much to the calm atmosphere in which pupils enjoy their education.
25. The school goes to considerable lengths to meet the needs of each pupil. A special club for potentially vulnerable new pupils helps them to cope well with their new environment with the aid of older pupils. The club is part of an excellent transfer and induction programme that prepares the pupils for their new school. The pastoral teams, including form tutors, who remain with the same form each year, provide continuous and very effective ongoing care. Prefects and pupil mentors receive coaching and training to provide high quality support for the younger children. The school regularly surveys pupils' views, and the suggestions that the very well developed school council puts forward are seriously considered and often acted upon.

The procedures for child protection are very well implemented and the support provided for children in public care is very good. The arrangements for health and safety are also very good.

26. Each day the learning support base is open at breaks and lunchtimes to give additional support and pupils with special educational needs are very keen to attend. They queue up to work in the centre and receive additional support. Very good monitoring of progress and frequent reviews make sure that pupils understand their own rates of progress and how to devise new targets. Links with outside specialist support agencies contribute very effectively to pupils' personal development and academic progress. The very good contacts with medical personnel mean that a swift response is obtained when pupils require it.
27. Pupils are well informed in most subjects about how they are progressing and the new system of review and targeting for improvement is good. Academic support is good, for example through a homework club or extra tuition. Pupils receive comprehensive and impartial information and advice about subject choices, and post 16 and career opportunities. Many pupils gain great benefit from a range of vocational courses at a local college.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents and its links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents believe that the school provides a good standard of education.
- Relationships between the school and pupils' parents are good.
- Information to parents about their children's progress could be improved.
- Involvement with the community enhances learning and pupils' personal development.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very well developed.

Commentary

28. Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education and care provided by the school. They are justified in believing that their children make good academic and personal progress. However, a minority of parents is not happy about the frequency of information received concerning pupils' progress. Annual school reports do in fact provide insufficient information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses in subjects and how to improve. The school is in the process of addressing the parental concern about frequency of information by sending out progress reports each term. Inspectors judge these new arrangements to be much better. Parents are kept well informed about the life and work of the school. They are surveyed for their views and are consulted about significant matters.
29. The school responds very promptly to concerns raised by parents. Parents in their turn co-operate well with strategies and events that support and involve their own children but their attendance at progress review meetings is low, although this is in many cases attributable to travel difficulties. Most parents are supportive regarding homework and attendance. Parental involvement in the daily life of the school is limited but the 'friends of school association' is very active in raising funds. Parents of pupils who have special education needs are very well involved in the statutory review process. The annual reviews for pupils whose needs require full formal statements take place at home when there are transport and other difficulties. The special needs co-ordinator and educational psychologist visit together to do everything possible for the children and involve the parents very closely. Very good links with primary schools help pupils to get off to a very good start.
30. A wide range of curricular-related visits out of school, including trips abroad, activities in the nearer community and with various organisations considerably enhances pupils' learning and

personal development. The school contributes to the community, for example by supporting charities and elderly people, and in allowing its premises to be used by local groups and for adult education. The members of staff work very closely with other schools and colleges to promote very effectively the transfer to and preparation for the next stages of pupils' education or careers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good. It clearly identifies a vision of good attitudes and achievement to underpin the school's work. Management is good overall and is effective in converting the vision into reality with relatively few shortcomings. The work of the governors is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a strong and effective commitment to provide a good quality of education.
- Leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff is very good.
- Management is good overall at all levels.
- There is a very strong focus on the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils achieve well, even so, a very small number of lessons is not good enough.
- Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.

Commentary

31. Governance of the school is very good. The governors have a strong commitment to provide all that is best in education for boys and girls of all abilities. They monitor the work of the school thoroughly and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. All statutory requirements are met, apart from those relating to collective worship, where the school almost fully complies. Arrangements for full compliance are in place but in practice a small number of registration sessions do not meet requirements.
32. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. He sets the tone in a calm and very effective manner and is respected by staff and pupils. He has a clear vision about the promotion of academic standards in a very supportive learning atmosphere that is shared by the whole of the leadership team and communicated effectively to staff at all levels. Management is good and successful in translating this vision into a reality with few weaknesses. Standards have risen much more quickly than they have nationally, and the school is now successful in ensuring that the academically below average intake reaches above average standards at GCSE. The general atmosphere in the school is one of calm, industry and order, where boys and girls of all levels of attainment can really reach their potential.
33. The school sets itself challenging academic targets and rigorously checks the progress of all pupils as they move from Year 7 to 11. Underachieving pupils are identified quickly and supported carefully. Middle managers, such as heads of subjects and key stage managers all share the same vision for the promotion of high standards as the senior team. They are all effective and most manage their areas of responsibility well, ensuring that pupils work hard and exhibit good attitudes. The leadership and management of the special educational needs department are very good. There is a strong focus on helping pupils achieve, for example, by ensuring they leave school with as many GCSE passes as possible. All statutory requirements for the education of these pupils are fully met and their annual reviews are thorough and systematic.
34. An indication of the strength in leadership and management is clearly shown in the very good improvements that the school has made since the previous inspection. For example, tough but necessary decisions have been made in relation to teaching, where most of the previous ten per cent of unsatisfactory or poor practice has been swept away. Teaching and learning in

French have improved tremendously and standards in Year 11 are now well above average. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, criticised at the previous inspection, is now good.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Total income | 1,862,912 |
| Total expenditure | 1,878,813 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3,505 |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year | 84,367 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 68,466 |

35. The school's financial affairs are also managed very well. The principles of best value are applied well and the school targets its resources carefully towards continually improving standards. Achievement is good throughout the school and standards are improving faster than they are nationally. The school provides very good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good with some very good features and a few shortcomings.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Pupils work hard, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' spelling requires attention and inaccuracies in written work undermine standards.

Commentary

36. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were broadly average in 2003, repeating the pattern of recent years. The proportion of results at the higher levels was above average. In 2003, GCSE English results were just above average and English literature results were well above average. Girls significantly outperformed boys in both subjects as they did nationally. All of these results represent good achievement because pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are below average, particularly in writing.
37. Standards are broadly average in the current Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Achievement is good. In Year 9, reading and speaking standards are average. Good progress in writing is evident in formal assessment tasks but less so in exercise books. Most pupils organise their writing clearly into paragraphs, write with clear expression and use basic punctuation accurately. Higher attaining pupils achieve a good effect through the careful selection of strong and varied vocabulary. In Year 11, pupils make good progress in writing in detail about the texts they study. Higher attaining pupils use quotations very well and justify a wide range of personal responses. The work of a small number of pupils is of the highest quality and consistent with GCSE grades A* and A. However, inaccuracies in written expression undermine the standards of lower attaining pupils in both Years 9 and 11. Weaknesses in spelling also undermine the work of a number of pupils, including many whose work is otherwise of an average standard and higher. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The subject's above average and successful entry rate at GCSE confirms this.
38. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. The most effective lessons reveal the teachers' very good command of the subject, fast pace and rigorous challenge. Lesson objectives based on relevant GCSE grade criteria, including the very highest grades where appropriate, are clearly evident in Years 10 and 11. This good practice helps pupils to make good progress in acquiring and applying the required skills for examinations. Lesson objectives are also clearly shared in Years 7 to 9 but they do not focus as explicitly on the skills the pupils require to reach their target levels. Some good assessment and monitoring procedures are emerging. Teachers adapt their methods and materials well to enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Planning for the best lessons ensures a motivating range of learning tasks that result in pupils working hard. Teachers expect much from their pupils. Even so, the high expectations and thorough marking that lead to painstaking work in the exercise books of Year 11 pupils are not as evident throughout all years. The least effective but nevertheless satisfactory lessons are characterised by reduced pace and challenge compared to the better ones.

39. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed acting head of department's searching analysis of the GCSE English results has resulted in improvements in schemes of work to deal with weaknesses in responses to poetry. She is effectively leading the introduction of a more rigorous assessment system to support and monitor learning. New grouping arrangements in Year 10 are resulting in better provision for potentially higher attaining boys. Higher standards and better teaching represent good improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Standards of language and literacy are broadly average. Pupils often express their ideas clearly and confidently in discussion. Most have sufficiently secure reading skills to help them find information effectively and efficiently. Writing skills in lessons are average. Pupils express their knowledge and understanding of subjects clearly when writing but weaknesses in spelling are apparent in the work of pupils of a wide range of attainment. These weaknesses relate to both technical terms and words in common usage.
41. Overall provision for the development of literacy is satisfactory. There is good support for pupils with significant reading difficulties through well-planned use of language programmes and literacy progress units. Subject teachers display key words and refer to them. In art, the pupils make good use of technical terms to evaluate their work. The school has promoted the development of literacy via training and the expectation that teachers in all subjects should plan for literacy. However, the marking and correction of spelling are not effectively developed across all subjects.

Drama

42. The teaching of drama was also sampled. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly average but current standards in Year 11 are clearly higher and well above average. During an excellent lesson, pupils made considerable progress in generating and evaluating methods to support an effective performance of their devised production. The teaching was energetic and compelling, providing a high degree of challenge to the pupils' thinking and imagination. Pupils' attitudes were excellent.

Modern foreign languages

43. From Year 7 pupils learn either French or German. In Year 8, approximately half of the year group begins a second language. No pupils in Years 10 or 11 study two languages. The focus of the inspection was on French but work in German was also sampled. In Year 9, teaching in German was good and pupils were making good progress. In Year 10 and 11, teaching was very good; pupils were highly motivated and were achieving very well. Lessons were conducted entirely in German, activities were challenging and pupils displayed a good command of vocabulary and complex grammar structures in their confident oral and written responses. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Pupils did better in German than in other subjects and boys' results were well above results for boys nationally. Pupils achieved very well considering they had studied German from Year 8 as a second language only.

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good.
- Boys and girls achieve well and standards are rising because teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are good.
- Current standards in French are well above average in Year 11.

- Pupils do not pay enough attention to accuracy in written work.
- Teachers do not speak French consistently in lessons.
- ICT is not used.

Commentary

44. In 2003, GCSE results were poor. Boys and girls did significantly less well in French than in their other subjects. Results reflect staffing difficulties over a period of time, which have now been resolved.
45. Current standards in Year 9 are average and are higher than the most recent teacher assessments. This represents good achievement over time because pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average attainment overall. Some high attaining pupils reach well above average standards in writing because they can use a variety of language structures, including tenses, with confidence. However, in general, pupils' written work lacks sufficient attention to basic accuracy, especially spelling. Numbers taking French in Year 11 are low because this year group studied French as a second language only and most pupils chose to continue with German to GCSE. Standards of work are well above average and represent good achievement. Some of these higher attaining pupils produce fluent and detailed accounts that match the criteria for the highest grades.
46. The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Planning for progression over time is good and lessons provide opportunities for pupils to develop their active use of French as well as their comprehension skills. Games and problem solving activities make learning enjoyable and help to sustain pupils' interest. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills still further are missed because teachers do not speak French consistently in the classroom. Materials are carefully adapted to meet the differing needs of pupils within a class. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress when in-class support is provided. Pupils' good conduct and attitudes contribute well to their good rate of learning. However, instances of restlessness and inattention among a small minority of pupils slow the pace of learning in large Year 9 classes where no in-class support is provided. Assessment overall is good, though marking for error is insufficiently rigorous. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning do not yet feature in the programme.
47. Since the appointment of a new head of department, good leadership and effective teamwork have led to good improvement, most notably in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. Annual visits to France are now well established and contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the department is good.
- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and most pupils achieve well.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to enrich and support learning.

Commentary

48. In 2003, overall results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average compared to the national picture. They were well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally.

The 2003 results were above average, both in terms of the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C and those attaining grades A*-G. Few pupils achieved the highest grades A* or A. Most boys and girls performed at least as well in GCSE mathematics as in their other subjects. In both GCSE and national tests there was very little difference in the performance of boys and girls.

49. Current standards of work in Years 9 and 11 are above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Analysis of their written work indicates that good progress is sustained throughout the school. Overall, pupils achieve well. They study similar topics at levels that are suitably matched to individual needs, but not enough use is made of ICT. The quality of the work of lower attaining pupils is higher than that usually observed, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and shows confidence and self-esteem. Most of their work is consistent with GCSE grades D and E. It is rare for any pupil not to gain external accreditation in mathematics. However, the highest attaining pupils are not consistently challenged with work that matches their potential for reaching the highest levels and grades. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls.
50. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have good pupil management skills and generally have high expectations of behaviour. Preparation and planning are thorough, and reflect subject expertise and the progressively positive impact of recent national strategies. Pupils' grasp of mathematical concepts is good and enables them to apply their skills well when looking at new work. The accurate use of correct vocabulary is constantly emphasised and pupils speak confidently when encouraged to do so. However, the least effective part of some lessons is the limited dialogue between teachers and pupils so that the potential for them to jointly assess learning and progress is not fully realised. Highest attaining pupils sometimes spend too much time on revision rather than more rigorous and challenging work. Although the quality and frequency of marking varies, assessment is used effectively to monitor progress and set individual targets. Homework is well used to support progress. Relationships reflect the mutual respect between teachers and pupils so that there is a harmonious and productive atmosphere in lessons. This enables most pupils to sustain interest and concentration and results in good levels of learning.
51. The leadership and management of the department are good. Leadership is energetic and sets a good example. Strategies for continued improvement are accurately identified and stem from the clear sense of educational direction. Monitoring, evaluation and analysis of the performance of the department are good and used well in informing planning and developments. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good and includes new schemes of work and continuous improvement at GCSE.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. All teachers have been involved in training to aid the promotion of mathematical skills across the curriculum. Pupils' competence in using and applying their mathematical knowledge and understanding in the different contexts provided by the curriculum is average. This competence supports learning in other subjects. For example, in science and geography, pupils show confidence in the production and understanding of graphs, and in design and technology, accurate measurement and estimation are strong features.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- Pupils in all year groups achieve well.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.

- There are good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Spelling and sentence construction require improvement.
- The highest attaining pupils need greater challenge.
- ICT is not used sufficiently.
- A very small amount of teaching is not good enough.

Commentary

53. Standards in the 2003 national tests in Year 9 were above average and maintained the trend of the last few years. Results at GCSE were average but showed an improvement on previous years. Boys did better than girls.
54. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average and represent good achievement. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 particularly in practical work. The emphasis on developing investigative and analytical skills has resulted in a rise in standards in Year 10 and 11, and an improvement in pupils' understanding of physics, chemistry and biology. Pupils carry out investigations confidently, record results accurately, and present them in a variety of different ways. They construct and interpret graphs, draw relevant conclusions and make evaluations. Most pupils can also explain anomalies in results. All pupils have a good understanding of fair testing and of controlling variables. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall because their needs are served well through the use of individual education plans. However, such pupils would make further progress with more support in class. Higher attaining pupils have a well-developed understanding of science but the most able do not have sufficient intellectual challenge. Poor spelling of scientific and technical terms and difficulties in sentence construction, when explaining observations, hinder the progress of many pupils of all ages.
55. Teaching is good in all years and frequently very good and pupils learn well. At its strongest, teaching is innovative and challenging, showing good planning and the use of a variety of strategies, which stimulate pupils and meet their learning needs. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of their pupils. They use resources well and recognise the value of the pupils' contribution to their own learning and to the lesson. These features are evident in all years and, as a result, pupils' progress is correspondingly good and their attitudes positive and co-operative. There is a very small amount of poor teaching characterised by a lack of pace and challenge, low expectations and a lack of respect between the pupils and teacher. Assessment of pupils' work is good overall. Pupils appreciate the use of self-assessment and their involvement in deciding how to improve their work. Assessment also helps teachers to match work and teaching styles to the needs of pupils. Although there is some effective use of ICT, this needs to be developed further. Teaching and learning are also good in the newly introduced GNVQ applied science course; lower attaining pupils in Year 10 are making good progress as a result. The overall good teaching and the curriculum opportunities are having an effect on raising standards in all year groups and particularly at GCSE.
56. Leadership of the department is good. The ethos is positive with a clearly shared vision and set of values all aimed at raising standards further. The well-qualified teachers work well together, sharing expertise, resources and strategies. Management is also good with the monitoring of progress being particularly strong. Resources are managed well but storage facilities are inadequate, particularly for chemicals. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in the curriculum and in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching has also improved and is now resulting in rising standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2003 GNVQ results were well above average but GCSE results were well below average.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well taught and achieve well.
- In Years 7 to 9, weaknesses in teaching are affecting standards.
- The good leadership and management of the subject are resulting in improving standards.
- Marking does not always show pupils in Years 7 to 9 what they have to do to improve.

Commentary

57. GNVQ results in 2003, the first year this course was offered, were well above average. This group of pupils, mainly boys, achieved very well and did better in ICT than in their other subjects. GCSE results were below average and pupils did better in the other subjects that they studied.
58. Standards in the current Year 9 are average overall, which represents satisfactory achievement. Most pupils can create good quality presentations for particular audiences, combining text and graphics to good effect. They are confident in a range of software applications though only higher attaining pupils can fully utilise the more advanced features, for example, when using spreadsheets for advanced modelling. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Although teaching is good enough to enable pupils to attain average standards, weaknesses in managing pupils effectively results, in a minority of lessons, in pupils wasting time and not doing enough work. This negates the very good planning and preparation that all teachers put into their lessons. Very occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory. Work is assessed and graded effectively at the end of each unit. However, pupils are not given enough frequent guidance on where they are in relation to National Curriculum levels or what they have to do to improve. The lack of self-help resources holds pupils back from finding things out for themselves and they rely too much on their teachers for assistance.
59. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations, manage pupils effectively and set work that is challenging. Consequently, standards are rising. However, despite this good teaching, overall standards in Year 11 are still only average as a result of staffing difficulties in the recent past and represent satisfactory achievement. Standards of work in the GNVQ course are above average and pupils are achieving well. Design skills are good and pupils can work independently of the teacher, applying a range of skills across several software applications. The standards reached by GCSE pupils are below average overall. They lack confidence and fluency at the keyboard and rely too much on their teachers for support. However, they have average basic skills and can use most of the features of major software programmes to create and present information. Design skills are below average. However, given their attainment at the start of the course, pupils are achieving well. Learning for pupils on both courses is supported by the good attitudes they bring to their work, unlike pupils in Years 7 to 9, where attitudes and behaviour are only satisfactory.
60. In normal circumstances, leadership and management of the subject are good. Vocational courses have been successfully introduced into Years 10 and 11. The department is focused on raising standards, for example, through matching the curriculum to the needs of the pupils. Years 7 to 9 are involved in the National Strategy for ICT that is designed to raise standards through more effective teaching and learning. Due to the temporary absence of the curriculum leader, the monitoring of teaching and learning in ICT has been postponed. As a consequence, the weaknesses in teaching in Years 7 to 9 have not been clearly identified and remedied. Since the previous inspection, there has been very good improvement in resources, curriculum, standards and, in particular, technician support which is now excellent.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects are satisfactory, except in modern foreign languages. In science, data loggers are used to capture and store data for future use. In English, pupils use the Internet for research and make imaginative use of CD Rom, for example, in their study of *The Merchant of Venice*. Art enables pupils to practise the use of image manipulation software. Computer aided design and manufacturing software is sometimes used in design and technology, though not as frequently as it might be. Video is used in physical education to demonstrate good technique and help improve performance. In mathematics, history, geography, citizenship and religious education, the Internet is used for research, and word processing and desktop publishing for presentation. However, the full potential of ICT as an aid to learning in several subjects such as mathematics and science is still not fully realised.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good with some very good features and pupils achieve well.
- The use of very good resources captures pupils' interest and they respond well.
- Standards of extended writing and spelling are not high enough.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- For most pupils, skills in map reading and fieldwork need to be improved.

Commentary

62. In 2003, all pupils entered for GCSE passed in the range A*-G but the proportion of A*-C grades was below average. There were no passes at A* and A grades. Due to technical problems with the examinations outside the control of the school these results were lower than expected.
63. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are average and represent good achievement because pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average attainment. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those identified as being gifted and talented, achieve well because teaching caters for them effectively. In Years 7 to 9, pupils use different resources competently to increase their knowledge and understanding of topics such as settlements and population. However, there is insufficient provision of classroom assistants to enable a few pupils to realise their full potential. In Years 10 and 11, pupils link topics effectively to develop their geographical understanding of the impact of migration on the social and economic growth of cities. Higher attaining pupils use fieldwork skills well, producing reports on tourism that are above average. Middle and lower-attaining pupils label diagrams accurately but they do not use technical language to explain the processes, for example in their work on waterfall and erosion. Skills in map reading and interpretation and fieldwork are not being consolidated and developed sufficiently as pupils move through the school.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good features. The best teaching is well planned with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. Starter activities, such as anagrams, effectively consolidate knowledge before the main part of the lesson begins. The lessons move at a good pace and make effective use of new technology. For example, compelling Powerpoint explanations in lessons on forests enabled all pupils to understand the circulation of the atmosphere in the tropics and the resulting pattern of rainforests and deserts. The use of very good resources captured pupils' interest and maintained their concentration. They were absorbed by video clips of forests and learnt about the symbolism of trees in different religions. They were invited to reflect on the beauty and variety of animal life in these regions and to consider the impact of human exploitation on these

fragile ecosystems. Sometimes, however, less effective teaching misses opportunities to involve pupils sufficiently actively in assessing their own learning. Insufficient attention is given to spelling and pupils need more guidance on how to structure complex writing when, for example, describing and explaining the pattern of farming in the British Isles.

65. Leadership and management are good. All the teachers are very experienced and work very well as a team sharing good practice. Documentation includes very good guidance on assessment levels. Planning has a clear focus on improving teaching and learning but does not include examination targets. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because standards are now higher, and achievement and teaching are good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and most pupils are achieving well.
 - The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
 - Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to their good achievement.
 - Pupils' spelling is weak.
 - There is not enough individual support for pupils with special educational needs.
66. In 2003, GCSE results were below average in the range A*-C though all candidates creditably obtained at least a pass grade in the range A*-G. Girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than that found nationally. However, achievement of both boys and girls was satisfactory in relation their below average starting points in Year 7.
67. Current standards in Year 9 are average. However, some of the highest attaining pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their ideas at length and critically analyse their sources of evidence. In written work, pupils' spelling is generally weak. Their understanding of how there can be different interpretations of the same event is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, in relation to the below average starting points on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is good. In the majority of cases, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, where the proportion of such pupils in a class is relatively high and there is no classroom assistant, the pace of learning drops because the teacher cannot always provide the amount of individual support required. This happens particularly when the special needs are related to the pupils' behaviour.
68. In Year 11, where pupils' previous experiences in learning history have been inconsistent because of staffing changes, standards are close to but below average and achievement is satisfactory. However, standards are rising, particularly because of the effectiveness of newly introduced strategies to improve the achievement of boys. For example, in their study of the development of medicine, there is an increasing depth and length of response to questions concerning the effects of warfare on advances in surgery. Initial progress of Year 10 pupils on the GCSE course has been rapid resulting in the upward revision of many of their target grades. Taking into account pupils' starting points at the beginning of Year 10, their achievement is good.
69. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A good range of interesting learning activities is used. However, in Years 7 to 9, some teaching does not cater equally effectively for pupils of all levels of attainment. Strengths include good subject knowledge and understanding and the creation of a good ethos for learning, which encourages the full involvement of pupils in lessons. Starter activities are used particularly effectively to capture pupils' interest and prepare them well for new learning. Marking is regular and shows pupils how to improve their work. However, this is not usually linked clearly enough to National Curriculum levels or

examination grades. Newly devised assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 provide good opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in the process.

70. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has quickly identified key areas for improvement and has introduced strategies that are beginning to have positive effects. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Issues raised at the time have been resolved and standards are now rising.

Religious education

Overall provision in religious education (RE) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- RE makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Religious education is well led and managed.
- Spelling of technical terms is not always established securely.
- Some written material is the same for all levels of attainment in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

71. Pupils' lower than average literacy skills and diversity of background in the subject make for a slow start in Year 7. However by Years 9 and 11, standards are average. In Year 11, all pupils achieve above average standards in oral work, but written work spans the full range. All pupils have the opportunity to take the short course GCSE. In 2003, just less than twice the national proportion did so and results were above average. One group took the full GCSE course and achieved average results. Pupils acquire a sound understanding of world religions as they move through the school and in Year 11 they concentrate in depth on Christianity. Overall achievement is good and in lessons boys achieve as well as girls although fewer choose to take the full course at GCSE. Good numbers of boys and girls achieve the higher grades.
72. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Teachers with very good subject knowledge generate confidence in their pupils so that they all contribute very well to the lessons and to each other's learning. They are skilled at challenging pupils with carefully posed and precise questions. Pupils' thinking is deepened and their insight developed by encouraging them to extend their answers. Sometimes vivid video presentations stimulate and engage pupils at deep levels. In a lesson on infant baptism in the Russian Orthodox Church, pupils gasped at the physicality of the liturgy as several babies were totally immersed. They were able to recall their knowledge well and compare it with the practice of adult baptism by immersion in another denomination of Christianity. Teachers provide good individual support to pupils with special educational needs by talking them through tasks, although written material tends to be the same for all pupils. Many pupils find the spelling of technical terms difficult and really need glossaries to help them research and define vocabulary. Lessons, which start with a short period of reflection, help pupils to focus quickly and bring them to the threshold of new learning.
73. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the future and a focus on raising standards. Teachers keep themselves up to date through continuing professional development. Straightforward schemes of work include well-planned assessment opportunities and projects, which develop pupils' research skills and the use of ICT to good effect. Some very good work in faiths other than Christianity broadens pupils' understanding of the world and its cultures. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly in relation to improved standards.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in food technology are very good.
- Current standards in food technology are well above average.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Insufficient use is made of displays of pupils' work.
- The choice of projects in resistant materials technology limits progress.
- Drawing, designing and the development of ideas need to be improved.
- Technical support for the subject is inadequate.

Commentary

74. GCSE results at A* to C were average in 2003 and broadly similar to those of 2002. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are broadly average but they are well above average in food technology, average in graphics and below average in resistant materials. They represent satisfactory overall achievement. In food technology, pupils make particularly good progress as a result of very good teaching linked to clear objectives in the GCSE or the National Curriculum programmes of study. However there is insufficient practical work using metals and plastics in resistant materials throughout the school. The areas provided for the subject need improvement and development to include the display of high quality examples to extend and raise expectations of all pupils, especially in resistant materials. Achievement is currently held back in resistant materials by poor choice of project tasks, poor drawing and ideas development and weak presentation skills. Ideas need more emphasis so that all pupils can develop personal approaches to design problems and so that the highest attaining pupils can reach their potential.
75. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with very good features in food technology. In food technology, teaching is characterised by very good pace and challenge. Features of the very good lessons are oral work, where pupils are encouraged to argue, debate, read out-loud and make suggestions in a supportive but challenging atmosphere. Homework in design and technology needs development because it is often undemanding and not used as an opportunity for extending the learning and skills of the higher attaining pupils. Systems and control projects need to be embedded further into the work of years 7 to 9. Pupils show a positive attitude to learning and behaviour in lessons is very good. Boys are engaged very well in food technology by a range of teaching techniques, one of which is to appeal to their competitive nature by giving groups very short time deadlines and breaking down activities into a series of small short tasks. Pupils' with special educational needs are identified and helped to make progress on an individual basis across the department.
76. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory with some good features. The department is well organised in terms of its good systems for assessment. However, the level of technical support available in resistant materials and food technology is totally inadequate and affects the quality of the practical experience available for the pupils. Greater technical support would also help to fully use the computer aided manufacturing equipment that is available but under-used. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Computer availability has now been adequately resolved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- There is a vast range of media and artistic outcomes.
- High standards are promoted by very good displays of pupils' work.
- Boy's achievement is promoted well and flourishing.
- Pupils exhibit very good attitudes and behaviour.
- ICT is not used sufficiently.

Commentary

77. GCSE results in the range A*-C were well above average in 2003, with boys and girls achieving very much better than the national average. Current standards are well above average throughout the school, and represent very good achievement as a result of very good focused teaching and the constant promotion of high standards. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop a wide range of very good drawing and painting skills. They begin to understand the work of important artists and designers and how it can influence art and design in general, and their own work in particular. By Year 11, pupils are moving confidently towards the higher GCSE grades, and work in their own style and those of famous artists both in two and three dimensions.
78. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. Teaching is often highly individualised with the emphasis on developing each pupil's ideas. This enables boys and girls to actively engage in their own interests and become confident independent learners. Short-term tasks linked to targets also foster boy's high achievement. A vast range of wet and dry media and the possibilities of working in a range of materials have helped to promote individual thinking and raise expectations. The very high standards of the work in the classroom and around the school also promote high expectations and the celebration of excellence. A major strength is the positive, articulate and mature attitude of the pupils. Most are confident, independent learners with developed skills, who enjoy the freedom and challenge of the subject. However, the use of ICT is currently underdeveloped within the classroom; further facilities would extend the skills of all pupils and enable the further progress of boys in particular.
79. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The ambition, direction and energy of the staff in establishing the subject as a major influence in the school are positive features of this department. The scheme of work is excellent and is directly linked to the assessment process with high quality feedback given to pupils and parents. However, technical support is totally inadequate for this intensely practical subject, particularly for the preparation of pottery materials. Since the last inspection, improvements have been good. Standards have improved a great deal and other issues raised at the time have been fully addressed. The significant lack of computers has been addressed by having access to ICT in other rooms but in the art department the computer facilities are still only barely satisfactory.

Music

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning lead to good progress for most pupils.
- SEN pupils require more attention.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Analysis of standards is used well to adjust the work given to pupils.
- Marking seldom corrects spelling or gives pupils details of how to improve.
- Music computer work has yet to be fully introduced in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

80. GCSE results in 2003 were below average, but the small numbers of candidates lessen the validity of comparison with national figures. Pupils did as well as expected.
81. Current standards in Year 9 are broadly average and represent good achievement because pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average attainment in music. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In Year 9, all pupils are able to use electronic keyboards and tuned percussion with some competence for performance and for composition. Listening and appraising skills are below average; the department works to improve these skills so that pupils are able to develop a musical vocabulary with which to describe the music they hear. Singing is used well in many lessons, as in a Year 7 lesson where songs were used to reinforce musical terms. However, computers are not used sufficiently in Years 7 to 9.
82. Standards in Year 11 are average and represent good achievement. By Year 11, pupils can produce compositions using computers in addition to electronic keyboards. Standards in composition and performance are average but below average in musical appraisal. The department identifies pupils' musical and general literacy as a focus area and gives emphasis to key words and technical terms. This has begun to have a positive effect on raising aural attainment in appraising music.
83. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils benefit from teaching with brisk pace. Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning and lessons often have a range of interesting tasks. This helps to consolidate learning and maintain interest. Teaching embodies strong preparation, a range of styles and good organisation. There is some work especially designed for pupils at a range of levels but not enough to help pupils with special educational needs make better progress. Work is regularly marked but spelling, particularly of technical terms, is seldom corrected. As a result marking does not underpin the strong focus on literacy found in many lessons. Progress is very good for high attaining pupils, and satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs. The provision for instrumental teaching is satisfactory. However the number of students taking lessons in school is below average. Teaching is good but instrumental teachers do not always set targets for their students nor does the department officially record grade examination successes.
84. Leadership and management are good. The monitoring and assessing of pupils' work are good. Attainment is analysed across the range of skills taught in music lessons and this information is used to develop the work offered to students. GCSE music results are analysed by component and the improvement in aural skills monitored from year to year. Accommodation is good but computer resources within the department are barely adequate. Extra-curricular work is quite strong with pupils regularly taking part in musical activities. The performing and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated in musical events. There are regular large-scale school productions. Such opportunities have a strong impact on pupils' cultural and social development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory because standards have improved, particularly in relation to composition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The quality of provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- GCSE results are well above average.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective.
- Weaker GCSE candidates need more support with written work.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and adversely affects standards.

Commentary

85. There were no entries for GCSE in the two years prior to 2003. The results in 2003 were well above average. Pupils generally performed better than might be expected in relation to their starting points on entry to the course. There was no significant difference in the overall performance of boys and girls although girls were more successful in obtaining the highest A* and A grades. Very creditably, all pupils obtained at least a D grade in the examination.
86. Current standards in Year 9 are average. Work on health related fitness is strong and pupils reach above average standards. In relation to the below average starting point on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. Pupils' special educational needs are well known to teachers, who adapt the activities suitably for them and enable them to succeed. Their learning support assistant effectively supports the progress of those pupils with a physical disability. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning also contribute to the good achievement.
87. Although average overall, current standards in Year 11 are inconsistent but represent broadly satisfactory achievement. In compulsory physical education lessons, pupils reach standards that are above average on the trampoline, average in basketball, but below average in badminton and table tennis. The school hall has to be regularly used for teaching physical education although it is unsuitable for this purpose because of its size, shape and availability. This restricts learning opportunities and adversely affects standards in some activities taught, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Standards in GCSE classes are well above average and pupils achieve well in both practical and theoretical aspects of the course. It is a shame that the effects of consistently good teaching are undermined by unsatisfactory facilities for the subject.
88. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and good overall. Specialist knowledge is used well in explanations and demonstrations and in the analysis of pupils' performance. Relationships are good. ICT is used well in Years 10 and 11 where pupils analyse their trampoline performance captured on video. Procedures for assessing pupils work are good but do not involve pupils enough in target setting based on an understanding of the levels of the National Curriculum for physical education. Marking of pupils' theoretical work in GCSE classes effectively helps them to improve although not enough is done to support the written work of some of the lowest attaining pupils. For a relatively small school, there is a very good range of opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular sport.
89. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Issues raised at the time have been resolved and GCSE results have improved. Subject management and leadership is good and has successfully tackled issues such as the participation rates of girls in physical activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school runs a GCSE course in business studies, vocational GCSE courses in ICT, leisure and tourism and science, and a GNVQ full foundation course in hospitality and catering. In addition, a small number of pupils follow work-related courses at a local college. It was not possible to inspect these courses in depth; however, lessons in all areas were sampled. Those in ICT and science are included in the reports for those subjects.

Commentary

90. GCSE results in business studies in 2003 were above average in the ranges A*-C and A*-G. An outstanding feature of the course is the opportunity for pupils to be involved in the Young Enterprise scheme. This provides them with exciting opportunities to use their initiative and to develop their responsibility. In recent years, with very good guidance and advice, pupils have been extremely successful in establishing small companies that have made a profit, designing, making and marketing various products. They have promoted their work in such an effective manner that they have won regional competitions and have represented the region at national level. As a result of these experiences, their personal development has been excellent. In the lesson observed, pupils were learning about company finance and achieving as expected in response to satisfactory teaching during the temporary absence of the permanent teacher.
91. Results in GNVQ leisure and tourism in 2003 were very pleasing. Twelve out of 13 candidates completed the award and gained two GCSE passes in the range B to C. These results represent very good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment at the start of the course. The course is now a new applied vocational GCSE. In the lesson observed, pupils were preparing a presentation on a visitor centre in the Lake District. Standards were average and pupils were achieving very well because teaching and learning were very good. Pupils were developing the skills of independent learning effectively and had very positive attitudes towards their work.
92. In hospitality and catering, skilled lecturers using specialist facilities teach the practical units at a local college. Portfolio and examination units are taught in school. The course leads to the award of four GCSEs at grades D to G. Current standards, evident from a scrutiny of completed work, are average and all pupils are on target to pass in that range. Most of the pupils have special educational needs and have made very good progress over time. Pupils have catered very competently for large numbers of staff for a Christmas dinner and for younger pupils in primary schools.
93. The work-related vocational courses have achieved success in motivating a small number of disaffected pupils and have provided continuity and progression on courses spanning school and college. The school works in close co-operation with a local college, and the organisation and management of these arrangements are very effective. Year 10 pupils spend one day each week at college and the school's timetable ensures that they do not miss lessons in other subjects. Joinery, hairdressing, motor vehicle engineering, sport and leisure, and food preparation are currently on offer. Pupils select one of these and over two years gain Level 1 NVQs or Progression Awards from the City and Guilds. Pupils and parents are fully involved in a detailed induction process, and high expectations of standards of work, attendance and behaviour are made clear. Monitoring of attendance is good and the college provides termly progress reports that are communicated to pupils and parents. Pupils are treated as young adults, respond accordingly and make good progress in learning new skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

During the inspection, the focus was on citizenship but personal, social and health education was also sampled in terms of four lessons relating to careers. Teaching was good overall and pupils derived considerable benefit from it.

Citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made a very good start with this new National Curriculum subject.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in active citizenship.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and really benefit from it.
- Pupils' files are not organised well enough and written work remains unmarked.

Commentary

94. The school's planning for this new National Curriculum subject has been careful, thorough and enthusiastic. It covers all requirements of the national programmes of study and provides pupils with a series of really worthwhile and challenging experiences, adding much to their personal development as they move through school and on towards the next phase of their lives.
95. Standards are average overall by Year 9 and represent good achievement. Pupils have a thorough understanding of topics such as human rights, national and local government, arson and the Fire Service, the law in relation to drugs, the effect of drugs on people's health, and the way that athletes can use them to cheat in sport. Pupils are really knowledgeable about these and other topics and can readily discuss them in the whole class situation or in smaller groups. However, written work standards are generally not as high as they should be. Pupils have realised that their work is rarely marked and some do not make sufficient effort with it. In Years 7 to 9, pupils derive considerable benefit from their experiences leading up to and during 'citizenship week'. For example, pupils in Year 8 work in art on topics such as pollution, animal welfare and healthy living for an exhibition, which is viewed by the whole school. During the week, Year 9 become actively involved in the locality in projects such as bringing joy to older people by revitalising their gardens under careful supervision.
96. Standards in Year 11 are above average and represent good achievement. Pupils have the opportunity to build significantly on their experiences up to Year 9, particularly in relation to active citizenship. All of the pupils currently in Year 11 have benefited greatly from experiences such as their organisation of 'citizenship week' for pupils in Years 7 to 9, when they were in Year 10, and the production of a newspaper to celebrate its success. They have also had other opportunities, such as applications to become prefects, and the clearing of weeds and debris from a section of an old railway line, which is soon to become an attraction for tourists. The maturity of the prefects bears testimony to the success that the school has had in preparing pupils for responsible citizenship when they leave.
97. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. It is only in respect of the organisation of pupils' work and marking that there are any real shortcomings. Teaching is characterised by very good planning and a variety of compelling approaches, which usually keep the pupils' interest and concentration. Presentation skills are very good and include very good visual aids, especially when experienced presenters from the Fire Service, Police, Social Services and the medical profession join the teachers to help to explore topics with the pupils. Group work and discussion enable pupils to debate topics between themselves and consolidate learning.
98. Leadership and management of citizenship are good. They are enthusiastic and effective, enabling the pupils to experience a programme which is unusually good compared to others being offered in secondary schools in 2004. The school has made great progress with the introduction of this subject. Although assessment is developing satisfactorily, marking of written work needs to be improved.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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