

INSPECTION REPORT

BRANNEL SCHOOL

St Stephen, near St Austell

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112050

Headteacher: Mr R P Bell

Lead inspector: Margaret Jones HMI

Dates of inspection: 29th March – 1st April 2004

Inspection number: 264051

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:	686
School address:	Rectory Road St Stephen St Austell
Postcode:	PL26 7RN
Telephone number:	01726 822485
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Hackney
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brannel School is a small 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving an economically deprived, rural area of small villages in the china clay mining district of mid-Cornwall. The number of pupils on the school roll is rising. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and only two pupils speak English as an additional language.

Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. The school takes part in a large number of initiatives based around creating a 'confident, creative, can-do community'. These include:

- Beacon school status
- Creative Partnerships
- Lifelong Learning Campus
- University of the First Age.

The school has twelve teachers engaged in research with the local university. The school has won Sportsmark Silver award and has Artsmark pending. A bid for Performing Arts specialist college status is to be submitted in October.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
5028	Margaret Jones HMI	Lead inspector	History
10329	Brian Sampson AI	Lay inspector	
33723	Ann Talboys HMI	Team inspector	Science
29927	Jane Austin AI	Team inspector	Religious education (RE)
33724	David Humphries HMI	Team inspector	Mathematics
32578	Neil Sortwell HMI	Team inspector	Citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and vocational education
33725	Honoree Gordon HMI	Team inspector	French, Spanish, English as an additional language (EAL)
19214	Geoffrey Price AI	Team inspector	English
2069	Jennifer Smith HMI	Team inspector	Geography
10053	Janet Simms AI	Team inspector	Art
31660	Marianne Young AI	Team inspector	Music
15051	Lynne Kauffman AI	Team inspector	Design and technology, Special educational needs (SEN)
25748	Roger Moyle AI	Team inspector	Physical education (PE)
33716	Brian Cartwright HMI	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were joined on this inspection by Additional Inspectors (AI) appointed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is effective with many significant strengths. The majority of pupils achieve well and attain results in line with the national average. The school's involvement in educational initiatives is directed to the benefit of its own pupils as well as those in other schools. The school achieves good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching and curriculum provision enables pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn and achieve well.
- All pupils are very well cared for and their individual needs are met.
- The headteacher's leadership is very good, and the contribution of other senior staff and the governing body to leadership is very good.
- Girls do very well but some boys could achieve more.
- Liaison with other schools is excellent and links with the wider community are very good.
- Standards in art and design, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and geography are not high enough.
- The personal development of pupils lacks a strong spiritual element and not enough is done to prepare pupils for life in an ethnically diverse society.

Since the last inspection, improvement has been good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. Standards on entry to the school are below average, but pupils do well to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. At age 14, standards are usually average for English, mathematics and science but they were slightly below average in 2003, mostly due to staffing difficulties. Standards are average in other subjects but below average in art and design, ICT, music and religious education. At age 16, standards are average in most subjects. Pupils reach impressive standards in English, music and vocational subjects, but standards are still below average in art and design, ICT, geography and religious education. Girls perform better than boys throughout the school.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their moral and social development, are good overall. In the vast majority of lessons pupils' attitudes are positive. Behaviour and punctuality are good. Attendance is satisfactory, although there is a rise in the amount of authorised absence in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture but are not sufficiently aware of other cultures. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education, including teaching and learning, is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and use their expertise well to motivate pupils, encourage them to work hard and aim for high standards. Pupils respond well and usually concentrate and apply themselves to their learning, but in a small minority of lessons boys do not apply themselves as well as girls. Lessons are well structured, have clear learning objectives and make effective use of warm-up and starter exercises. In most subjects, the assessment of pupils' work is good and pupils know what they have to do to

improve. Learning support assistants and technicians are used very effectively to assist pupils in their learning.

Very good early identification of pupils at risk of exclusion is in place. Strong links with the local college to provide alternative curriculum opportunities, such as construction courses, have a significant impact on pupils' attitude to school. In addition, opportunities to inspire personal development through an enriched curriculum, for example outdoor pursuits, are helping pupils to develop confidence and leadership skills. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils, although the provision of ICT for older pupils is inadequate and does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school has developed excellent relationships with other schools and the wider community. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The new humanities block is excellent but other areas, including the library and facilities for physical education and music, are unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good, providing an innovative vision for the school, whilst the management is good. Leadership within the school reflects an excellent commitment to the promotion of equality and concern for the needs of individuals. The deputy headteacher and senior staff share this commitment and have ensured that learning and raising pupils' aspirations is at the very heart of the school. Heads of department and pastoral and curriculum co-ordinators provide good leadership and effective management of the curriculum and the pastoral care of pupils. The school evaluates its own practice well but monitoring is not always sufficiently rigorous. The analysis of data taken from national and school-based tests is used very effectively to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, except that there is no report to parents about citizenship. They provide challenge and support to the headteacher. The finances of the school are very well managed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. They are particularly pleased with their children's progress, the quality of teaching, and the way the school helps children to settle in well and encourages them to do their best. Pupils are equally satisfied: 98% of them say they are expected to work hard. A significant proportion of pupils (two fifths) feel that there is some bullying in the school, but inspectors found that the school deals with this effectively. Positive views were expressed by pupils who were interviewed by inspectors.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the achievement of boys by consistently applying effective teaching strategies across every department
- raise standards in ICT, art and religious education across the school and in geography for pupils in Years 10 and 11
- improve pupils' personal development by providing more systematic opportunities for spiritual development and preparation for life in an ethnically diverse community

and to meet statutory requirements:

- implement fully the National Curriculum in ICT for pupils aged 14 to 16
- report on citizenship to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are good, when compared to similar schools, and pupils achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are in line with national average and well above average when compared with similar schools.
- The gap between the performance of boys and girls is too wide.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), achieve well in relation to their capability.

Commentary

1. When they enter the school, the attainment of pupils is below average with poor levels of literacy for many. They achieve well in their first three years, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in all other subjects, apart from art and design, geography and religious education, where they make sound progress. In the next two years to GCSE examinations, achievement continues to be good in all subjects, except for geography, ICT and religious education, where progress is slow.
2. Results in 2003 national tests at age 14 are slightly below national average. Examination results at age 16 are in line with the national average and well above average for similar schools. Over the last four years GCSE results have improved but at a slower rate than has been the case nationally. In 2003, girls' results were better than boys' at both age 14 and 16. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is wider than the national gap. The school has introduced strategies to improve boys' achievement that are producing encouraging results and there is a very supportive, inclusive ethos, which expects every pupil to do his or her best. The very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those in public care perform much the same as others.
3. Pupils with SEN, irrespective of the nature or severity of their needs, make good progress and achieve well. This is evident in most subjects across the curriculum and is due to excellent liaison with primary schools, which leads to detailed analysis of the needs of these pupils and high quality support in small classes.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.9 (33.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.3 (33.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.0 (32.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 138 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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	49 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33.1 (33.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 100 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are good; they enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning. Overall, behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory whilst punctuality is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' relationships with others are very good.
- Moral and social development is good.
- Pupils' spiritual development and their knowledge of other cultures are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

4. The school expects and promotes a genuine desire to learn through its strong ethos and high expectations. Pupils rise to the challenge with enthusiasm. Pupils really enjoy school and many take part in the very wide range of extra activities that are offered. Pupils consider the school to be good and well run. Their very positive attitudes are a key factor in the standards they achieve. The school is good at stimulating pupils and building up their confidence and self-esteem. Most pupils get on very well together in joint ventures and team-work, as seen during the after school rehearsal for 'Bugsy Malone'.
5. Procedures and liaison with the educational welfare service have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. The impact of this has been improved attendance rates. However, the school recognises that authorised absence within Years 10 and 11 is too high and has systems in place to alleviate this. Parents are aware of their relevant responsibilities. Punctuality is good and most lessons commence promptly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	0.2
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.

6. Behaviour is generally good. Where discipline is tight and the lesson content is stimulating, behaviour is often very good and occasionally excellent. However, where these attributes are less well established, behaviour can become unsatisfactory. There have been two exclusions in the twelve months prior to the inspection, both dealt with appropriately and with care by the school. During the whole inspection, very little graffiti, litter or vandalism was witnessed. Overall, pupils are proud of their school. They are friendly and helpful to visitors, and courteous to each other and to staff.
7. Infrequent incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with effectively. Pupils have the confidence to report incidents to an adult or prefect. Pupils themselves take responsibility for controlling bullying and many have volunteered to act as 'green badge' mentors to help the younger children. These mentoring schemes work very well. Parents were concerned about incidents of bullying on the buses. The school has taken reasonable steps to deal with this.
8. The positive moral climate encourages pupils to distinguish right from wrong; they are encouraged to be trustworthy and co-operative and respect the school's ethos. They are also acutely aware of their school as a community and their responsibilities in it. They appreciate the importance of the school to the villages and the good reputation it has. The school is also proud of its Cornish culture and pupils have recently obtained funding to research and write a history of the local clay mining industry. However, the pupils' knowledge of other cultures is less well developed. The school provides a daily act of

collective worship but other opportunities for spiritual development are limited and are not systematically planned for across the curriculum.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
660	25	2
1	0	0
11	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The curriculum, support and guidance for pupils and partnerships with parents are good. Links with the community and care for pupils are very good. Links with other schools are excellent.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject expertise and learning resources well to help pupils learn.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils encourage the pupils to learn and try hard.
- In most subjects pupils' work is assessed thoroughly, and this results in pupils knowing how to improve their work.
- Learning support and technical staff support teaching and learning effectively.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

9. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. This reflects the school's commitment to developing the best practice through a range of initiatives focusing on teaching and learning. Good teaching and learning were observed in all subjects. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning was limited to a few departments, mainly in humanities, where the tasks set were at too low a level.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 105 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	26 (25%)	46 (43%)	25 (24%)	6 (6%)	0	0

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

10. In most areas of the curriculum teachers know their subjects well. They are enthusiastic and use their expertise to motivate the pupils, encourage them to work hard and aim for high standards. Well-planned lessons, which follow the guidance for the national strategy for Key Stage 3, have clear learning objectives that enable pupils to consolidate and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in a Year 9 design and technology lesson pupils clarified their understanding of the properties of various materials through a lively debate about making a hat.
11. Stimulating activities capture pupils' interest. In a Year 9 history lesson on World War 1, pupils were moved by a contemporaneous diary account of life in the trenches and made good progress understanding what conditions had been like. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and maintain a good pace in lessons. Carefully selected resources, well matched to the pupils' abilities, support learning effectively. In a Year 8 science lesson, high quality pictures enabled pupils, working together, to develop their understanding of how animals adapt to their habitats. Technical staff provide effective support to both teachers and pupils in the preparation and use of resources, for example, in ICT.
12. In almost all lessons good relationships lead to positive attitudes and an atmosphere of trust in which pupils feel comfortable sharing their ideas. This was apparent in an excellent Year 11 personal, social and health education lesson led by a health worker, when pupils were able to discuss contraception thoughtfully.
13. When teaching is less than satisfactory, learning objectives are too broad and take insufficient account of previous learning. As a result, tasks are not well matched to pupils' learning needs and this leads to some unsatisfactory behaviour. In religious education and geography, non-specialist teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to lead learning effectively.
14. The quality of assessing pupils' work is good and pupils understand how well they are doing. This is a particularly strong feature in many subjects including English, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music, with teachers conducting a dialogue with pupils when their work is marked. Pupils are given opportunities to assess their own and each other's work, especially during information and communication technology lessons, but this practice is not consistently applied across all subjects. Assessment is particularly weak in humanities where marking is variable and targets are vague; as a result, pupils do not know how to improve their work in these subjects.
15. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and very good lessons were observed in the special needs base room. A very good programme of assessment and monitoring keeps pupils on target and helps teachers to modify their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Most teachers make good use of individual education plans for pupils. Well-trained learning support assistants make a significant contribution to teaching and learning. They work in small groups, targeting support more directly resulting in enhanced progress.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is good. The opportunities for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, are very good. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with primary schools are excellent.

- The school is innovative and flexible in meeting the needs, abilities and aspirations of pupils. There is an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities especially in sports and performing arts.
- Statutory regulations for the provision of ICT for pupils aged 14 to 16 are not met.

Commentary

16. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught in Years 7 to 9, with the addition of drama and a second modern foreign language throughout, and dance in Year 7. Curriculum links with feeder primary schools are excellent, so pupils make a smooth transition and settle in quickly. Programmes of study are fully covered and the school's setting arrangements enable teachers to plan work effectively for pupils of different abilities. Although setting has these benefits, small sets are often exclusively boys, so they do not get the opportunity to learn from the often higher standards and different approaches to learning of girls.
17. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. A full range of GCSE subjects lies at the core of provision. The school has developed good, innovative ways of motivating pupils in these years. All pupils in Year 10 follow an enterprise programme, and close links with the local further education college means that pupils can choose to take NVQ and GCSE qualifications off-site, in a range of vocational subjects. The absence, however, of ICT for all but the small minority following the GNVQ course is a weak element. ICT is insufficiently covered across subjects of the curriculum, so the majority of pupils' experience of learning about ICT, or of applying its use to other aspects of their learning, is unsatisfactory.
18. Provision for pupils with SEN is good. Year 7 pupils with SEN follow a well-planned programme taught for 40% of the time by the same teacher. This offers continuity and consistency in the level of support offered.
19. Provision for pupils at risk of exclusion is outstanding because of specialised programmes, such as the music' workshop and outdoor pursuits courses. These courses challenge pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties by offering exciting opportunities to improve their communication skills, which helps them deal with tension and conflict. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage of development.
20. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment activities are very good. Sport, for example, provides a very wide range of opportunities in which a large proportion of pupils and staff participate. Similarly in the arts, extra-curricular provision is strong, particularly amongst the performing arts, where music contributes particularly strongly. School productions, such as the revue 'Spotlight on Brannel' are well regarded in the local community. Provision for other activities outside the school day is good. The school succeeds very well in its strong commitment to affording equality of access for all pupils to all elements of its curricular and extra-curricular provision.
21. The match of teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. Only in the humanities faculty does the deployment of teachers outside their specialist subjects have a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. Teachers are very well supported by non-teaching staff. Technicians in many subjects are extremely well used and learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs help their learning very significantly. Teaching and non-teaching staff work very well together to provide for pupils' needs.
22. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. The new humanities building provides an excellent environment in which to learn. Other accommodation is, however, unsatisfactory, for instance that for physical education and for music. The library is also unsatisfactory. It has only recently been returned to its status as a library, after the building work. It is still used for many lesson periods, and access is difficult. These circumstances

mean pupils do not practise the habits of using a library for research, either book-based or using ICT, or for quiet reading or for browsing.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good support, advice and guidance for pupils. It takes very good care of pupils' welfare, health and safety, and ensures that pupils are involved in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent arrangements for the induction of pupils into Year 7.
- The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensuring that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- The school ensures that each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school.
- The school council is currently underdeveloped.

Commentary

23. The excellent work done across the Brannel cluster of schools ensures a smooth transfer from primary school. This ensures that pupils settle down quickly and feel safe and secure in their new environment.
24. There are very good procedures for dealing with child protection issues. There are comprehensive health and safety policies in place and Internet service provision is safe and secure. Accident and medicine procedures are caring and efficient and the school has several 'in date trained' first aid personnel. Good use is made of the local police who talk to pupils about drug and alcohol abuse and other local professional help such as a school nurse and doctor.
25. Within school all pupils have regular access to personal support from a Connexions adviser and representatives from the 'Children's Fund' visit the school regularly. The latter often work, with great success, on music projects involving pupils who are disaffected and have low esteem. Pupils feel they are able to talk to an adult in school about any problems and feel well supported by the peer mentoring schemes. Pupils receive very good support and guidance to aid their choice of route for post-16 study or work.
26. A substantial network of professionals including pastoral curriculum co-ordinators, external agencies, well trained learning support assistants, proactive tutors and the head of inclusion are all managed by the special needs co-ordinator, and provide a high level of guidance for pupils with special needs. From this background of support for their behaviour and personal development, pupils cope with most aspects of their work and know where to go for help. This enhances their confidence and builds self-esteem, which has a positive impact on their learning. Although all staff have appropriate access to individual education plans and targets, some lack confidence in planning to meet the needs of pupils with more complex learning difficulties. A gifted and talented register has been established and planning is developing but action is at an early stage.
27. Currently the school council is suspended in favour of more democratic representation. A significant minority of pupils, in the pupils' questionnaire, did not think they were treated fairly by teachers. However, pupils do have a say, through personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies, and the pupils have had an influence on the provision of drinking fountains, canteen facilities and on anti-bullying procedures.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. The quality of links with the local community is very good; those with other schools and colleges are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has excellent working relationships with local primary schools and post-16 liaison is very good.
- Parents are kept well informed about the school and their children's progress.
- The school capitalises very well on the expertise and resources in the community to improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

28. The school has excellent working relationships with local primary schools. A common development plan shared amongst the schools allows very strong curriculum links in the majority of subjects. Initiatives include: collaboration on teaching; joint improvement planning; improved attendance; gifted and talented provision; and links through the sports co-ordinator scheme. Specialist resources and facilities are shared; performing arts collaboration is good and pupils themselves are very active in organizing sports activities. Pastoral links are very good and transfer arrangements are handled with great care and sensitivity. Post-16 liaison is very well established with a local further education college.
29. Parents are well informed about the school and their children's progress, particularly through high quality annual and interim reports, regular newsletters and the monthly 'Physical Times'. A significant majority of parents find the school approachable and most feel that it takes account of their suggestions and concerns, for example, through the recent parent questionnaire, by promoting efficient parenting and drugs workshops.
30. The school's links with the community are very good and capitalise on the expertise and resources in the community to improve pupils' learning. Local businesses are particularly supportive of the well-managed work experience programme for Year 10 pupils. The school has a good partnership with the University of the First Age, particularly in exploring new approaches to learning. Links with the Peninsula Programme are raising pupils' awareness and aspirations for higher education.
31. Liaison with the parents and carers of children with special needs is very good. Parents make a valuable contribution to annual reviews and collaborate effectively to solve any problems that arise. The educational welfare service and other external agencies are part of the strong network that ensures pupils' specific needs are met.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good, and ensures the school has a sharp focus on inclusion and improving achievement for all pupils.
- There is very good leadership by other key staff.
- The governors know the school's strengths and work very well with staff to identify areas for improvement.
- The leadership of special educational needs and inclusion is excellent.
- Self-evaluation, monitoring and the implementation of policy are not always sufficiently rigorous.

- Beacon status and participation in a large number of educational initiatives brings very considerable benefit to the school and to its partner schools.

Commentary

32. The headteacher leads a lively and successful learning community. He has encouraged the school to embrace a number of national and local initiatives to help raise standards and increase the involvement of the community. The school development plan provides clear direction as to how the initiatives are to be implemented. This ambitious plan sets out clear principles, known as the learning dispositions, forming the hub of the plan. All departments and pastoral and curriculum co-ordinators have adopted one of these factors in their own improvement plans, creating a very secure basis from which the school is moving forward. This is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided by the school and its standing in the local community.
33. The governing body is very effective. Individual governors are actively involved in linking with departments and undertake classroom visits ensuring that they have a clear understanding of the school. The outcomes of these visits are shared effectively with the headteacher and the whole governing body. The governors provide a good range of expertise and have a clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities, including those related to inclusion, special educational needs, race, disability and sex education. However, they do not ensure that there is a report to parents on citizenship. Governors have a good understanding of the standards in the school and provide both effective challenge and support for the headteacher.
34. Management of departments and of guidance and care are good, with very effective leadership in some areas, including English, mathematics, design and technology, and music. Leadership of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent and is committed to the school's central aim. There are outstanding systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils with SEN. The school has forged excellent links with external agencies and the co-ordinator is driving these partnerships forward. Links extend to working in tandem with primary schools to ensure a seamless transition to the secondary school. The highly qualified and widely experienced team of staff for special education needs has a very good impact on tailored programmes to suit all pupils. Management is very good in its ambition to see pupils with special educational needs meet their full potential. A co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils has identified a list of pupils from across the school and is in the process of refining the plans to accelerate their learning.
35. Overall, the school monitors and evaluates its work effectively. Departmental plans frequently use the evidence collected to confirm that areas identified for improvement are the correct ones. This approach has played a major part in securing the considerable improvements in English, modern foreign languages and physical education since the previous inspection. The humanities faculty has, however, given too little attention to analysing and acting upon the results of monitoring activities.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,100,757
Total expenditure	2,074,973
Expenditure per pupil	3,187

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	184,939
Balance carried forward to the next year	210,723

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN 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

- Good teaching actively involves pupils in all lessons so that learning is enjoyable and effective.
- Pupils benefit greatly from working with local poets and theatre groups to enrich their learning.
- Learning is less effective when pupils do not fully understand the texts they study.

Commentary

36. Pupils enter the school with below average standards. Good teaching helps them to reach average standards by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement. Boys do less well than girls against national figures. Test results have improved at a faster rate than nationally over the last four years. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to make good progress. Almost all pupils were entered for GCSE English and English literature examinations in 2003. Results were above the national average. Boys gained a lower proportion of A*-C grades but achieved higher results overall. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieved equally well.
37. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ensure that pupils work as often as possible in pairs and small groups so that everyone is actively involved. As a result, pupils learn quickly and enjoy the challenge of contributing to lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on poetry, pupils exchanged views about the text and were able to challenge one another to support their assertions with specific textual evidence. This meant they read the poem closely and were analytical. Pupils invariably behave well because they participate widely in lessons and, since no one is distracted from their work, they learn very effectively.
38. Pupils also benefit from additional activities that enrich the curriculum. Links with local poets and theatre groups significantly supports pupils' imaginative writing and dramatic work. Weekly drama lessons for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the close ties between English and drama departments help explain the strength of oral work throughout the school. Written work is generally weaker. Levels of accuracy in spelling and punctuation are variable. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not develop literary ideas sufficiently. This arises in part from pupils' weak understanding of the texts they study. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils made limited progress when discussing Gillian Clarke's poems because their grasp of main themes was too sketchy. Reading is generally competent but an under-resourced library restricts opportunities for pupils to develop research skills or to extend their reading for pleasure. Much good work on basic language skills in English lessons helps pupils to improve their literacy.
39. The department is well led and has played a significant role in securing substantial improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Support for speaking and listening is good across most subjects. As a result pupils are often very competent oral communicators. They talk effectively to each other in small groups and often speak confidently to the whole class. Writing for a variety of purposes is evident in science, religious education, design and technology and music. In most subjects teachers

have high regard for spelling and punctuation in written work, although marking is often inconsistent in the help offered to pupils for improving accuracy.

Modern foreign languages

41. All pupils are taught French and Spanish. The recent introduction of Spanish has increased motivation for languages and has provided better access to language acquisition for all. First entries for Spanish at GCSE will be in summer 2004.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils progress well from Year 7 to 9.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use a range of strategies to good effect to enhance pupils' learning.
- Pupils, particularly boys, do not achieve as well in French at GCSE as they do in other subjects.
- The department is well led. Strategies to raise attainment have begun to have a positive effect.

Commentary

42. By the end of Year 9, standards achieved are average. The gap in performance between girls and boys is wide but narrowing. Recent emphasis by teachers on developing pupils' oral skills has resulted in increased confidence in using the spoken language and led to improved standards. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average in French, with boys performing well below national expectations. However, this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' low standards on entry to the school, and recent instability in staffing. This has led to insecure foundations for some pupils in the early years of studying French.
43. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, progress well. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils achieve satisfactorily, but some individuals and groups underachieve. This is usually related to negative attitudes to language learning and poor foundations laid for some pupils in the past. There is a lack of challenge for some average ability girls and the behaviour of some pupils, especially low ability boys, hinders progress.
44. By the end of Year 9, pupils write and speak about themselves, family and hobbies, often using both present and past tenses. Grammar structures are systematically introduced and developed, with stress on careful and accurate presentation in written work. By end of Year 11, most pupils are able to complete response tasks but many have difficulty in writing or speaking at length and this adversely affects their attainment overall at GCSE. There are some effective, extended writing opportunities for able pupils. Reading skills are well developed for all pupils because vocabulary is learnt systematically and regularly. Pupils' listening skills are satisfactory overall.
45. Teaching is good. This is because teachers have very good subject knowledge and deliver lessons enthusiastically. All teachers are specialists. They plan lessons well, their explanations are clear and they ensure pupils understand the aims of lessons. This aids concentration and motivation. Pupils are generally keen to learn French and participate actively in lessons. Teachers make effective use of various techniques, including paired work and interactive whiteboards to engage pupils in their learning and to allow sufficient opportunity for all to practise the teaching points. Pupils with SEN are welcomed as language learners. Differentiated lessons and varied teaching strategies ensure they enjoy their lessons and can make progress. Insufficient use of the target language by teachers to

conduct lessons restricts the opportunities for practice and development of pupils' listening skills in Years 10 and 11.

46. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a strong, young and enthusiastic team of teachers in place and the head of department encourages the sharing of good practice within his team and ensures consistency of approach by regular monitoring. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations and above average in Years 10 and 11. This represents good achievement given the time allocation for Spanish.
- Teachers use an interesting range of strategies to good effect to enhance pupils' learning.
- Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching and learning.

Commentary

47. Curriculum time is less than for French, yet pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 11 standards of written and oral work are good. For example, in a Year 11 lesson observed where pupils had studied Spanish for only two years, they were able to talk with confidence and a high degree of accuracy and fluency about themselves, family, daily routine and interests, using a variety of tenses and a good range of vocabulary and syntax.
48. Achievement is good for all pupils. Pupils in Year 9 have only studied the language since Year 8 yet have already reached a similar standard to that in French. Achievement is encouraged by teachers' good relationships with pupils. Teachers use praise and humour to encourage pupils and this promotes their self esteem and confidence. Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in lessons and this assists the development of oral skills. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the opportunity to study Spanish and make steady progress, particularly in oral and reading skills.
49. Teaching is good or better in all years. This is because teachers' very good subject knowledge, good planning and enthusiastic delivery of lessons. Teachers' explanations are clear and they ensure pupils understand the aims of lessons. This aids concentration and motivation. Teachers make effective use of various techniques, for example pair and group work, video and games to engage pupils in their learning and to allow sufficient opportunity for all to practise the teaching points. Pupils are keen to learn and good efforts have been made to encourage the active participation of boys in lessons, but teachers need to monitor this closely to ensure participation is equally balanced between the sexes. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, with individual and class targets set. Assessment is used effectively to improve teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership by the head of department has a positive impact on the quality of provision.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to mathematics and very good behaviour are key factors in their good learning.

- Good teaching and high expectations have a positive impact on pupils' achievement, although the standards achieved by boys require further improvement.

Commentary

50. Pupils enter the school with mathematics standards that are below average. Overall achievement in mathematics is good; standards at the end of each key stage are average and higher than would be expected from standards on entry to the school. However, girls' performance is significantly better than boys' at the end of both key stages.
51. Overall teaching and learning are good; teaching frequently has very good features. Well-designed schemes of work support effective planning; lessons are well-paced and characterised by high expectations. Behaviour is very good; pupils have a positive attitude towards learning mathematics and are able to work collaboratively. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and work hard to support and encourage pupils.
52. There is a strong emphasis on identifying key learning objectives and systematically tracking the progress of individual pupils and whole classes. Questioning and monitoring of pupils' work is used appropriately to assess progress and understanding so that lesson plans can be adjusted when required. However, the quality of marking of pupils' work is inconsistent; it is most effective when misconceptions and errors are identified clearly.
53. The team of knowledgeable and committed teachers is very well led. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards supported by a good programme of lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Provision for low-attaining pupils is much improved and there are more opportunities for all pupils to undertake extended investigation and project work. Assessment arrangements have been developed so that analysis of pupil progress is now more systematic.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Pupils apply mathematics successfully in most areas of the curriculum. In science they compile tables of data and use these to construct and interpret graphs. Art and design teachers work hard to develop the poor spatial awareness displayed by pupils on entry to the school. In vocational courses tutors provide good support for pupils with low levels of numeracy.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good leadership of a hard working and innovative team of teachers and support staff.
- Excellent investigative work is developed from Year 7 through to Year 11.
- Assessment and marking are consistently good with some very good features.

Commentary

55. Standards reached by pupils at age 16 are satisfactory and are in line with that of pupils in similar schools. Achievement is good. The 2003 GCSE results showed a significant improvement from the previous year. At age 14 the proportion of pupils who attained the expected Level 5 or above showed a decline in 2003 after a number of years of steady improvement. The department has analysed the results systematically and has implemented appropriate strategies to reverse the decline. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 showed continued steady improvement on previous years but remained slightly below the national average. Current assessment data indicates that there will be

improvement in the proportion achieving Level 5 this year. The achievement of the pupils at age 14 is good.

56. Teaching and learning are most effective in Years 7 to 9 where pupils achieved high standards because they were fully engaged, enthusiastic and sufficiently challenged. Overall the quality of teaching across the department is good. Teachers engage pupils with interesting starter activities and the pupils are enthusiastic. Pupils are fully involved in activities and keen to improve their work. For example, in a very well organised and challenging Year 8 practical session, where pupils worked safely on microbiological techniques, they learned the importance of aseptic techniques and completed relevant internet research. Much work is planned to accommodate the specific needs of the pupils, one good example being the writing frame used for less able pupils when recording their investigative work. When teaching is less effective the pace is slow and the pupils lost interest. In a good lesson there was effective use of the pupils' numeracy skills to present data from their practical work, the lively discussion which ensued concerned whether a line of best fit or a freehand drawn curve was the most accurate way to illustrate their findings.
57. Investigative work is given a high priority in all years and with the helpful use of supportive materials and writing frames the pupils are familiarised with the process as early as term one in Year 7. These investigations continue through the school with more independent work being introduced. The pupils showed their ability to plan well, make sensible predictions, assess reliability and undertake detailed evaluation. Careful assessment of these investigations and useful comments for improvement are reflected in the standards of the work produced in Years 10 and 11, which is very good.
58. The leadership and management of an enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff is strong. Last year effectively overcoming some difficult challenges. Since the last inspection good improvement has been made. The assessment and marking and the quality of the scientific investigation have continued to improve and both are now of a high standard.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff have very good subject and technical expertise and deploy it well in specialist lessons.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive ICT lessons and this prevents them from reaching high standards
- Very good pupil self-evaluation practice helps secure rapid progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Good cross-curricular practice supports learning in several subjects.

Commentary

59. The very good provision for pupils aged 11 to 14 ensures rapid progress. Teaching and learning are very good, and are supported by good technical resources. Consequently, achievement is very good. Both boys and girls, and pupils with SEN, are making equally good gains in knowledge and understanding. In-class support for pupils with SEN is unobtrusive and targeted efficiently. The department systematically develops peer and self-assessment skills with pupils that ensures good knowledge and understanding, and clearly cements a sense of completion and mastery with pupils. Teacher-pupil dialogue is constructive, supportive, and determines a calm and purposeful working culture in lessons. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject. The GNVQ course is equally well-taught; here some pupils are demonstrating very high ICT competences. The overall provision for Years 10 and 11 however, remains unsatisfactory, because there is no specialist ICT teaching. As a

result, hardly any development of skills, knowledge and understanding occurs, and standards remain well below those expected of pupils at this stage.

60. Until September 2003, ICT was only taught in Year 7. In 2003, Year 9 teacher assessments were carefully moderated in collaboration with the local education authority. Standards were well below average. These low standards are still evident in the routine ICT work of older pupils. However, for younger pupils there is strong evidence of rapidly rising standards because of the impact of high quality teaching, planning and resource management brought about through a new timetabled hourly ICT lesson per week for all pupils. Although still below national standards, the impact is clear. As a result, achievement overall in Year 9 is very good, whereas it remains unsatisfactory in Year 11.
61. The current leadership in ICT has ensured very good planning, assessment, and technical support. Schemes of work are securely based upon the National Strategy recommendations, adapted as necessary and mindful of the weak previous provision in Year 7 and 8. Systematic base-line assessment of pupil ICT capability early in Year 7 is used, with additional primary school data, to set end of year targets that are shared with pupils. Each unit of work is assessed to generate individual written skills-based advice for pupils. The hardware resources available now are good, and will further improve as a new ICT classroom comes on-line. The computer to pupil ratio is now in line with national averages. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory overall. However, despite the good mapping of cross-curricular ICT opportunity in Years 10 and 11, and a generally positive approach by other staff to consistently deliver these opportunities, this strategy has failed to adequately develop pupils' ICT competencies because the programmes of study are not being taught.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. The ICT co-ordinator has ensured that opportunities to use ICT as part of subject teaching and learning have been well audited, and a good overall map designates where, in schemes of work, these opportunities are delivered. Practice in science is particularly strong, in that all pupils do use ICT as planned. Good examples in use of spreadsheets, word-processing, internet research, and presentations were seen, which have improved the learning of science, although has not significantly extended pupils ICT capability. Similar good use for learning is seen in mathematics through coursework, and design and technology, with folder work and subject specialist software.

HUMANITIES

Pupils study history, geography and religious education. One group of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 study humanities as an integrated course. Most decisions are made departmentally but an improvement plan exists for the whole faculty. Lack of rigorous monitoring at faculty level has failed to tackle weaknesses in assessment, and in teaching in RE and geography. The leadership and management of humanities are unsatisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well across the school and display positive attitudes.
- Teaching is good; it is lively and sets high expectations.
- The quality and use of assessment for pupils aged 11 to 14 is unsatisfactory.
- The self-evaluation of the history department is not sufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

63. Standards in history are in line with the national average. Pupils start from a low base but achieve well because of good teaching which involves and engages them. Only eight pupils took history GCSE last year. Results were good with 62% gaining grade C or better. Four pupils gained grade A. Pupils use historical sources well, and produce high quality coursework in which they are able to recognise bias and show understanding that evidence is open to different interpretations. Oral skills are well developed. For example, a Year 9 group prepared detailed and moving descriptions of their lives as soldiers in the trenches, and were keen to read them aloud. Written work in exercise books is often limited and does not reflect the level of understanding and analysis shown in class discussion. Lower attaining pupils achieve well, particularly in being able to link cause and effect. A good example is a Year 7 class where pupils were examining and prioritising the reasons why William won the battle of Hastings.
64. The good achievement is the result of engaging teaching, to which pupils respond with significant effort and enthusiasm in lessons. Teaching is characterised by good pace, high expectations, very good relationships and good classroom management. A particularly strong feature is the use of starter exercises, often involving the use of the interactive whiteboard, to immediately capture the attention of pupils. A range of interesting varied activities keeps pupils on task and concentrating throughout lessons. For example, a dramatic reconstruction of 19th century surgery in a Year 10 lesson maintained pupils' interest and led to an informative debate about the barriers to progress in surgery. In the few instances where the teaching was less than good, this was because learning objectives were unclear and pupils became confused about what they were doing and why.
65. Insufficient use is made of assessment to raise standards. Assessment tasks do not test the full range of historical skills and limit the development of pupils' written expression. Pupils' assessment tasks are not systematically stored and referred to in order to improve curriculum planning. Marking is encouraging, but does not use National Curriculum levels or give specific, detailed guidance as to what needs to be done to improve.
66. Leadership is satisfactory and good support is given to new and non-specialist history teachers by the head of department. The department has recently moved to new accommodation which is excellent. Monitoring of the subject by the head of department has been slow to identify areas for improvement and has resulted in limited improvement since the previous inspection.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn well when they are actively involved in challenging tasks.
- Fieldwork contributes positively to pupils' experiences.
- The behaviour of a significant number of boys in geography reduces their achievement.
- Low level tasks, lacking in geographical rigour, are set for pupils in some classes.

Commentary

67. Standards by the end of Year 9 are satisfactory but girls' standards are higher than those of the boys. Standards at the end of Year 11 are unsatisfactory overall because boys are performing at considerably lower levels than girls. Achievement overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory for boys in Year 10 and 11. Many pupils, especially boys, have poor organisational skills and this is not systematically addressed to enable pupils to develop better learning habits before embarking on their GCSE course.

68. Pupils' achievement is considerably better when they are actively engaged in their learning and levels of motivation rise. For example, when undertaking fieldwork exercises, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how river features form and how to graphically represent data collected in the field.
69. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Many lessons begin by effectively sharing with pupils appropriate learning objectives and starter activities. The starter activities motivate pupils best where they are brisk and introduce new ideas and innovative resources, including the interactive whiteboard. Where the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been adopted, it is beginning to have a positive impact on styles of learning. Lessons are weaker where there is less attention to subject rigour and consequently new geographical knowledge and skills learnt by pupils are limited. In several lessons, the behaviour of a significant proportion of boys limits the effectiveness of their learning. This is not the case where pupils are provided with active learning opportunities, such as in a Year 7 class, when pupils were undertaking a memory mapping exercise working in small teams. This held their attention, it was fun and all pupils learnt a considerable amount about the position of key features of the South West Peninsula. A good range of assessment opportunities are used to test pupils' knowledge and skills in a variety of geographical contexts.
70. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Monitoring has taken place but the impact of this is not yet fully reflected in improvements teaching throughout the department. Well structured schemes of work are in place but, overall, there has been limited progress since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not achieve well enough because teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Insufficient attention has been given to the professional development of religious education teachers.
- Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory although the day to day management is satisfactory.

Commentary

71. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average and they do not make sufficient progress. Their work in Years 7 to 9 shows pupils building up a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism but they are not developing sufficient understanding to make connections between religions. The scheme of work hinders this. Although each unit is logical, the overall structure does not enable pupils to build up a coherent framework for understanding religious concepts.
72. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Unsatisfactory teaching by non-specialist teachers is a major contributor to this. Learning objectives are too broad in scope. This results in tasks which are insufficiently focused to enable pupils to build progressively on their prior knowledge and understanding. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. A suitable variety of activities motivates pupils to think carefully about issues such as the sanctity of life. The tasks set are matched to appropriate learning objectives and pupils are challenged to complete these in a given time.
73. Assessment is poor. In Years 10 and 11 GCSE target grades are set but marking does not always relate to pupils' progress towards these. Links between GCSE assessment criteria, pupils' attainment and what pupils need to do to improve are not clear enough. The

assessment tasks set at the end of each unit of work measure pupils' short-term gains in learning but not the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills over time.

74. The leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. Since the previous inspection, standards have fallen and the quality of teaching and learning has declined. Assessment remains a weakness. There is insufficient support for the subject leader in the development of schemes of work and assessment procedures. Non-specialist teachers do not receive enough guidance to deliver the subject effectively. Not enough time is spent monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching to identify staff training needs. The day to day management of the subject is satisfactory. Religious education makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls do well and reach above average standards.
- Boys are low achievers because they do not put enough effort into their planning.
- The very good use of assessment is a key to improved learning.
- Computers are used effectively to aid designing and making.
- The innovative curriculum development in Years 10 and 11 matches' pupils needs.

Commentary

75. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. This represents good achievement when taking account of pupils' below average capability in design and technology on entry to the school. At the end of Year 11, results in 2003 design and technology GCSE were average overall. Results were above average for girls and below average in the case of boys; this is a consistent trend over recent years. This picture was reflected in work seen during the inspection, indicating good achievement for girls and satisfactory achievement for boys. Lower-attaining pupils often achieve very well. This has resulted in many of these pupils applying to college for training and modern apprenticeships that involve design and technology capability.
76. By the end of Year 9, pupils' making skills are good and cover the full range of materials. Very effective assessment is used consistently and is raising standards. Very good resource sheets guide pupils' design work. However, the method used for presenting these sheets needs refining to improve pupils' overall presentation. Literacy is an issue for boys and reflects in their record of work because they often fail to annotate their designs and have difficulty in evaluating the finished product. Good ICT programmes have contributed to improving standards of drawing and research.
77. In Year 11 girls perform better than boys in all areas of designing and making. Improvement for the boys is beginning to emerge as a result of more user-friendly accreditation. Pupils build on skills developed throughout Years 7 to 9. This challenges their confidence to think more creatively and produce innovative, quality products fit for purpose. Some pupils attend college and are involved in building construction courses. The use of an enterprise course in Year 10 is a pioneering initiative to extend pupils knowledge of the business element of manufacturing. Timetabling has been modified to enable design and technology GCSEs to exist alongside this enterprise course.
78. The quality of teaching and learning across the department is very good with elements of excellent teaching in food and electronics. Teaching styles are raising standards as a result

of consistent work with consultants from the local education authority. Very good lessons are characterised by short-term targets that set the pace of learning, high-quality demonstrations and active participation by pupils. Less effective lessons are hampered by room layout, which restricts discussion, missing the opportunity for pupils to contribute analytical comments about other designers work. Support staff are limited in the time they are available to work within the department, but still manage to maintain efficiency of the work spaces, as well as making valuable contributions to teaching and learning where required.

79. Leadership is very good and has galvanised a team of enthusiastic teachers to challenge achievement and drive up standards. The subject audit has been completed and produced an imaginative action plan. Management is good; assessment is a strong feature of the department but overall monitoring is at an early stage of development. Improvement from the previous inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

80. Art and design and music were inspected, and drama was sampled.
81. Two lessons were seen in drama, which is taught once a week to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and as an optional GCSE subject for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are generally good but pupils enter the school with well below average drama skills so that by Year 9 work still remains below average. By Year 11 those taking GCSE drama achieve average standards of work, building well on standards at the beginning of Year 10. No pupils took GCSE examinations in 2003 but results for 2002 were in line with the national average. Teaching is well planned and shows high expectations of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and to evaluate their own progress. Programmes of lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 have recently been revised to provide all pupils with good basic skills and knowledge in drama and with increasing challenge each year. New assessment procedures to track pupils' progress are also a feature of the good leadership and management of the department. This good leadership provides pupils with a varied and stimulating programme of drama activities outside the classroom. Frequent theatre visits and strong links with theatre groups and with drama departments in other schools and colleges further enrich the overall drama provision for pupils.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan well to allow pupils for activity and give good, well focused one-to-one help and guidance.
- Setting arrangements result in large, upper-set classes that hamper effective teaching.
- Pupils make good progress in non-graphical skills, for example in three-dimensional work.
- Effective use is made of local artists to raise achievement.

Commentary

82. On entry, pupils' art skills are well below average. Literacy is also very weak and spatial understanding, particularly amongst boys, is very low. In Years 7 to 9, standards are still below average. The department succeeds well in developing in pupils a relatively confident, 'can do' approach when skills are so weak. To accomplish this, the curriculum focuses sensibly on non-graphical media, where pupils achieve better standards. Drawing abilities remain very weak, though, and sketchbooks are not used well enough to provide a satisfactory record of pupils' progress in this, or any other skill. Pupils' progress to Year 9 is good overall. In other media, for example in three-dimensional work and in understanding

the work of artists, pupils progress well, particularly in lower sets. This is because groups are very small, so pupils have more one-to-one help and individual guidance from teaching and support staff. In large upper sets, numbers are too great for this individual support to have enough effect. Weak literacy impedes pupils' development of annotations of their work in sketchbooks, which could be much better.

83. Pupils enter GCSE courses with below average standards, particularly in drawing and sketchbook use. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average. Year 10 are much stronger, with some work above, or well above average, for example, in lessons with a local sculptor, the artist enables pupils to achieve an exceptionally well proportioned skull-form upon which to build their clay heads. They then develop highly individualistic, expressive features. These are based, for example, on elderly peoples' faces, or faces from other cultures. Some of these sculptures are of very high quality. Year 11 have made satisfactory progress overall and Year 10 are achieving very well. Across both years achievement is now good.
84. Teaching and learning are good. Schemes of work have been satisfactorily revised to appeal more to boys. Effective lesson planning means that pupils learn well from brisk introductions, then have maximum opportunity to benefit from activity phases, where they learn best.
85. The leadership and management of art and design are good. A strong focus on standards is a driving force for the department. Curriculum alterations, well focused on improvement in achievement, have begun and are having beneficial effects. One of these is the involvement of professional artists, such as the sculptor, for workshops and as artists in residence. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory since the previous inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to achieve very well, particularly in composition.
- Leadership and management are very good because of a clear sense of direction and priorities for development.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive; they enjoy the musical opportunities provided which contribute significantly to their personal development.

Commentary

86. Pupils' musical ability is well below average on entry to the school, but good teaching in Years 7 to 9 means they achieve well. Standards are, however, still below average by Year 9. The standard of work in the current Year 11 is above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils have strengths in their performing and composition work. They show good understanding of structure and melodic fluency in a variety of musical styles. However, their use of musical language is a weakness.
87. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Despite the cramped accommodation, very good class management means that pupils work well with each other in paired and ensemble work. Some younger pupils have yet to learn the skill of silence during musical performances. However, older pupils listen carefully to each other, appraising and evaluating work on a regular basis. Pupils in Year 11 demonstrate good independent learning with both boys and girls showing positive attitudes to their work. Teachers show considerable subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Planning is thorough and designed carefully to ensure that activities match the needs of pupils,

especially the lower attaining ones. Some pupils struggle to use musical language correctly when describing their work. Occasionally learning is hampered where practical tasks last too long, and lessons lose a sense of direction.

88. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision and sense of direction for the department. Whole-school initiatives have been embraced and adapted for the subject. This has resulted in many extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, where they benefit from multi-arts events and workshops. These extend their musical and multicultural horizons beyond the classroom. Standards and achievement are now higher than at the previous inspection. Other issues have been tackled successfully and, as a result, improvement is very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allow most pupils to learn well.
- Leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- The use of assessment data to determine standards at the end of Year 9 is inconsistent.
- The lack of a multi-purpose sports hall reduces standards and opportunity.

Commentary

89. Standards are average and most pupils are achieving well. The performances of boys and girls are similar. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were in line with the national average. Standards in work seen by the current Year 11 examination pupils (27) are well above average. Pupils with special educational needs and the talented, achieve well. High attaining pupils are successful in a range of sports at area, county and sometimes national levels.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage pupils very well. Work is planned to suit all pupils; for example, in a Year 8 badminton lesson, lower attaining pupils made good progress because the teacher simplified rules, modified tasks and used demonstrations well. The learning of higher attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and the very good extra-curricular provision. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In a Year 10 basketball lesson, pupils planned work, evaluated peer performance and officiated. Learning is less effective in a few lessons when teaching becomes more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.
91. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialist. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Assessment systems are good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the use of data when determining standards at the end of Year 9. The very good curricular links with cluster primary schools enable pupils to make a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7. The lack of a multi-purpose sports hall reduces standards and opportunity but teachers work hard to minimize the effects; the school's grant application to establish this facility, is at an advanced stage. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational courses

92. The range of vocational courses offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11 includes: the 'Business and Enterprise Pathfinder' course and vocational ICT, both offered to pupils at GNVQ level 2; engineering at NVQ level 1 and GCSE; construction courses offered through the local college at NVQ level 1; Child Development, which is a school-based GCSE course; and an accredited Youth Award course, offered within the school to those pupils undertaking a vocational course at college.
93. All these courses were sampled. Courses not visited during the inspection included the Service Industries course, which is being discontinued at the end of the year, and the GCSE Engineering course in Year 11.
94. Overall, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Standards within vocational ICT were good and in Business and Enterprise they were very good. Pupils achieve highly in these courses. Standards seen at the college-based courses were satisfactory in engineering and good in construction. Portfolios of NVQ course work held at the college indicate that pupils' achievement is good.
95. Pupils' achievement is at its highest in lessons which are led by well qualified teachers and tutors, many of whom have recent industrial or healthcare experience. As a result of their enthusiasm and very good relationships, pupils' attitudes to work-related learning are very good. Teachers make good use of ICT in their lessons. Overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in the vocational ICT course and excellent in the 'Business and Enterprise Pathfinder' course.
96. The school's vocational courses are particularly attractive to less academic pupils and enable them to achieve well. The school has carefully considered alternative pathways for its 14-19 pupils. The creation of the highly innovative 'Business and Enterprise Pathfinder' course is a deliberate attempt to include business experience in the school's design work. It is Government funded, as part of its new enterprise initiative and is well supported by local businesses. In 2003, 30% of pupils left school to start work and 4% entered work-related training. The school has targeted pupils who wish to start work after Year 11 or those who are considering taking up a modern apprenticeship. The partnership with the local college is strong and as a result, lower ability pupils are very well supported. These pupils enjoy the different learning environment which the college provides. The leadership of vocational work is good and good progress has been made.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good subject leadership and the integration of PSHE into the school's 'Learning to Learn' programme has been well managed.
- Standards and achievement in PSHE are good.
- Provision for careers education and guidance is very good.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

97. Standards in PSHE are good. They are satisfactory in Year 7 and at least good in all other years. Pupil achievement in the Year 11 sex education lesson was excellent. Pupils make good progress in PSHE. In discussions, pupils are able to talk about sensitive topics and to express their opinions with growing confidence and considerable maturity. They have good awareness of their own personal development and know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. While Year 11 pupils feel ill prepared for life in a multicultural society, they understand about prejudice and the importance of having good relationships. Pupils have good attitudes to PSHE. This is in part due to the climate of trust which exists between pupils and teachers. Pupils' written work is, however, often poorly presented.
98. The programme for PSHE is well established, but has only been included as part of the school's 'Learning to learn' (L2L) programme for two terms. This decision makes good sense as the whole purpose of L2L is to encourage pupils to know and understand themselves as learners. The programme is already having an impact on pupils' self-esteem. The implementation of this new approach to PSHE has been well managed by the co-ordinating teacher who provides strong leadership. The school does not, however, currently monitor and record pupils' progress in PSHE.
99. Pupils are well prepared for the world of work through the provision of work experience in Year 10. The onus is on the pupils to identify work placements with good support being provided by the work experience co-ordinator. A very large number of local employers support the school. The L2L programme encourages pupils to prepare thoroughly for this by considering career options in Year 9, preparing letters to employers in Year 10 and generally considering work related issues. The Connexions service provides very good support for PSHE and ensures that all pupils in Year 9 and 11 are well advised and supported as they consider their future steps into work, further and higher education. Parents are well informed about pupils' career pathways. There is particularly good support for pupils with special educational needs.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship as a discrete subject has been well managed.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

100. No lessons were observed during the inspection. Pupils from all year groups were, however, interviewed and teachers' planning and schemes of work were closely scrutinised. Standards are average. Pupils have a reasonable knowledge about the aspects of the subject which have been studied. The programme for citizenship has only been in place for two terms. As a result, pupils do not yet have a deep understanding of all aspects of citizenship. Pupils could talk at length about issues such as racism, the impact of drug use on society and human rights. Whilst standards in speaking about these issues are high, there is little evidence of pupils expressing their own opinions in writing.
101. Citizenship is well led and managed. The school has completed a very thorough audit of its curriculum and staffing needs in order to meet the national requirements. The subject is delivered as part of the school's innovative 'Learning to Learn' (L2L) programme. Teachers and pupils are well supported within the carefully planned citizenship modules. These are taught within the pupils' tutor groups. The subject co-ordinator regularly monitors citizenship

teaching within L2L. Staff and pupils are evaluating the programme. Sufficient time is allocated to the subject. Pupils' achievements in citizenship are, however, not monitored or recorded. Because of uncertainty in this area, the school has not yet reported on pupils' progress to parents, although plans to do so are in place for summer 2004.

102. Opportunities to teach citizenship have also been identified within other subjects. Pupils report that this happens, but it is not always made clear to them by teachers that the work is part of the citizenship programme. Some aspects of the citizenship programme, including 'Thought for the day', are not always used effectively by the teachers in registration groups.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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