

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHFIELD SCHOOL

Blackbird Leys, Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123346

Headteacher: Mr Mark Blencowe

Lead inspector: Alistair J M Bates

Dates of inspection: 8th - 10th March 2004

Inspection number: 259055

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community special
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 79

School address: Knights Road
Blackbird Leys
Oxford
Oxfordshire

Postcode: OX4 6DQ

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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Julie Slimm

Date of previous inspection: 15th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Northfield is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 79 pupils on roll (76 boys, 3 girls) aged between 11 and 16. The pupils' attainment on entry is very low with many having missed considerable amounts of their previous education due to exclusion from previous schools. The school is responsible for weekly residential provision for up to 12 boys at Northfield House, which is close to the main school site. School staff provide education at Thornbury House, a secure unit in Oxford. This provision was inspected by Ofsted in November 2003 and was not inspected during the current inspection. All pupils at Northfield have a statement of special educational needs. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils (12 per cent) are in public care. The school now admits pupils who in the past have been accommodated in out-of-authority provision. A significant number of pupils, particularly the older pupils, have a history of criminal behaviour, including substance misuse. This criminal behaviour has been known to cause difficulties in school and, partly as a result, the school employs a full-time on-site police officer. The school is currently advertising for a full-time teaching post and there are four teaching assistant posts not being filled due to long-term sickness or vacancies. The local education authority has plans to reorganise the school, reducing the number on roll to 60 and maintaining the residential provision.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21737	Alistair J M Bates	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education French Special educational needs Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language
9079	Ann Moss	Lay inspector	
18394	Maria Marsh	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Music
22729	Robert Arnold	Team inspector	Science History Geography Citizenship Personal, social and health education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Northfield is an **unsatisfactory** school because of weaknesses in the pupils' behaviour, teaching and learning, management and governance. The teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because of the very difficult behaviour of a significant number of the pupils. Although the school management has introduced appropriate systems for improving teaching, the curriculum and whole-school planning, these are not yet effective. The school provides **unsatisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very difficult behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is very challenging and, during the inspection, resulted in a high level of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- The headteacher provides good leadership to the staff team, who demonstrate a very high level of commitment to the school and to the pupils.
- The school has been required to admit a number of pupils who have no commitment to education or the school. Attendance is poor and their difficult behaviour, particularly in Key Stage 4, means that they receive "home tuition", although this does not meet their need for full-time education.
- A third of the pupils, those who attend school and lessons well, achieve well in their behaviour and learning in relation to their special educational needs. Standards for these pupils are improving, including improved examination results at 16 in English, mathematics and science.
- The residential provision is very good and the pupils make good progress in their personal development.
- Although the governors support the school, they are not effective in their role of providing direction and a number of statutory requirements are not met.

The school has made **unsatisfactory** progress since the last inspection. Behaviour has deteriorated as a result of the more severe difficulties presented by a significant number of pupils. GCSE examination results have improved overall, as have results at the end of Key Stage 3. Standards have improved in mathematics but achievement in English and science is worse. Relationships with parents have improved. The headteacher has established a number of appropriate systems for school management but these are not yet effective.

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 9	Satisfactory	Good
Year 11	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

(Note – these judgments relate to the pupils who attend regularly. Many pupils do not do so and their achievements are unsatisfactory in all areas).

Although the achievements of the whole population are **unsatisfactory**, overall, the table shows that pupils, particularly younger pupils, who attend well, achieve well during their time at the school. Achievement is unsatisfactory in science and for older pupils in English. A significant number of pupils do not attend regularly or avoid going into lessons. This results in unsatisfactory achievement, although their individual records show progress in behaviour and learning over time.

During the inspection, the very difficult behaviour of a number of pupils (particularly older pupils) had a serious impact on the achievement of others. These pupils did not respond to the school's normal behaviour management system. A scrutiny of work shows that pupils can achieve well over time.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are **poor** despite the school setting up appropriate systems to try and improve this area.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and learning are **unsatisfactory**. The main concern is the very difficult behaviour of a number of pupils who do not respond to the school's normal management system and disrupt a large number of lessons. Where pupils are able to settle, teaching is generally satisfactory with the majority of pupils, who remain in lessons, showing good commitment to learning. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. It has been extended to provide additional areas that interest and involve the pupils but statutory requirements are not met for the teaching of religious education. The school provides **good** care, guidance and support to the pupils. The partnerships with parents are **satisfactory** and the links with other educational institutions are **good**. The residential provision at Northfield House is **very good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides **good** leadership and this ensures that staff share a common commitment to the pupils. Management is **unsatisfactory**. Appropriate systems have been developed to support whole-school planning, the curriculum and self-evaluation but these are not yet effective. Governance is **unsatisfactory**. Governors support the work of the school but do not have sufficient awareness of their role in providing leadership.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views are generally positive. They feel that the school is well run, the staff work well and they are well informed about their children's education. They feel that some of the behaviour in the school is unmanageable. The pupils, particularly older pupils, have positive views, although they are concerned about the behaviour of some older pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Review, in conjunction with the local education authority, the provision that is made available to the pupils who are currently not attending.
- Improve the management of behaviour of a number of pupils by consistent use of the school behaviour policy.
- Raise the quality of teaching in English for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 and in science for all pupils.
- Further develop management systems, particularly the links between the school improvement plan, the use of the budget and raising standards, and develop the role of the governing body in monitoring the work of the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the teaching of religious education for all pupils and the statutory curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16.
- Ensure that headteacher performance management takes place.
- Ensure that the governors' annual report to parents includes all required information.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is **unsatisfactory** overall, although pupils who attend school and lessons regularly achieve well in a number of areas in relation to their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nearly a third of pupils do not attend regularly, or require alternative provision, and their achievement is poor.
- Another third of pupils do attend school but do not attend lessons, or behave very badly when they do. Their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- A final third of pupils attend school and lessons well and achieve at least satisfactory standards in the majority of subjects. This represents good achievement given their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and prior educational achievement.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in English for pupils over the age of 14, for all pupils in science and in religious education, where the school curriculum does not meet statutory requirements.
- Achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology, good in personal, social and health education for pupils up to the age of 14 and satisfactory for older students.

Commentary

1. All pupils on roll have a statement of special educational needs which identifies that they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their attainment is below national averages or expectations of pupils of their age. Judgments about their achievements are based on an assessment of their capability from pupil and school records, together with classroom observations.
2. The school population can be divided into three groups who achieve at different levels. A group of pupils, including a high proportion of pupils between 14 and 16, have no commitment to education or the school. Some have only attended for a small amount of time and do not attend now. A number have attended in the past but their behaviour has proved very difficult and they are now involved in alternative provision. The achievement of this group is poor.
3. A third of the pupils attend more regularly but their attendance is still poor. When they arrive in school, they often do not attend lessons, or are brought into lessons by school “patrol” staff. Their presence in a lesson is, for some, a major achievement in that they have a history of non-attendance or exclusion in other settings. Nevertheless, the behaviour of this group of pupils, particularly older pupils, is very challenging and can be very disruptive. During the inspection, a significant number of this group behaved in such a way as to significantly damage the quality of teaching and learning for other pupils. The achievements of this group are unsatisfactory, although they do make limited progress.
4. The other pupils attend school and lessons more regularly, although some still have significant periods of absence. The improvements in the school’s results for pupils aged 14 and 16 show that these pupils can achieve appropriate levels in their learning. Given their complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, this represents good achievement and progress over time.
5. Achievement is satisfactory in English for pupils up to the age of 14. However, between the ages of 14 and 16, it is unsatisfactory, largely due to the increasing challenge of the pupils’ behaviour, but also because the work is often unchallenging or appears irrelevant to the pupils. Although GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, they are not as good as in

mathematics for the same pupils. Achievement in the use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory.

6. Standards have improved in mathematics since the previous inspection and are now average across the school. Examination results have improved for 16-year-olds and more pupils achieve success in mathematics than in any other subject, largely due to the modular nature of the course. Achievement in numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory.
7. A small number of pupils are now achieving GCSE passes in science but standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is mainly due to unsatisfactory teaching, based on low expectations, together with inadequate facilities. The school does not fulfil statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education and there is little evidence of any achievement in this subject or in other areas of humanities.
8. Achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology, where the pupils' skill levels are good and the regular use of computers for literacy and numeracy is helping to raise standards in these areas. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in English and science, although its use in other subjects is satisfactory. Achievement is good in art and design due to the quality of teaching. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgment on standards in French, music, design and technology or physical education, although achievement was satisfactory in all the lessons seen.
9. Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve good standards in personal, social and health education. Those who attend regularly, particularly those in the residential provision, make good progress towards their personal targets in their individual education plans and in their personal development. Pupils with additional learning needs make satisfactory progress. Those pupils identified as vulnerable make satisfactory progress in their withdrawal class. Pupils with additional behavioural needs often present the most severe challenging behaviour and their needs cannot be fully met within the school environment. There is no difference in achievement between boys and girls or pupils of different ethnic origins.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

A significant number of pupils, particularly older pupils, are indifferent to the work of the school. They reject what is offered and this leads to **unsatisfactory** behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are **poor**, with a very high level of unauthorised absence. However, one third of the pupils have good attitudes to their work.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall with good provision for moral and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The behaviour of a significant number of pupils is poor. They disrupt lessons and find it hard to co-operate with others around the school. This leads to unsatisfactory achievement.
- Two-thirds of the pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes to school.
- One third of pupils have good attitudes to their work, particularly where there is good teaching. This has a positive impact on their achievement.
- Relationships between pupils are sometimes poor.
- Many of the older pupils show disrespect for teachers and are not good role models for the younger pupils. However, the relationships between pupils who want to work and staff are very good.
- There is a high rate of truancy. Some pupils are often late and have to be persuaded to remain in school.
- Behaviour management strategies are not being used consistently by all staff throughout the school.

- The appointment of a police officer is having a positive impact on the behaviour of many of the pupils.

Commentary

10. A very significant number of pupils are disaffected and demonstrate poor and unacceptable behaviour. They disrupt lessons and swear constantly. This all leads to unsatisfactory achievement and pupils who do behave well and try to concentrate on their work do not achieve as well as they could because of the constant flow of interruptions. In many lessons, however, the well-behaved pupils were observed to respond enthusiastically to challenges set for them, to concentrate on their work, show positive attitudes, to listen intently to each other and to work independently. These pupils were seen to play well together at playtimes. At the breakfast club, pupils were well behaved and friendly. There was a very good start to the week for those pupils, who received the reward of a cooked breakfast.
11. However, in a high proportion of lessons (eight of the 11 lessons judged as unsatisfactory or poor), there was little evidence of the use of the school behaviour management strategies having an impact on poor behaviour and sometimes challenging behaviour went unchecked. Behaviour sheets are being used to good effect for pupils to gain points for good behaviour, but there is inconsistency between teachers in how many points should be awarded for each target achieved.
12. Older pupils respond less well to formal classroom-based lessons. These pupils often posed serious behavioural problems in lessons but responded well to other activities. For example, pupils talk positively about the “driving lessons” (part of a GCSE course) and the pupils responded well to the careful explanations of the instructor and drove the motorbikes with care and control. As well as providing valuable lifetime opportunities, the experience clearly made a significant contribution to pupils’ self-esteem.
13. Bullying has become much less of an issue at the school since the installation of cameras and the appointment of a full-time police officer. Pupils spoken to during the inspection confirmed the results of the school’s own analysis that there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents of bullying in the last few months. The school recognises that this behaviour still occurs, however, and is working hard to eliminate it. The headteacher and his staff patrol the school and grounds at every opportunity. There is no evidence of incidents of racial harassment.
14. Despite the poor behaviour exhibited by many of the pupils, there are good relationships between pupils and all members of staff. This is due mainly to the resilience, hard work, forgiveness, patience and kindness of the staff. They are very good role models. Pupils are used to sharing feelings and experiences with staff and many are now developing higher levels of self-esteem. They were seen to show pride in their work. The school has established a link with Oxford University, where mentors help to boost pupils’ confidence and self-esteem. The sensory room is put to good use to allow pupils quiet periods of reflection and time to calm down if they have become particularly agitated.
15. Achievement is celebrated continuously and pupils are praised at every opportunity. Personal, social and health education lessons are being used to teach pupils right from wrong and to respect other people’s feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils who attend the lessons are responding well and are developing a growing awareness of their place in society. There is a school council and they discuss issues such as the wearing of hooded sweatshirts. Pupils eagerly participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and enjoy their GCSE driving lessons. Their multicultural awareness is being supported by ‘International Week’, which was very successful last year in having the West Indies as its theme. However, the significant number of disaffected pupils who have no commitment to the school or education show no signs of developing a set of values, principles and beliefs that consider the needs of others.

16. Prior to March 2003, the school had a high number of exclusions. At that time, the headteacher made a decision to implement a no-exclusion policy. This decision has not contributed to an improvement in behaviour and at least one pupil is currently receiving home tuition as an alternative to permanent exclusion. This pupil is not receiving the entitlement to education that would need to be implemented if permanently excluded.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White - British	38	11	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	6	4	0
No ethnic group recorded	31	18	0

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

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	17.3	School data	10.4
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

17. Attendance levels are poor, being well below the national average for schools of this type. A very significant number of pupils arrive late, if at all. The school is trying to improve these rates by employing its own education social worker and by telephoning parents whenever possible if pupils do not arrive. About one third of parents and carers ensure the attendance of the children, but there is a significant number of parents for whom education is not a priority. The school, however, is not rewarding good attendance and staff are not consistently monitoring pupils who are arriving at school late or are not going into lessons. A number of pupils do not attend school as they are receiving tuition at home.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **unsatisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **unsatisfactory** overall. They are unsatisfactory for pupils in their last two years in school and for all pupils in science. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in other subjects for pupils up to the age of 14.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is unsatisfactory for pupils in their last two years in school. This is usually the result of their difficult behaviour when faced with routine school work and their unwillingness to respond to the behaviour management strategies used by the teachers and other staff.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in science for all ages, expectations are too low and teachers cannot manage the pupils' difficult behaviour.
- Teaching is satisfactory for other pupils up to the age of 14 in the other subjects inspected.

- The strengths of teaching are the commitment of the teachers to try and engage the pupils in a working ethos and the good teamwork between teachers and support staff.
- In many of the lessons, where teaching was judged unsatisfactory or poor, the teachers did not make full use of the whole-school system for the withdrawal of pupils.
- Teachers know the pupils' capabilities well, although planning does not always take full account of the pupils' range of abilities.
- A number of pupils who are more committed to the school showed considerable perseverance in learning despite the behaviour and disruption of other pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	1	6	8	8	3	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

18. The table shows a high proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching, with over four lessons in ten being unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching is good in art and design and information and communication technology. It is unsatisfactory in science and in English for 14 to 16-year-olds.
19. Two-thirds of the lessons observed for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 showed unsatisfactory or poor teaching and learning. This was directly as a result of the pupils' challenging behaviour in classwork-based lessons. In the other lessons, in physical education, art and design and driving, the pupils responded better to the teaching and their better behaviour meant that they made progress.
20. The teaching of science is unsatisfactory throughout the school and this is a major factor in the overall unsatisfactory quality of teaching observed. Teachers have low expectations of the pupils' learning. Although interesting activities are used to initially interest the pupils, the subsequent work in the lesson is often unchallenging for the range of ability in the group. Teachers often allow the pupils to decide their level of involvement rather than ensuring that the pupils are focused on the tasks in hand. Often, the same pupils who were failing to learn in science achieved better standards in other lessons where challenged by the expectations of other teachers.
21. Teaching and learning for pupils up to the age of 14 is good in art and design and information and communication technology. It is satisfactory in subjects other than science. In most lessons, the teachers and learning support staff have to contend with the difficult behaviour of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, such as late arrival, an unwillingness to undertake written work and distraction. They do so effectively due to high expectations that pupils will work and by dealing immediately with unsatisfactory behaviour, such as swearing, before problems escalate. They use humour and their knowledge of the pupils to encourage their participation. The nature of the pupils' difficulties means that they still pose challenges and, in a small number of lessons, teachers were reluctant to use the school behaviour management system to have pupils withdrawn before this behaviour became too difficult. This led to teachers and support staff focusing their efforts on a small number of pupils and meant that the learning of other pupils suffered.
22. In all lessons, the teaching and support staff work well together to help encourage and motivate the pupils. The more experienced support staff make a very positive contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. A number of support staff are inexperienced and providing cover for staff who are absent or vacant posts and these staff, although willing, have fewer skills in dealing with the very difficult behaviour of the pupils.

23. The school recognises that the assessment of pupils' progress is currently unsatisfactory in that there is no consistent use of a common system in different subjects. Teachers know the individual pupils well and will try to plan appropriate work. However, this is difficult as the irregular pattern of attendance of a significant number of pupils means that pupils will arrive in a lesson having missed a considerable number of previous lessons and important prior learning. Where teachers are more confident, they alter the content of the lesson to address the pupils' individual needs. In other lessons, the pupils are expected to complete the same learning as the other pupils and this does not always challenge their capabilities.
24. The teaching of personal, social and health education in formal lessons is well supported by the tutorial system, where teachers have responsibility for the personal development of individual pupils. Pupils feel comfortable in these sessions, for example, pupils who have presented difficult behaviour for much of the school day will choose to have lunch with their tutor and discuss their unsatisfactory behaviour.
25. Although much of the quality of learning in lessons depends on the response of the pupils, there were many instances of individual or small groups of pupils showing considerable perseverance with their work despite the distractions of other pupils or events, either inside or outside the room.
26. There is insufficient evidence to allow a judgment on the impact of homework on teaching and learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory in English and science and satisfactory in other subjects.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** overall. Resources are satisfactory but the accommodation is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- Lack of time in some curriculum areas leads to underachievement.
- Aspects of the curriculum offer relevant and exciting opportunities to support pupils' self-esteem.
- Curriculum monitoring does not lead to sufficiently rigorous self-evaluation.
- Pupils do not have equal opportunities to access the curriculum.
- The accommodation and resources limit curriculum opportunities in some areas.

Commentary

27. The school aims to provide a similar curriculum to that in a secondary school but taught time is lower than the recommended time of 25 hours. Some of this difference in time is taken up with informal personal, social and health education, linked to pupils' individual behaviour targets, through time allocated in tutorial, lunchtime and privilege system.
28. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught to Years 7, 8 and 9 but the lack of time contributes to a lack of breadth in music and humanities. A modern foreign language is taught up to the age of 14 but not in Years 10 and 11. There is no evidence of the regular teaching of religious education for any pupils and consequently the school does not meet its legal requirements. There is an appropriate range of courses offered to GCSE level and accreditation for other activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The school is considering opportunities for accreditation for lower attaining or less motivated pupils.
29. The school works hard to provide relevant opportunities to pupils and has introduced an 'international week' and first aid for Years 7, 8 and 9, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and a

GCSE “driving” course for Years 10 and 11. These offer a very positive experience for those pupils who have the opportunity to take part in the courses.

30. The flexible learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11, whilst very relevant, inevitably take further time away and no humanities or music are offered. The school, in common with many other similar schools, has difficulty in ensuring homework is completed. The course work for GCSE is therefore often carried out in class, which places further restrictions on teaching time. This contributes to the unsatisfactory achievement in English in Years 10 and 11. Teachers find it easier to set homework for pupils in the residential provision and these pupils make better progress than their peers.
31. Teachers and other staff offer a range of activities at lunchtime. Pupils benefit from such activities as the trip to London and the additional activities which occur outside the school timetable to gain the Duke of Edinburgh’s Bronze Award. In particular, the pupils identified the positive aspects of the expedition element which takes place in the Lake District. Transport requirements restrict the range of activities that can be provided after the end of the school day.
32. The school’s stated aim is to provide a curriculum which is focused on the individual. However, this focus on the individual can be a barrier to whole-school development as individual pupils with complex needs disrupt the quality of education for other pupils. A group of pupils, who are deemed to be unsuitable to be retained in school, receive home tuition for an average of five hours per week. Whilst the tutor works hard to ensure that pupils receive as much teaching as possible in this time, the curriculum does not have sufficient breadth or balance. The school purchases other provision for a group of pupils in Year 11 but has not received reports on the achievement and progress of these pupils. Individual support is effective for pupils with additional learning needs and for the group that the school has identified as more vulnerable.
33. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been developed to support pupils with identified reading difficulties. A system of withdrawal lessons has been organised and pupils who attend these sessions on a regular basis make good progress in this area of learning. However, the withdrawal sessions are not sufficiently well used by the pupils who require this level of support, partly because the teaching assistant who runs these sessions is called to cover for absent colleagues and partly because many pupils do not like to be withdrawn for individual work. The school supports reading and mathematics through the use of a commercial computer based program. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 attend sessions three times a week and there are improvements in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003.
34. The deputy headteacher takes overall responsibility for the curriculum but, in practice, individual co-ordinators lead and manage their own subject areas. In some subjects, such as mathematics, information and communication technology and art and design, this works effectively but in other subjects, for example, music, staff have been asked to take on subjects that are not their areas of expertise. The deputy headteacher supervises an audit of each subject but the level of analysis is very limited and does not make a sufficient contribution to the improvements within the school. The local education authority has provided support to help develop the literacy and numeracy curriculum for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and this has had a positive impact on the teaching and learning in this area.
35. The school tries to ensure that the accommodation is well maintained and the design and technology room has recently been well refurbished after being identified as a risk area. The school has created a sensory room and this is effective to help pupils in crisis to calm down. However, the majority of the accommodation is poor in quality and very unsuitable for use for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some rooms provide a pleasant working environment, particularly the art room, but other rooms are too small to support good quality teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is constantly disturbed in those classrooms positioned by the hall, either by the noise of physical education lessons or by pupils outside classrooms moving around the school.

36. There are no outdoor facilities due to vandalism and damage outside school hours. This makes the flat roof a particularly attractive option for lively teenagers. This roof is easily accessible and the school has tried a considerable number of strategies to prevent pupils accessing this area and therefore putting themselves at risk.
37. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was satisfactory. This is no longer the case. The school has tried to develop new areas and procedures and these are beginning to be more effective. However, too much time is taken in the management of the behaviour of a significant number of pupils and this distracts from the opportunities that can be provided to all.

Care, guidance and support

The pupils receive high levels of pastoral care from the school. It provides them with **good** support and guidance and involves them in their own learning when appropriate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection procedures are good.
- Pupils who attend school regularly feel valued and have very good and trusting relationships with all adults in the school.
- Teachers act as personal tutors and meet regularly to consider pupils' behaviour, and tutor groups allow pupils to work well together.
- Pupils are involved by the school seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Staff know the pupils very well and use encouragement to enable them to make small steps of progress and gain confidence.
- There are a few health and safety issues which have been recognised by the school.

Commentary

38. The child protection procedures are comprehensive and clearly recorded, and lines of communication are very well known by all adults. All are aware of, and familiar with, the need for vigilance in monitoring the wellbeing and welfare of pupils in their care. Good health and safety procedures are in place but the school recognises that there are areas that require improvement, including the science room. The site supervisor and staff work hard to repair damage, usually caused out of school hours, but this is very difficult and there can be hazards in the grounds, such as broken glass. Where risks have been identified, such as pupils climbing on the roof, the school has tried various courses of action before finally having to accept physical barriers being fitted to the outside of the building, which will look oppressive.
39. All staff know the pupils very well and provide them with a very high level of pastoral support. They are kindly and sensitive to their needs. They deal with often very aggressive behaviour with calm and reason. Parents and pupils confirm this and value highly the advice and guidance they receive from staff. The more vulnerable pupils are well looked after and all pupils are properly supervised during playtimes. Good induction procedures ensure that new and co-operative pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. Teachers work well with their personal tutor groups, including eating lunch together in small groups, where the pupils' behaviour during the day is discussed. On Fridays, the groups meet for a review of the events of the week and pupils discuss their success in achieving their targets and set new targets for the following week. This is good practice.
40. Teachers identify and monitor pupils' personal development and progress against targets through day sheets and daily conferencing, although there is inconsistency in giving grades to different behaviours, for example, how grades are achieved by pupils who arrive late at the lesson. Pupils are well informed of their personal targets which are communicated to parents. Individual education plans are in place and are becoming much more effective in that they now

include learning and behaviour targets. Pupils attend their annual reviews with their parents and are encouraged to participate in the discussion. The older pupils have good access to work experience and careers guidance and are supported by the Connexions personal advisers. However, the level of other external support is often inadequate for the complex social, emotional or behavioural needs of those pupils who pose the most challenging behaviour.

41. Pupils are consulted through the school council and with specific questionnaires, for example, on the role of the police officer. They can talk to teachers, say that they listen to them and will act to put things right. Older pupils in discussions showed considerable maturity and value the support that the school has given. Pupils who had been very difficult during the inspection subsequently apologised for their behaviour. The small number of girls recognised the specific help and support that is provided to them.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents has improved since the previous inspection and is now **satisfactory** overall. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents support the school and have great confidence in the headteacher and staff.
- There are a number of parents who remain unco-operative.
- Information given to parents about the school and how their children are progressing is good overall but there is an omission in the governors' annual report to parents.
- Links with the primary special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are now good.
- Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Commentary

42. The school's good relationship with the majority of parents is amply demonstrated by the positive views expressed in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection. These parents feel the teaching is good, they are very positive about how they are kept informed about the progress of their children. They feel that the school takes their views into account and most feel that their children are making progress, increasing in maturity and are treated fairly. Parents are concerned that the proposed reorganisation may result in the closure of the school.
43. The analysis of pupils' records show that there are good arrangements for regular contact with parents, for example, at the annual review and at parents' evenings. The distance from the school for many parents makes personal contact difficult at times, but there was a high rate of parental attendance at the last parents' evening, where 22 pupils were represented. There have been more parents attending the prize-giving celebration recently.
44. Parents are provided with a good level of information about the school and their child's progress. They are aware that they can contact the school at any reasonable time and are sure that any queries or concerns will be quickly addressed. In general, the end of year progress reports are detailed and provide parents with appropriate levels of information about what their children know and can do; targets for improvement are given. Parents are also invited to attend the annual reviews for their children and to work together as partners in the development of strategies to help pupils improve their attitudes and behaviour towards their learning. In the event of regular difficult behaviour, parents are invited to school to discuss possible solutions. There are some minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents that mean that it does not meet statutory requirements.

45. Some parents expressed concerns over the number of incidents of bullying at the school. The inspection team's judgment, that incidents of bullying have decreased since the appointment of the police officer, and the better use of cameras, is agreed by pupils, who say that bullying is no longer a serious problem. However, the school is very aware of this issue and is very vigilant in working towards even further improvement of this aspect. Parents also expressed concerns regarding the behaviour of a large number of pupils. The inspection team agrees with these concerns. Some parents were worried about the more vulnerable pupils, but these pupils were seen to be well looked after within the separate provision. The parents identified that the children's behaviour had become more difficult in recent times and felt that the staff were "doing an impossible job".
46. However, despite the strong support of the majority of parents, there are several parents who are not interested in the education of their children. The headteacher is trying very hard to involve these parents, particularly by good use of the education social worker, and by telephoning parents whenever possible when their children do not arrive at the school.
47. Partnership with outside bodies exists for pupils' benefit. For example, there are good links with the local primary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, the Thames Valley Police and Oxford United Football Club. A pupil is gaining work experience at a local nursery. The school organises a work experience week and older pupils have the opportunity to attend driving lessons. Mentors from Oxford University come into the school on a regular basis, and all these factors enhance the pupils' learning environment.
48. The school has a particularly good link with a school in Bicester for staff exchanges and is forging very good links with a school in Chipping Norton as part of their performing arts programme. They also have a teacher exchange programme with a school in the United States of America involving annual visits by teaching staff. One pupil is currently being supported towards re-inclusion into a mainstream school and is attending there for three days a week with a full-time transfer being planned.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **satisfactory**. The headteacher provides good enthusiastic leadership and very good day-to-day support for all staff. Management of the school and governance is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is developing a hard working senior management team.
- Development planning, although improved from the previous inspection, is still not used effectively.
- Day to day management of pupils' behaviour is over-reliant on the headteacher and other senior staff.
- Financial management and budget monitoring is poor and has only improved slightly since the last inspection.
- The impact of performance management is not improving the standard of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is not rigorous in its monitoring of the work of the school.

Commentary

49. The headteacher's role in leading the drive for improvement has been a major factor in the progress made over the last three years. His daily support for staff is outstanding, although this support detracts from his role as the senior manager. Staff tend to be over-reliant on this and often use him before exploring other strategies or deploying the whole-school behaviour

system. This diminishes the impact normally associated with deploying senior managers in a situation involving challenging behaviour. He has developed very good support with the staff, who have shown themselves to be very hard working, receptive to advice and responsive to new challenges. The relatively new leadership team has settled in very quickly and each member has a vision of the priorities for development in the areas that have been delegated to them. There is effective communication between senior management and other staff, who are regularly consulted about and actively encouraged to contribute towards short-term development. The headteacher has provided a clear sense of direction to this corporate effort.

50. Development planning was a key issue in the previous inspection. The current school development plan addresses some of the previous concerns but improvement has been too slow. Although the plan spans three years, many items are still simply repeated and show no planned development. The current priorities are more detailed but most curriculum subject action plans do not appear and, consequently, are not linked to the budget. Historically, the headteacher and deputy headteacher compile the plan each summer before presenting their ideas to the governing body. Evaluation of progress towards priorities and celebration of success does not feature in either governing body or senior management meetings and, consequently, the plan has a limited role in the strategic development of the school. Curriculum leadership is being developed with subject audits and development plans but these vary too much in quality. Whilst the school has a cohesive performance management policy in place, its impact is not effective enough as there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching.
51. Financial planning is unsatisfactory, which represents a small improvement since the last inspection. Day to day financial management has improved, due to new systems put into place by the bursar, who provides monitoring information and support to prevent excessive overspending by staff or governors. Budgets for subjects are still being allocated poorly, with no link between the money allocated and how this will raise standards. Despite curriculum audits and completion of action plans by subject leaders, money is distributed according to how many periods a subject has on the timetable and bears no relation to the actual needs. This process does not allow progressive, planned development of either subject action plan or school development plan issues.
52. Governors are very supportive of the school but they have not held the school sufficiently to account or developed their role of 'critical friend'. Although governors have regular contact with the school, few visit systematically in their role as governors or for a specific purpose so that the work of the school can be appraised during meetings of the full governing body. Organisation of the governing body does not recognise the importance of individual or groups of governors taking on specific responsibilities for curriculum, management or financial matters. All issues raised at meetings rely heavily on the information supplied by the headteacher. Consequently, governors have an insecure understanding of their roles and responsibilities, resulting in a lack of knowledge. For example, there is no indication in the minutes of meetings that policies are regularly reviewed or approved and governors are unaware if all their duties are met. At a meeting during the inspection, governors were unaware if they were meeting all their statutory duties and there was some confusion regarding the implementation of performance management for the headteacher. The governing body does not have a clear understanding of its role in monitoring financial management, for example, the latest set of budget monitoring figures show a significant anticipated under-spend but this has not been questioned or challenged. Governors do not meet a significant number of their statutory duties including:
 - The teaching of religious education.
 - The performance management of the headteacher has not been completed in the current academic year.
53. As the school has a high level of challenging behaviour, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching and learning, and unsatisfactory management and governance, it is identified as requiring special measures and providing unsatisfactory value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,120,174	Balance from previous year	151,471
Total expenditure	1,023,261	Balance carried forward to the next	96,913
Expenditure per pupil	12,182		

RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

What is the effectiveness of the residential provision?

The residential provision at Northfield House is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good.
- The pupils make good progress in their personal development.
- There is a very good programme of activities available to the pupils.
- The house staff work well in conjunction with school staff to support the pupils with any difficult behaviour in school, which is followed up consistently by the house staff.
- The house is operating effectively despite the long-term absence of senior care staff.
- The headteacher and head of care have responded effectively to the small number of recommendations from the National Care Standards inspections.
- The pupils' care and welfare needs are met well.

Commentary

54. Pupils in the residential provision make good progress in their personal development and in learning to manage and control their behaviour. They respond well to the clear boundaries set for them and use the opportunities provided to enhance their learning. They begin to develop good relationships with each other, for example, at meal-times, where they discuss a range of matters appropriately. Older pupils support younger ones well, for example, offering calming words when a younger pupil is in difficulty. The pupils have a very clear view of the provision as "their house" and they expect each other to conform to their standards.
55. The overall provision is very good. Although the location of the house poses potential risks, being situated very close to the town by-pass, the accommodation is homely and pupils personalise their own areas. Although most bedrooms include up to four beds, the pupils have appropriate levels of privacy. The house staff have established an independence unit and this promotes the pupils' personal development well. The provision for the pupils' care and welfare is very good. Food is plentiful and of good quality. Personal and medical needs are met with sensitivity and appropriate attention to procedures. Child protection procedures are good. The pupils' individual care plans include appropriate targets and link to the behaviour targets in the pupils' individual education plans.
56. The evening begins with a review of behaviour during the school day and any difficult behaviour is followed up by the staff. After a very difficult day in school during the inspection, a number of pupils had their range of activities restricted. They accepted this sanction and very quickly settled with the events of the day being forgotten. The range of activities provided in the evenings is very good, including access to a range of local facilities, such as swimming,

skating etc. There is a good routine to the evening and even very new pupils understand how the house operates. There are good links with parents from the house.

57. The head of care was absent at the time of the inspection, as was a senior member of staff undertaking a professional qualification. Despite this, the staff team operates very effectively with support from school staff and increased working hours. The school management accepts that this situation can only continue for a short time as the hours worked by staff was a criticism from the National Care Standards inspection in October 2003. The headteacher and head of care have worked well to address the other recommendations of the inspection. The chair of governors carries out appropriate visits as a statutory visitor and is beginning to produce reports of her visits.
58. The school recognises how important the care and stability offered by the residential provision has been in helping a number of pupils to improve their self-esteem and their behaviour. During the inspection, the pupils who attend the house were consistently the best behaved and therefore the best achieving pupils. The school is seeking to expand the provision to support more pupils and possibly include girls. Northfield House gives good value for money.

PART C: SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **unsatisfactory** overall. However, it is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved in national tests in 2003 for pupils in Year 9.
- GCSE examination results have improved since the last inspection.
- Planning in Years 8 and 9 identifies appropriate areas of learning and supports the satisfactory teaching of English in these year groups.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who attend additional support classes for reading make good progress.
- Speaking and listening is not sufficiently planned or developed within the school.
- Marking in books provides very general comments and does not pick out for pupils those aspects that have been done well and those areas that require further development.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is poor.

Commentary

59. Achievement in speaking and listening is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their use of language in formal question and answer situations and by Year 9, they show that they can use sophisticated language, such as when they described Macbeth's response to Duncan's murder as being "horrified and fascinated". They reflect on the way different stories begin. A very small minority of pupils continue to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in Years 10 and 11, reaching levels which enable them to obtain GCSE success. However, for the majority of pupils, achievement in speaking and listening in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because it is frequently restricted to answering straightforward questions at times when pupils are working with the adult sitting next to them. Throughout the school, planning does not include sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening within a broad range of contexts.
60. Pupils' achievement in reading and writing is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. Results in the most recent national tests show that 50 per cent of pupils attained levels that ranged from just below the national average to above the national average. The majority of pupils who attend lessons in Year 9 respond to the expectations of teachers, for example, to read a review of Macbeth. Work displayed on the wall and in books shows that pupils have a developing confidence in using written language to convey atmosphere. For example, one pupil gave a sense of mystery by writing "It was early morning. I'm not quite sure what day it was," while another wrote, "It was my first time in the theatre of dreams." The school has a system of withdrawal sessions with a teaching assistant for pupils with significant reading difficulties. Records show that pupils who attend on a regular basis make good progress. Reading for all pupils is effectively supported by regular use of commercial computer software.
61. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a wider range of attainment than is the case in the younger classes and this presents more challenges. However, the organisation of classes and teaching within them does not take sufficient account of these learning needs and achievement for pupils in these year groups in reading and writing is unsatisfactory overall. A survey of reading ages over a two-year period shows that the reading age of the majority of these pupils stays the same or goes down lower and there is very little evidence of sustained achievement in writing by the majority of pupils. However, satisfactory and occasionally good progress is made by a minority of pupils who are entered for the GCSE examination. Reflections on

Romeo and Juliet by one pupil demonstrated a thoughtful consideration of Romeo's character and the writing of higher attaining pupils shows a good level of interest and detail. Records indicate that these pupils have benefited from attending the residential provision. GCSE results have broadly maintained a steady average for the last three years. No other forms of accreditation are available for pupils. Throughout the school, when pupils write, their handwriting and spelling is at a similar level to their overall writing ability.

62. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8, and 9 is satisfactory overall. A helpful planning format is used in Years 8 and 9 and this ensures appropriate attention to work with words, sentences and longer texts. Pupils learn best where the teachers show personal interest in what they are teaching, through persistently focusing on what they want pupils to learn and give very little time to potentially distracting behaviour. Pupils respond well to this approach and gradually join in the lesson, often persuaded by observant teaching assistants who encourage and support pupils by, for example, sitting near them at times when they are being distracted, or showing them what to read. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching does not engage pupils and pupils' learning is therefore very dependant on individual support from the teacher and teaching assistants. The majority of pupils who attend these lessons show negative attitudes to learning and this has a significant affect on their behaviour, which often deteriorates during the lesson. Teaching and learning is made more difficult by very unsuitable accommodation. The room is next to the gym and, at times, a ball can be heard banging against the door. The room is spoiled by iron pillars which, as well as being unsightly, provide hiding posts for unwilling pupils.
63. Throughout the school, teachers do not sufficiently match tasks to pupils' capability, for example, all pupils usually complete similar writing tasks, even though some pupils are significantly more able than others. This is particularly evident in Years 10 and 11, where the attainment range is greatest. Marking is usually restricted to very general points about pupils having done well. Whilst this is very important, marking does not identify particular points which pupils can improve and therefore the assessment of work does not lead to the necessary detail in planning which is required to further support the teaching and learning of individual pupils. Apart from the structured reading programme for younger pupils, information and communication technology is not used effectively in the teaching of English.
64. Curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator takes an overview of developments in all year groups but most of the development in English is being lead by the second in the department, who joined the school in September 2003 and works with Years 8 and 9. The co-ordinator audits the subject regularly but the level of detail is very limited and does not identify key development points that could take the subject forward. Since the last inspection, opportunities for the teaching of reading for lower ability pupils have improved but achievement in Years 10 and 11 is lower.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. The level of speaking, listening and reading and writing across the curriculum is satisfactory in those subjects where pupils are achieving in line with their capabilities, for example, in personal, social and health education. Where achievement is unsatisfactory, for example, in science, there is insufficient attention paid to the use of literacy.

FRENCH

Only one lesson was observed in a modern foreign language (French) and so no judgments on provision are made about this subject

66. The teaching and learning in the lesson observed were satisfactory with a focus on pupils using French in their spoken and written answers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory for Year 11 pupils, including an increasing number of pupils achieving grades C to G in GCSE examinations in the last three years.
- Achievement between Years 7 and 9 is satisfactory and results are improving in statutory assessment tests in Year 9.
- Standards have improved since the last inspection, when they were unsatisfactory.
- The subject is well co-ordinated.
- There is some very good teaching, where expectations are very high and pupils are challenged by their work.
- In a small number of lessons, the difficult behaviour of a number of pupils prevents effective learning.

Commentary

67. Achievement and results have improved since the last inspection. A high proportion of students take part in a modular GCSE course during their last two years and achieve success in the final examination. A scrutiny of coursework shows that they complete the required investigations in line with their capability, with higher attaining pupils showing a range of mathematical techniques to solve problems, For example, a pupil used algebra to express the relationships between the size of a rectangle drawn on squared paper, and the number of squares that could be made up within it. Although the pupils often have long periods of absence, the modular nature of the course allows them to complete the necessary work.
68. Standards are improving in statutory assessment tests at the end of Year 9. More pupils are taking the tests and, although there is a wide range of achievement in any year group, the scrutiny of work shows that individuals are making satisfactory progress in line with their capabilities. Some pupils complete homework and higher attaining pupils complete work that is more challenging, for example, using a range of charts to plot data and then selecting the most appropriate type of chart. Lower attaining pupils develop their skills across the subject with appropriate emphasis on developing their understanding of operations such as addition or multiplication. The regular absence of a number of pupils has a negative impact on their progress with large parts of their work being incomplete.
69. Teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, teaching varied from very good to unsatisfactory. The very good teaching is well planned and the material is presented in a way that is interesting. The teacher has very high expectations for both learning and behaviour and pupils respond very well, even when they are late for the lesson. The lesson follows the pattern for the Key Stage 3 Strategy, including initial mental activities and an opportunity at the end of the lesson for pupils to identify their own learning against the lesson objective identified for them. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils identify the learning outcomes of the activities and their work is assessed against those outcomes.
70. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the behaviour of a small number of pupils is not managed effectively and the teacher is unable to devote time to the pupils who wish to work despite the disruption. Although appropriate work is set for all pupils, including individual work, those pupils who have a poor attitude do not respond. If the whole-school policy for the withdrawal of pupils is not used effectively, the quality of learning becomes unsatisfactory. It is clear that the behaviour of a number of pupils is deliberately intended to disrupt, for example, a number of pupils who had been very difficult throughout a Year 10 lesson became involved in the end of lesson activity and demonstrated good understanding of mathematical concepts.

71. The subject is well co-ordinated to ensure that the different teachers are using the planned scheme effectively. The co-ordinator monitors the teaching of different aspects of the subject by looking at pupils' work. This informs the subject development plan well. Information and communication technology is used effectively, for example, the use of spreadsheets to produce graphs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to develop their mathematics and numeracy skills in other subjects. In science, they use equations, for example, "weight = mass X force of gravity", and use units of measurement such as Newtons. In design and technology, they learn the need to measure accurately using a range of implements. Pupils develop their numeracy skills well using a commercial computer-based scheme that records their progress in different areas of the subject and sets new work accordingly. Although these opportunities exist and are identified in teachers' short-term planning, they are not planned for systematically over time to ensure that the pupils have learnt the appropriate skills in mathematics before they need to use them in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. It is satisfactory for the small number of pupils who regularly attend science lessons.
- GCSE results and end of Year 9 assessment results have improved since the previous inspection for the pupils who take part.
- Plans for improving the subject are generally appropriate for Years 7,8 and 9 but limited in scope.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are too low. Their behaviour management is inconsistent and this leads to a high number of lessons being unsatisfactory.
- The science room provides a very poor learning environment.
- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to support learning.

Commentary

73. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that those pupils who attend regularly can achieve well, increasing their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively from a low level of attainment on entry to the school. This has resulted in improved GCSE results and attainment in end of Year 9 tests. The pupils' interest in practical activities and ability to understand many of the technical terms used in scientific topics has been maintained since the last inspection.
74. However, a number of teachers now teach science, and there is significant variability in the progress of pupils in lessons. Many pupils do not attend regularly and their achievement is unsatisfactory due partly to the lack of work that is adapted to their level and a lack of different types of teaching styles.
75. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, teaching, accommodation and resources are now all worse than at the time of the last inspection. All teaching observed was unsatisfactory or worse. Teachers have low expectations and set work that is neither challenging nor amended to accommodate the wide range of ability. Their subject knowledge is unsatisfactory, particularly when answering questions. Lessons were constantly interrupted by pupils arriving late, leaving early or from being joined by pupils from other classes. Behaviour management strategies were ineffective and techniques used did not engage or involve the pupils. The support staff were inexperienced and their work was not planned well by the teacher.

76. Where teachers introduced simple investigations, the information obtained was not well used to plan activities well enough for pupils with differing capabilities. This means that a number of pupils lose interest and concentration and do not behave well. More teacher time is spent on managing pupils' behaviour than on reinforcing learning. This was seen in a Year 10/11 lesson about elements and atoms. Only two pupils were kept fairly constantly on task with the other pupils mostly ignored by staff. When behaviour became intolerable, they spent significant amounts of time trying to persuade pupils to conform and participate and consequently pupils made no progress.
77. The working environment in the science room is very poor, due partly to the state of the room. A number of work-stations have been removed to minimise risk but the floor is now uneven. The school improvement plan recognises the need to improve the accommodation but staff have made little effort to improve the situation.
78. The variability of teaching quality is reflected in the small number of pupils who choose to follow accredited course work in science in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are taught a wide range of topics but work files are not well presented. There was no evidence that work is graded or marked in a way that would help pupils to improve. There is no external accreditation available to the less able or those who do not wish to study for GCSE.
79. Leadership and management of science are unsatisfactory. An audit of provision has been completed but only for Years 7, 8 and 9 and the new development plan reflects this. Issues were identified during the audit but yet do not appear in this plan, for example, improving the use of information and communication technology. The school has made good use of local authority advisory staff to identify areas for improvement but these discussions have yet to have an impact on the quality of achievement. Although the subject leader supports staff well, teaching and, consequently, learning is unsatisfactory. The use of information and communication technology has now been unsatisfactory for many years and has been cited in the last two inspection reports. Progress therefore is very poor in this area.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils enjoy using information and communication technology and their attitudes and behaviour are usually better than in other lessons. They concentrate on tasks for longer and are prepared to persevere with them to obtain a good result.
- Pupils are confident to use a range of applications and techniques in their work. Their practical skills are better than their understanding of other, more theoretical, areas of the subject.
- Teaching in specialist lessons is good with learning outcomes clearly defined, and individual pupils are supported to achieve positive results.
- The regular use of a commercial program has improved progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Information and communication technology is under-used in some subjects, particularly English and science.
- The information and communication technology room provides a good resource area.

Commentary

80. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. A number of pupils at the age of 16 are now being entered for GCSE examination, representing improvement since the last inspection. They show good skills in using a range of applications, including word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation software and Internet browsing and e-mail software, including web-design programs. They show a satisfactory understanding of the wider uses of information and communication technology, including publishing, the use of automated

systems and some aspects of the misuse of technology, including the spread of virus software.

81. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of Year 9. Pupils have developed good skills but with a more limited range of applications. They use clip-art or pictures from the Internet to produce a range of projects, including letters, or to design a logo to show their interests and personalise their work. They are confident with the operation of computer-based systems, including different types of files, using the network and the use of printers for specific purposes. They have yet to extend their knowledge and understanding of the use and potential misuse of information and communication technology.
82. The pupils show good attitudes to work and learning when in the information and communication technology room. They respect the quality of the equipment and treat it carefully. They show considerable perseverance to complete their work, for example, pupils in Year 9 modified their logo designs without becoming frustrated. There are examples of co-operative working, with higher attaining pupils providing support in locating clip-art or Internet files and assisting other pupils to modify this material. The use of computers interests and motivates pupils, allowing pupils who do not regularly attend other lessons to succeed and complete good work.
83. Teaching is good. The objectives for the lessons are stated clearly and at the end of the lesson pupils are required to consider their progress towards this objective. There is an emphasis on ensuring that any use of the computers is put into context, for example, the pupils considered a range of existing company logos before designing their own. This included higher attaining pupils obtaining examples of logos from web-sites. Behaviour is well-managed through good relationships, combined with a firm insistence on following school rules, for example, swearing being challenged. Pupils who are late are reminded of the expectation but incorporated into the lesson without the need for a major confrontation.
84. The accommodation and resources are good. There are sufficient high quality computers in the specialist room to allow all pupils in the class to have an individual machine. The design of the room does mean that the pupils have to work closely but this did not cause any difficulties during the inspection. The use of an interactive whiteboard enhances the room, with pupils using it to demonstrate their ideas.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Pupils make good progress in a number of subjects using information and communication technology, particularly through their regular use of the literacy and numeracy program. This was despite the assertion of a number of pupils who claimed that they found the program repetitive. However, information and communication technology is not used effectively in other subjects, particularly in English and science. There is a lack of coherent cross-curricular planning to allow pupils to use skills that they have developed in their specific information and communication technology lessons. As an example, pupils learn to use spreadsheets to produce a good range of graphs in information and communication technology but do not use "real data" such as that available from their science observations.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision in religious education is judged to be **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education only appears on the timetable for one group of pupils (Year 10) and no evidence of religious education work was found in the scrutiny of work provided by the school.

The provision does not meet statutory requirements and there is no evidence of pupils being withdrawn from study by parents.

Humanities

Provision for humanities is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- It is evident from the very small amount of teachers' planning, work on display and in pupils' books that provision is unsatisfactory. There is no guidance to help staff plan for progressive development of knowledge, understanding and skills, and this is reflected in the disappointing amount of poor quality work seen in pupils' books. In the one lesson observed, the good demonstration by the teacher, concerning mixing foods and drinks connected to a rainforest theme, led to pupils being able to produce their own drinks and burgers. Relationships and behaviour were good and they derived pleasure from this achievement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Commentary

86. Only one lesson was observed in design and technology and one in food studies. Little work was available to sample as the design and technology room has been closed for refurbishment. There is therefore insufficient evidence to make judgments on the quality of provision.
87. Teaching and learning in the food studies lesson were good. Pupils enjoyed making and tasting their pizzas and showed considerable care and patience during the process. In the design and technology lesson, the youngest pupils showed a good awareness of health and safety working practice and some took care in making their models. Others presented behaviour difficulties, which meant that staff could not support all the pupils effectively.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Overall, provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils who attend lessons show positive attitudes to the subject.
- There is an experienced co-ordinator who has the knowledge and drive to continue to take the subject forward.

Commentary

88. Achievement for pupils throughout the school is good. Pupils in Year 9 use their sketchbooks effectively to record their ideas. For example, before making ceramic masks, pupils researched examples of African masks and made a record of their findings. From these, they developed their own designs prior to making their artefacts. Although some design briefs lack sufficient written explanation of why particular features are chosen, pupils' final masks show good attention to detail, enhanced by a careful consideration of glazes. Pupils continue to make progress and, by Year 11, they are working on quite complex projects. Pupils' skills are

well developed and examples of work include careful use of stitching applied to appliqué work for a cushion cover and carefully thought out lino prints to be used for household goods. Pupils receive appropriate support and, as a consequence, individual pieces of pupils' work demonstrate standards which are at the national average. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working toward a double-weighted Vocational GCSE and they are unable to complete sufficient course work to gain this level of accreditation. The co-ordinator is in the process of investigating a more appropriate single-weighted GCSE.

89. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities through which to develop an appreciation of art and learn and apply a range of skills. The teacher has a good knowledge of her subject and uses this skilfully to choose and develop projects which interest and motivate pupils. The level of skill required is then well matched to pupil abilities. The teacher sets high standards and pupils respond well, showing good levels of concentration and interest in their work, which leads to the good achievement. There is a good working partnership between the teacher and teaching assistant. Pupils' frustrations during the lesson are quickly identified and support given when needed. The support is well judged and withdrawn appropriately and pupils are encouraged, and therefore succeed, in working as independently as they are able.
90. The subject is well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator who has done much to develop a positive approach to art and design. The art room is large and spacious and well organised with interesting displays which celebrate pupils' work. This provides a comfortable learning environment which makes an important contribution to pupils' positive attitudes to this subject. Appropriate health and safety checks are in place. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Music

91. Only one lesson was observed where teaching and learning were satisfactory. However, little work was available to sample as the teacher has only taught the subject since September 2003. There is therefore insufficient evidence to make judgments on the quality of provision.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

92. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection, which was satisfactory for the small number of pupils present. Pupils took part enthusiastically in basketball skills and co-operated in a game. An interview was held with the newly-appointed co-ordinator but, in the absence of other evidence, it is not possible to make a judgment on the quality of provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Those pupils who attend class regularly up to the age of 14 show satisfactory achievement in the taught aspects of the subject and good progress towards their individual personal development targets.
- The informal tutorial system provides good support for the pupils' personal development.
- The comprehensive scheme of work provides good structure and guidance for teachers.

Commentary

93. The school sees pupils' personal development as an important part of its work. There is a programme of activities, including work on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety. This helps pupils develop a safe and healthy life style, gain confidence and interact with others. The programmes of work are well planned to include a wide range of relevant topics and to enable

pupils to develop their skills and knowledge as they get older. For example, younger pupils learn about friendships, sex and drugs whilst older pupils are given experiences associated with materials from the Terence Higgins Trust.

94. Those pupils who attend regularly acquire a growing understanding of their own and each other's feelings. They start to take responsibility for their own actions and learn from experiences with support from the management strategies for behaviour. No teaching was observed for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good for pupils up to the age of 14. Year 9 pupils were fully engaged in discussing the implications of smoking and then successfully completed work showing the cost of smoking across an average lifetime. In this lesson, teaching was skilled and sensitive. The resultant learning occurred in a warm but challenging atmosphere, resulting in good achievement.
95. All pupils have personal development targets and pupils up to the age of 14 who attend are making good progress towards these targets. They are beginning to consider their own behaviour and its impact on others and can discuss their behaviour in personal, social and health education lessons or in tutor time. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress but a significant number of pupils are adversely affected by factors in their home lives. The personal, social and health education curriculum incorporates appropriate material on citizenship and personal responsibility.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	5
Attendance	6
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	6
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

The quality of education provided by the school	5
The quality of teaching	5
How well pupils learn	5
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	5
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*