

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHBROOK CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

Lee Green, London

LEA area: Lewisham

Unique reference number: 100749

Headteacher: Mr John Ratcliffe

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 11 – 13 October 2004

Inspection number: 270531

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	483
School address:	Taunton Road Lee Green London
Postcode:	SE12 8PD
Telephone number:	020 8852 3191
Fax number:	020 8463 0201
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Revd Richard Bainbridge
Date of previous inspection:	15 November 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This Church of England mixed comprehensive is much smaller than average. There are 483 pupils on roll with approx 100 in each year group. There are about 50 more boys than girls. The school's roll is ethnically very diverse. The largest ethnic group is White British (35 per cent) with Black or Black British Caribbean heritage being 21 per cent and Black or Black British African heritage (14 per cent). Sixty pupils are supported through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and 17 pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is higher than most schools (11.1 per cent). The most common first languages spoken by pupils are: Tamil, Bengali (Bangladeshi), French. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. The number of pupils with statements is over double the national average. Roughly, 50 pupils receive support through School Action Plus or have Statements of Special Educational Needs. About half these pupils have specific learning difficulties. The most common other difficulties that the other pupils have are: moderate learning, speech or communication, social emotional and behavioural or autism. There is significant pupil mobility; the numbers joining the school mid-year are much higher than average.

Year 6 tests indicate below average attainment on entry to the school, but this varies from below to well below average according to subject and year group. On balance, attainment is well below average. The school reports that the attainment of girls, who have taken GCSE in the recent past, was significantly below the attainment of boys on entry to the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is roughly double the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Drama
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33267	Margaret Baker	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
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22849	Ronald Catlow	Team inspector	Geography History
8104	Joan Child	Team inspector	Music
8864	Peter Clifton	Team inspector	Special educational needs
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Physical education
12121	Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	English
8798	Dennis Maxwell	Team inspector	Mathematics
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Business studies Citizenship Work related learning
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	English as an additional language Art and design
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Northbrook provides a sound education for its pupils. Standards are rising and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are known individually through formal structures and a strong informal network. Their overall progress is tracked carefully and there is a high degree of concern and care for the pupils. All staff work very hard on their behalf. For the most part, it is a harmonious, calm community. Standards are rising because: the quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, and it is often good; the school is led well by the headteacher and senior leadership team, with a very strong focus on raising achievement; and the school is introducing courses which have a vocational emphasis. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has a good capacity within its current staffing and management for ongoing improvement.
- The good leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is effective in establishing a professional culture in the school with a strong focus on raising pupils' standards and achievement and the accountability that goes with that.
- Despite the school's best efforts, recruitment and staffing difficulties in science mean that the department is leaderless and this is having a profound detrimental impact on standards, achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The provision for pupil's personal development is good. Careers, citizenship, personal, social and health education and the overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.
- There is good practice within departments such as Art and English that needs to be shared and greater consistency developed.
- Although the use of assessment is satisfactory, further refinement will help to raise standards and help to develop pupils' independent learning skills.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and moved to approaches that are more active. There has been significant investment in ICT and standards in literacy have improved. Standards have risen.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The indications are that 2004 GCSE results would place standards as below national average but above the results of similar schools. Standards are improving. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A* to G results at GCSE are in line with the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. The trend for improvement is above the national trend at GCSE examinations. The progress that pupils made from Year 9 tests to GCSE was above average. The school's analysis indicates that African boys and girls are achieving well, whilst Caribbean pupils are underachieving, which is more pronounced amongst the boys. The school is participating in two projects specifically examining ways of raising Caribbean and UK boys' achievement. Girls do not do as well in GCSE examinations as girls do nationally and the school accounts for this because, in recent years, girls' attainment on entry was significantly lower than boys' attainment. In class, little difference was seen in the performance of boys and girls.

In the Year 9 2003 tests, overall standards are below the national average but above those of similar schools. Pupils made above average progress from Year 7 to Year 9 when compared with similar schools. The trend is above the national trend. The school has adopted the national teaching strategy for these year groups to good effect.

Overall, pupils' achievement is sound. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress against their targets as their peers, as do pupils with English as an additional language. The school has identified a number of pupils as being gifted and talented but the work with them has yet to show in the increased proportion of higher grades. Sharper, more forensic use of assessment is needed to evaluate the progress of pupils with additional needs and to judge the effect of the support given and strategies adopted.

Behaviour is mostly satisfactory, as are attitudes. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time but there are lessons in which learning is slowed by low level disturbance and sometimes more disruptive behaviour. This is usually in subjects where there has been significant instability of staffing. Where there has been stability in staffing over a period, pupils are keen and do get involved in their work. **The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.** Attendance is in line with national average. However, the traffic and long distances that some pupils have to travel mean that lateness continues to be an issue.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is sound. Teaching is at least satisfactory, it is often good. What distinguishes good teaching from satisfactory teaching is in the degree of challenge being presented to pupils and the establishment of a climate in the classroom where pupils are engaged, want to work and where their energies are being utilised; where in fact they are working at least as hard as the teachers.

Standards are also being raised because the school is beginning to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school has increased the range and nature of the vocational courses and curriculum innovation is good. Strengths in the curriculum include citizenship, PSHE and careers guidance and the development of vocational courses that demand an active participatory approach. The poor provision in science is a significant weakness which counter-balances these strengths. Overall, links with parents and the community are good. The overall care and guidance for pupils is also good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership at senior level is good. The senior leadership team is effective - they work well together and bring a range of skills. Governance is good. Leadership at middle management is satisfactory and there is the need for ongoing development (already underway) to improve the effectiveness of heads of department in evaluating their departments and what is needed to improve.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their child liked school; felt that members of staff expect their child to work hard and do their best; and that they felt comfortable about approaching the school if there was a problem. Pupils, in informal discussion and in their questionnaires, were very positive about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the provision for science in the school.
- Share the good practice that exists within departments and develop consistency within and between departments.
- Refine the use of assessment in classrooms to develop pupils' involvement in their own learning, raise their aspirations, unlock their energies and ensure that they know what it is that they have to do in order to improve.
- Make sharper and much more evaluative use of assessment in the setting and reinforcement of pupil's targets and in measuring the effectiveness of strategies on pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall standards are below the national average but above those of similar schools. Standards at GCSE and Year 9 test results are improving at a rate that is above the national trend. Overall, achievement of pupils is sound in relation to their prior attainment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving.
- The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A* to G grades is in line with the national average in 2003 and well above average compared with similar schools.
- Pupils achieve very well in art and well in English, design technology, physical education and citizenship.
- Instability in staffing in French, now rectified, has led to underachievement. In science, there is underachievement because of the current staffing situation. Pupils underachieve in business studies.

Commentary

1. Overall, although standards as indicated by Year 6 tests are below average on entry this varies between subjects and years and in most areas is well below average.
2. In the Year 9 2003 tests, overall standards are below the national average but above those of similar schools. Pupils made above average progress from Year 7 to Year 9 when compared with similar schools. The trend is above the national trend. There is a significant discrepancy between the teachers' assessments for mathematics, English and science in 2003 and the results of the national test when pupils outperformed the teachers' expectations. The 2004 results indicate that progress will be below average. This is because there is underachievement in science and to some extent in mathematics. In English, pupils' results are in line with the national average. Caribbean boys seem to be doing well in English but underachieving in mathematics and science. There is not such a discrepancy between the performance of boys and girls, as is evident in the GCSE results.
3. The headteacher identifies the Key Stage 3 strategy¹ as having a positive effect, with excellent consultative support across English, mathematics and science and there is good funding to support the Key Stage 3 strategy in other subjects. There are mathematics booster classes through the gifted and talented programme and Excellence in Cities, and booster classes in other subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.5 (30.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	34.1 (29.2)	35.4 (34.7)

¹ The Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy and helping pupils who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation, and providing professional development and support to teachers.

science	32.0 (29.0)	33.6 (33.3)
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There were 92 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The percentage gaining 5 A* to C is well below average and is proving a stubborn statistic to change but the school's targets indicate a very significant step change in 2005 as a result of the improvements which have taken place moving through the school. On the surface, boys and girls attain similar results at GCSE, although the school's analysis shows that fewer girls than boys achieved 5 A* to C grades. However, girls' results were well below the national median for girls in 2003 whereas boys' results were close to the median for boys' performance nationally; that is, girls are underachieving compared with girls nationally. There has been this trend for some years. The school attributes this to girls' lower attainment on entry to the school. Within class, there were no apparent differences.

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	26 (20)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.7 (29.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 88 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- This picture of improved standards is not consistent across the school. In two areas, difficulties in the recruitment of key personnel has led to, or is leading to, significant underachievement. In science, particularly, pupils are disadvantaged. Despite the school's best efforts, recruitment and staffing difficulties mean that the department is leaderless and this is having a profound impact on standards, achievement and quality of teaching. A similar situation has existed in the recent past in French. This has now been stabilised and, although too soon to judge the overall provision, significant improvements have and are taking place which have established a stability of structure on which standards can be raised.
- The school's analysis indicates that African boys and girls are achieving well, whilst Caribbean pupils are underachieving, which is more pronounced amongst the boys. The school is participating in a number of projects to raise the aspirations and achievement of specific groups of pupils, in particular Caribbean and UK boys.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils in the school on the SEN register is above average. They make satisfactory progress in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills through the specific support offered in the learning unit. In classes, their progress is not always satisfactory because lesson planning is not sufficiently well adapted to meet their needs.
- Pupils with English as an additional language generally achieve as well as their peers. Although the school analyses achievement by ethnicity, no such analysis takes place for EAL pupils' achievement. In the absence of analysis and tracking of these pupils' progress, it is difficult for teachers to identify whether or not they are doing as well as they should be.

9. Overall, literacy skills are below average. The school could do more to promote reading, particularly amongst boys. Key vocabulary is displayed but seldom referred to. Whilst there were good examples of oral work, particularly in practical subjects, nevertheless opportunities for group discussion, presentations and other opportunities for pupils to rehearse their ideas are limited, except within the English department. Pupils in the school do not find writing extended answers in the formal language required in examinations easy, and providing more opportunities to discuss their ideas will help this process, particularly those pupils with English as an additional language who have good 'street-wise' oral skills but lack academic language – especially in writing.
10. The skills of mathematics and numeracy have satisfactory application in most other subjects, although for science there is little evidence of intended links. The school has yet to establish planned links between mathematics and other subjects.
11. A number of factors within departments is helping to raise achievement; not all are present in all departments. These are:
 - The consistency of high expectations shared by all staff within the department.
 - The department carefully structures the learning to which pupils respond in a very positive fashion.
 - What is taught is interesting and relevant and engages pupils' interest.
 - The quality of leadership of the department.
 - Very good use of homework.
 - Very good planning.
 - Good teaching by hardworking teachers.
 - Staffing stability. The quality of relationships, which exist between staff and pupils, developed over a time, is fundamental to developing the quality of learning and achievement in the school.
 - The well below average teacher:pupil ratio.

There are also factors that limit achievement.

- Difficulties of recruitment and staffing instability within a couple of departments.
 - Teachers' expectations are not always high enough – particularly in lower sets.
 - Pupils' attitudes – sometimes these have been shaped by their previous experience in the subject area or when the challenge and pace of the lesson is lacking.
 - Attitudes relate very much to the quality of teaching, particularly expectations, challenge and pace.
 - Development of thinking skills and independent skills is sometimes thwarted by spoon feeding or the closed nature of exercises.
 - Assessment information is not used well enough to set targets, establish what pupils need to do to improve, and to judge the impact of strategies; for example, with English as an additional language and special educational needs.
 - Setting arrangements can throw up anomalies in that boys tend to dominate the lower sets or cause differences in pupils' attitudes when higher aspiring pupils are not present.
 - Achievement is sometimes not as good as the quality of teaching because pupils lack of independent learning skills; on these occasions, teachers are working harder than pupils.
12. The challenge that the school is facing is to develop pupils' attitudes so that they take more responsibility for their learning, and the key to this is through refining the use of assessment.
 13. These factors are explored in more detail through the report.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are satisfactory. The school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Attendance currently is broadly in line with the national average but punctuality is unsatisfactory despite the school's best efforts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A caring, harmonious and collaborative atmosphere.
- The Christian ethos of the school.
- When unchecked, boisterous behaviour and attitudes can get in the way of learning.
- Late arrival of pupils in school disrupts their own and others' learning.
- Pupils are known as individuals and there are strong informal supportive networks which operate within the school.

Commentary

14. Pupils describe Northbrook as a 'happy, multicultural environment where people are treated as individuals.' Pupils from different racial groups tend to get on well and there are few incidences of bullying. Pupils feel that if incidents do occur the school treats them seriously and takes immediate action. Pupils share equipment and help one another. Prefects and older pupils look out for the well-being of younger pupils.
15. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time but there are lessons in which learning is slowed by low level disturbance and sometimes more disruptive behaviour. Sometimes pupils' attitudes have been forged by their previous experience in a particular subject area, particularly when there has been significant staffing instability. Colleagues new to the school have to earn pupils' respect; once gained, pupils are very supportive. When the relationship has not yet been established, teachers require strong behaviour management strategies. Many pupils are keen and do get involved in their work, particularly in those subject areas where there has been stability of staffing over a significant period. The school uses its small size well. Pupils are known as individuals by most staff and there are strong, supportive, informal networks that supplement, very effectively, the more formal structures. Because they are known as individuals, their self-esteem is enhanced effectively. This informal network and the overall good relationships that exist with staff, provide a very important foundation for learning in the school. In this school, the quality of learning is very dependant on the quality of relationships with members of staff that have developed over time. There is some occasional jostling and high noise levels in the corridors between lessons; this is not helped by the design of the building. However, the school has taken steps to address this with a one-way system and patrols throughout the day.
16. The time given to Christian reflection in morning registration and assemblies provides a calm start to the day that pupils appreciate. Christian principles provide a point of reference for teachers and children in discussions of social issues and are reflected in the ethos of the school. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility and understand what it means to live in a community. Pupils' self-awareness is promoted through the close monitoring undertaken by the school of behaviour, attitudes, punctuality and achievement. Targets are set after discussions with pupils in many of these areas, and support is available, for example from learning mentors, to help pupils achieve them. The school's provision for personal development is good. The planned personal, social and health education programme, along with citizenship and the elements of the work-related programme, all interlock effectively. Pupils take responsibility when given the opportunity. There is a rich diversity of ethnic heritage, religion and cultures in the school and pupils are sensitive to and respect individual difference. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Attendance

Attendance currently is broadly in line with the national average and 0.3 per cent higher than the LEA average. The school has good systems in place to improve attendance. Punctuality has continued to be an issue since the previous inspection. Pupils frequently arrive late for registration, assembly and classes and this disrupts learning. The school has taken many steps to try to address this,

such as making the start of the school day earlier to avoid the rush hour, putting in systems to record and penalise lateness, and communications with parents about lateness. However, the traffic and long distances that some pupils have to travel mean that lateness continues to be an issue.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03 (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.1
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.8
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

The school works hard to keep challenging pupils ‘on side’. The fixed-term exclusion is used to provide a ‘short sharp shock’ and as a means to involve parents in deciding how best to approach a particular problem with a pupil. As an approach it seems to work effectively with girls generally and Black British Caribbean and African pupils, in that with these groups the rate of reoffending is lower. In the case of white pupils, there would seem to be a small group of pupils who tend to reoffend. The school seldom resorts to permanent exclusion. The school has an effective behavioural unit in which pupils who present challenging behaviour, and are therefore at risk of exclusion, are withdrawn and taught for specific periods of time. The programme they follow gives specific help with the curriculum as well as a programme to help them take responsibility for their behaviour. This ‘Fresh Start’ unit provides a calm environment and intensive adult to pupil support and has contributed significantly to the very low rate of permanent exclusions in the school.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African

No of pupils on roll
173
3
14
19
3
8
8
3
1
4
2
108
67

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
37	0
0	0
5	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
5	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
19	1
14	0

Black or Black British – any other Black background	39	12	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	22	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	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 sound. Teaching is at least satisfactory; it is often good. The school has increased the range and nature of the vocational courses and curriculum innovation is good. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The strengths in the curriculum are counterbalanced by the weakness in science

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory; it is often good. There is some unsatisfactory teaching - particularly in science. Good teaching was seen across the school and in almost all subjects, including science. There is a developing professional culture in the school and good practice in most departments that needs to be shared to reinforce expectations. Assessment is satisfactory but further development of assessment will help to raise standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. It has moved from a formal, instructional style to one that seeks to engage pupils more.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, developed over time, underpin the learning.
- Pupils lack independent learning skills, and developing these is sometimes hampered by work that provides insufficient challenge or is inherently 'closed' in nature.
- Lessons are not always planned sufficiently to support the range of pupils' additional needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 102 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	18 (18%)	38 (37%)	37 (36%)	6 (6%)	1 (1%)	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.

17. What distinguishes good teaching from satisfactory teaching is the degree of challenge being presented to pupils and the establishment of a climate in the classroom where pupils are engaged, want to work and where their energies are being utilised; where in fact they are working at least as hard as the teachers. This is clearly easier to achieve where there has been staffing stability and where pupils have had a good experience in the past. Satisfactory teaching tends to limit the challenge with relatively 'closed' tasks and does not provide either the challenge or support required to extend pupils' learning into the higher levels achieved through good teaching. In these lessons, pupils tend not to be active participants.

18. There is evident expertise within departments, which now needs to be shared to ensure consistency of expectations. At the time of the last inspection teachers were doubly isolated by being (a) part of a small school which, because of its size and nature, stood slightly outside the mainstream and (b) in relative isolation within their own classroom. This culture has to a large extent been broken down to be replaced with a growing sense of professionalism, which looks outward towards the evident good practice in and around the borough. The school has worked closely with external consultants to introduce the Key Stage 3 strategy and members of staff have increasingly taken on board the recommended strategies and approaches. The school has also participated in another pilot project that focused on teaching methods and approaches. The result is rising standards.
19. Throughout this report, the quality of relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the fundamental importance of this relationship to the overall quality of learning has been repeatedly stressed. Pupils respond to 'their' teacher and the informal and formal network of support that exists. Where the relationship has not yet been established, teachers need to apply skilled behaviour management strategies. The inspection took place relatively close to the beginning of the new academic year and, in some cases, routines and expectations were still being established.
20. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, overall. In lessons seen where small groups of individual pupils are withdrawn to work on individual programmes, the teaching is consistently well targeted and pupils make satisfactory progress with basic skills. Members of the support staff make a sound contribution to teaching and learning. They are aware and make effective use of information in pupils' individual education plans. In other classes, planning does not always support the learning needs of pupils sufficiently well and this leads to some underachievement. For example, worksheets presented to a class are sometimes too crowded with information and verbal instructions are insufficiently clear. This leads to confusion amongst some pupils. The teaching strategies used throughout the school to support pupils with special educational needs do not promote independence in learning sufficiently well.
21. The school has identified a group of pupils who are particularly able and has established a register of these gifted and talented youngsters and identified enrichment opportunities. Within class, these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
22. Beginners in English, and those at the very early stages of learning English have individual action plans to which teachers can refer. Recent planning identified the need for staff teaching English as an additional language to support most pupils within classes across the curriculum, but support still mainly happens in withdrawal sessions. An imminent appointment to the department will improve this situation.
23. Currently, the use of assessment is satisfactory. A key to tackling pupils' lack of independent learning skills and to raise standards further is to develop further the use of assessment. The concept of assessment for learning needs to be broadened so that it is used to foster pupils' motivation, raise their expectations and encourage them to take more responsibility for their learning. Pupils need to know what it is they have to do in order to improve their work, to take it, for example, from a D grade to a C grade. The school has introduced good tracking systems and the school is rich in data. Currently, there is almost too much data. The audience and the use to be made of data, requires clarification and indeed simplification so that teachers are able to make effective use of it. This is particularly true of pupils with additional needs. Currently, for example, assessment information is not sophisticated enough to provide teachers with sufficiently detailed, concise information about English as an additional language needs, achievement or progress.

The curriculum

Standards are also being raised because the school is beginning to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school has increased the range and nature of the vocational courses and curriculum innovation is good. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strengths in the curriculum include citizenship, PSHE and careers guidance, and the development of vocational courses that demand an active participatory approach.
- There is good provision in English, design technology, art and design, music and physical education
- The poor provision in science is a significant weakness that counterbalances these strengths.

Commentary

24. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements. Curriculum innovation is good and it has taken advantage of the increased flexibility given to schools to introduce a curriculum that allows pupils to appreciate the world of work and acquire particular skills, ranging from GNVQ IT to a Level 1 BTEC courses in hospitality, travel and tourism. Work-related learning is good. There are good opportunities for enrichments through, for example, the sporting, artistic homework and revision clubs. The residential experience for Year 7 provides a very good opportunity for pupils to get to know one another and for key relationships between staff and pupils to develop.
25. The provision for citizenship is good. Very good teaching of a well-planned curriculum by specialist staff in discrete lessons is leading to very good achievement in the GCSE short course examination. Pupils are expected to be active participants in activities within the community. The provision for personal social and health education is good and covers the required aspects relating to drugs and sex and relationship education. Careers education and guidance are very good.
26. Despite the school's best efforts it has not been able to make a key leadership appointment to the science department and the lack of leadership over time has led to poor provision in this subject area.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school meets the requirements specified on Statements of Special Educational Needs. Individual education plans are clearly written and have useful targets identified. In addition, they give teachers good information about suggested approaches to learning. Specific support provided is recorded carefully in daily lesson plans. However, the pupils' learning and progress made are not always sufficiently well evaluated to inform next steps. In lessons, the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is not always sufficiently well adapted to the learning needs identified in individual education plans.
28. Current arrangements to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language are not fully satisfactory. The two days per week allocated do not give enough time to meet demands. The school's good action planning, following a recent inclusion audit, identified the need for in-class support across the curriculum, but this is not happening enough. Withdrawal of those in the early stages of learning the language is potentially satisfactory, but these learners do not always have good modelling of language from staff. Pupils with more advanced needs, for example, for academic language, need more support in classes.
29. The quality of resources is satisfactory, overall. The library is very well managed, and supports ventures that foster a love of reading. Despite this, boys in particular borrow few books and, in general, the library is less used than it deserves to be. There has been significant investment in ICT. Aspects of the accommodation are poor. The school is all too aware of these difficulties and is currently engaged in making a bid for enhancing the accommodation.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Provision for support, advice and guidance is good. The school has good arrangements to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school utilises its small size effectively so that pupils are known individually both through formal structures and a strong informal network.
- Extensive resources and procedures are in place to provide pastoral and academic support for pupils.
- There is a very good induction programme, which eases the transition into Year 7.

Commentary

30. The school makes good use of its small size – and pupils, parents and teachers alike value this. They comment that being a small school results in lots of support for both pupils and staff. One pupil commented that they liked the fact that “you know most of the students and the teachers know you” another that “they take care of us here.”
31. The Year 7 induction programme and citizenship classes make clear to pupils where they should go if they need help. As a result, pupils feel they know where to turn to for help and support if they need it. Appropriate arrangements are in place for first aid. The designated Child Protection and Looked After Children Officer has been trained and receives regular updates on developments in this area. The school has sought to raise awareness of Internet safety issues by sending a DfES Internet safety booklet home to all parents with the end-of-year report.
32. The structure for pastoral care that was in place at the time of the last inspection has been re-focused on academic achievement. Student co-ordinators have developed expertise in the issues facing children at particular points in their school career, for example, the transition to secondary school, choice of qualifications, careers and further education. Good monitoring procedures enable information to be shared between form tutors, subject teachers and student co-ordinators and allow the school to intervene before issues result in pupils not realising their potential. Extensive resources are made available to support pupils both with behavioural issues and with their learning. For example, learning mentors assist form tutors; the Learning Challenge in Year 8 helps pupils develop the tools they need to succeed; the academic mentor helps Year 11 pupils to focus on completing coursework, and booster classes are provided in core subjects. The Fresh Start unit provides a calm environment, out of the classroom, in which pupils can reflect and work on behaviour management issues and has contributed significantly to the very low rate of permanent exclusions in the school.
33. Careers education and guidance (CEG) are very good. Work experience is a particularly strong feature that receives positive comments from pupils, parents and local employers. Pupils benefit from careful induction and skilled debriefing. Pupils from Year 7 onwards have a coherent curriculum that links a focus on self-review with high quality information. For example, Years 9 and 11 pupils and their parents benefit from skilled advice from staff and independent advisers about subject and career options. Pupils have the opportunity to meet the local Connexions personal adviser who is most appreciative of the school's work and detailed knowledge of their young people. Members of staff are good at identifying those who require specific, specialist help and ensuring that they meet the right person. Very good accommodation, good resources and the skilled use of a new administrative assistant enhance the very well planned CEG curriculum. A highly committed co-ordinator has vision and a belief in the importance of CEG and this has been an important factor in the good improvement since the last inspection. Well-chosen future targets include further extending

the role of CEG in Years 7 and 8 and more intensive use of the new ICT hardware. CEG makes a very good contribution to work-related learning and pupils' personal development.

34. The arrangements for induction of pupils into Year 7 are a particular strength of the school. An extensive programme of activities involving local primary schools, parents, the school's senior management team, prefects, the current Year 7 and form tutors, allows pupils to get to know the school before they arrive for the autumn term and to reduce potential nervousness. The cross-curricular sunflower project has been very successful in capturing pupil's enthusiasm and provides additional information to staff on pupils' attainment.
35. Prefects take on an important role in school life, undertaking numerous daily duties and being involved in after-school events. Members of the School Council feel that they are listened to by the school and that fellow pupils value their role in raising issues. Over the last year, they have been influential in achieving several improvements to the school environment. Pupils are also an integral part of the staff interviewing process.
36. Some areas of the building are not in good repair and there is no disabled access to the upper floors, but these issues are due to be addressed through the plans for the new building.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents, other schools, colleges and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Positive relationship with parents.
- Helpful information provided to parents on the school and individual pupils' progress and targets.
- Good links with local primary schools and the community have raised the schools' profile.
- There is no formal parents group, although the school is planning to develop a "family focus group".

Commentary

37. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and at the pre-inspection meeting were generally positive. Ninety-seven per cent of parents indicated that their child likes school and the same proportion of parents felt comfortable in approaching the school.
38. The information that the school provides to parents, for example, using planners and academic review evenings was seen as helpful. Attendance at these meetings, where progress is reviewed and ideas on how to improve are discussed, averages at 85 per cent and the student co-ordinators follow-up with any parents who do not attend. Pupil reports to parents give good information about the courses they have been covering. Useful targets for further development are given in most subject areas. If ever there are issues, parents are involved through telephone conversations or meetings and they are kept informed of progress through having to sign daily reports. The school's prospectus is very attractive and well produced and gives parents a lot of information about what it is like to attend the school. Regular updates are provided through a half-termly newsletter.
39. The value that the school places on parental views is illustrated by the fact that it undertakes an annual survey of their opinions of the school. The school is looking to develop parental involvement in their children's learning through parenting skills evenings and the creation of a family focus group as part of the 'Aim Higher' initiative. Currently, there is no parents' group at the school.
40. The school has succeeded in improving links with local primary schools and the community. This has resulted in an increase in demand for places at the school from families who live

locally and a consequent reduction in the distances pupils live from the school. Two community groups use the school premises for their monthly meetings and the school participated in the local 'Party in the Park', providing music and artwork. Local businesses support the work of the school through providing prizes and discounts for materials. The school raises funds for a local charity and, every Thursday, one year group attends a service at the church, conducted by the Chair of Governors. Pupils feel that going to the church has a positive impact, 'providing time to reflect and change negative attitudes.' A local Church youth group runs activities in the school that are attended well and clearly enjoyed by the pupils, and pupils from the school help in the church's activities. The sunflowers from the Year 7 induction project provide bright displays for the local supermarket. The Routes and Wings mentoring scheme with local business allows children whose parents have not been through Higher Education to meet and work with people who have and to better understand its potential benefits.

41. The Governors' Annual Report to parents and the Prospectus are very attractive and well-produced documents. They give a lot more information than the statutory requirements. However, there are some omissions to both documents which have been identified by the school and which will be rectified in the future. The prospectus, for example, omits the reminder that parents can withdraw their children from religious education or religious worship and lacks information about future policies and admission policies with regard to pupils with disabilities.
42. Links with other schools and colleges are good. The school has an extensive programme of visits to local primary schools, and science workshops are held with some, allowing Year 7 students to gain self-esteem from teaching primary school pupils. Every child in Year 11 has the opportunity to apply to Christ the King Sixth Form College. The college visits the school in Assembly and there are good links between the Years 10 and 11 Student Co-ordinators, the Careers Advisor and the college. The school shares some of the facilities of a nearby independent school and a joint session in English was felt to be beneficial to the pupils of both schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance is good. Leadership by the headteacher, deputy and senior leadership team is good. Management is good. Strategic planning is very good and performance management is good. There is a developing professional culture in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The key judgement for Northbrook school is that there is amongst the staff a good capacity for on-going improvement and development of the school and the raising of standards and achievement of its pupils.

Commentary

43. Governance is good and has very good features. Members of the governing body are very committed, prepared to take difficult decisions and provide effective support and challenge. They are fully engaged in setting the strategic direction for the school and are prepared to use external expertise, where appropriate, if they have concerns or doubts about a particular issue or aspect of the school. There is an effective working relationship between the governing body and the senior leadership team. They have a very clear idea of where they want the school to go and of its strengths and weaknesses.
44. There is good leadership by the headteacher, supported very effectively by the deputy headteacher. They have complementary skills. The senior leadership team is also effective

and its members bring a range of strengths. Leadership is focused appropriately on raising standards and pupils' achievements and the means by which this is to be accomplished.

45. The headteacher has put structures and systems in place and has, along with deputy and leadership colleagues, created a changed culture. It would appear, from discussions with members of the governing body, that the school had in the past a reputation for being a caring supportive environment but was lacking in academic challenge. It also tended to be inward looking, with somewhat isolated staff. Leadership has been successful over the past four years in providing significantly greater academic rigour – challenging any complacency and acceptance of low standards. Strategic management is good, as is financial management; the school is rich in data but needs to be more selective about what data is the most meaningful for specific audiences.
46. There is an emerging professionalism in the school – reflected in the significant numbers attending training in middle management. Currently, management at this level is satisfactory. Management in a small school has its own difficulties and challenges but, clearly, colleagues are beginning to see themselves as leaders and managers, even if departments are small. Members of staff are also beginning to look outward to find examples of good practice that can be brought back to the school and their department. The school has made extensive use of LEA consultants to implement the Key Stage 3 strategy and the LEA has provided good support in supporting the school with the problems in science.
47. A recent effective inclusion audit accurately identified action points for the improvement of the school's provision for pupils with English as an additional language. The senior team developed a useful action plan to provide for these needs, but this is not being implemented quickly or effectively enough. Leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. Outside agencies are used effectively and the team supporting pupils is well informed. Information about the needs of specific pupils is clear and accessible to all staff. Staff in the unit have promoted good links with parents. Specialist staff have, however, not been sufficiently active in supporting lesson planning that consistently meets the needs of pupils. This has led to some underachievement. Essentially, the strategic role of both co-ordinators within classrooms and departments needs to be significantly developed in order to develop other teacher's skills. Currently, the monitoring of pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the strategies put in place are too superficial.
48. Financial planning and control are good. The school has effective procedures for setting, monitoring and evaluating the annual budget. Strategic planning is very good. The school has ambitious plans for expansion, supported by a detailed business plan. The pupil/teacher ratio is very low, as is the contact ratio, to some extent part of the diseconomies of scale of being a small school. The annual budget for 2003-4 shows that spending on staffing was proportionally much higher than average. However, most of the extra expenditure was on supply cover, when it was not possible to make permanent appointments, and support staff as part of a drive to improve the performance of targeted groups in the school. There was no detrimental effect on other areas. Learning resources in subjects are at least satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in ICT resources since the last inspection. The problem of poor accommodation is being addressed through the expansion plan. The recommendations from the last audit report have all been put into practice. The school has a very high income per student and, overall, gives satisfactory value for money.
49. The school applies the principles of best value effectively. Standards are rising steadily in many subjects because teachers are beginning to challenge their own performance, although there are still significant areas, such as science, where this is not yet the case because the school has been unable to make a key leadership appointment. The school works hard to achieve best value for money; for example, by using a leasing contract for ICT equipment and by operating its own cleaning contract. It consults well. There is an effective school council and the school regularly undertakes detailed surveys of parents' views.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,677,479	Balance from previous year	84,514
Total expenditure	2,622,483	Balance carried forward to the next	54,999
Expenditure per pupil	5,142		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

What is the effectiveness of work-related learning?

The provision for work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is co-ordinated well.
- The citizenship programme provides good opportunities for developing personal responsibility and enterprise.
- The school has taken advantage of the increased flexibility to introduce a curriculum which contains vocational subjects.
- There are productive links with the local college and individual pupils attend and benefit from the courses provided.

Commentary

50. Work-related learning (WRL) is good. It is well co-ordinated to ensure that it contributes to, and is supported by, other aspects of the curriculum. For example, the very good work experience enables pupils to extend their work-related learning through direct experience. All pupils take the short course GCSE citizenship course, which requires them to take responsibility for a community activity, thereby increasing their ability to be enterprising and increasing their employability. This is very carefully implemented, recorded and assessed. Whilst some departments, such as geography and design and technology, have integrated WRL well within their curriculum, others have not. The school has introduced a curriculum that allows pupils to appreciate the world of work and to acquire particular skills, ranging from GNVQ IT to a Level 1 BTEC courses in hospitality, travel and tourism. The BTEC course is new this year but the 2004 results for the GNVQ course were good, with pupils obtaining better results than their prior attainment indicated. Years 10 and 11 pupils attend the local college and study a range of vocational skills. They are well supported by senior staff who visit each pupil weekly and have productive links with the college. The school has prioritised the need for further whole-school in-service training to hone teachers' understanding of this new curriculum area and to refine and extend the audit.

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**.²

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teachers are conscientious in preparation and marking, and care well for their pupils.
- Consequently, attitudes and behaviour are generally good.
- There is a good range of activities outside the classroom.
- There is insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching.

Commentary

51. Standards of English on entry are below the national average. However, tests at the end of Year 9 indicate standards in line with the average. Girls in 2003 performed better than boys and better than the national average. These results are now similar to those in mathematics, but better than in science. Compared with similar schools, standards in Year 9 are high. English language GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average. Girls normally perform better than boys, but similarly when compared with their respective national averages. Results in literature are generally in line with those for language. In 2004, English language results were significantly better than in 2003, but weaker in literature.
52. Standards observed in lessons are in line with these results. Accuracy in spelling and punctuation is generally at expected standards by Year 9. Many pupils in that year are writing at length, with an increasing range of vocabulary, and more sophisticated sentence structure. The ablest pupils argue persuasively. Standards of weaker pupils are below average. Poetry seen displayed on classroom walls was lively, showing that pupils can adapt poetic devices to their own uses. In Years 10 and 11, the ablest pupils are writing imaginative stories, with vivid use of language. Most pupils read the texts carefully, and make helpful notes. The best write long, carefully researched essays. Accuracy is generally good. Pupils have yet to develop the tools for dealing with literature, particularly poetry. They tend to tell the story at the expense of analysis.
53. Standards of speaking and listening are below national expectation. At their best, pupils can handle the demands of a 'hot-seating'³ exercise with confidence and wit. However, speaking is not given sufficient prominence, despite many pupils, particularly boys, showing that they are articulate. Reading is also below national expectation. Pupils read aloud infrequently, and then hesitantly. They show that they understand the text, but are seldom challenged on what they have read. The library is an asset to the school but is underused. Loan rates indicate that pupils read little fiction.

² This judgement is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision for a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared with like.

³ Hot seating is a technique whereby a pupil assumes the role of a character from the book being studied and answers question put by the rest of the class as that character.

54. Achievement is good in all years. By Year 9, pupils who were below average in Year 7 have gained accuracy, and ability to write creatively. Pupils apply themselves conscientiously in Year 11, writing more copiously, and more perceptively. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special needs make good progress.
55. The quality of teaching varies but is good, overall. Teachers are conscientious in preparation, sometimes most imaginatively so. The best teachers set demanding challenges. They encourage the use by pupils of presentation software to examine characters and plot in a story. Drama is also used effectively in English lessons. Teachers know their pupils well, and show they care about their progress. They organise a good range of activities outside the classroom. As a result, pupils show positive attitudes. Weaknesses stem from lack of challenge, and too few opportunities for pupils to be active. Although marking is good, there is too little redrafting, so pupils do not learn from their mistakes.
56. Learning is generally good. Objectives are clearly explained so pupils know what they should do, and how to improve. However, they are not encouraged to become independent learners. They have few opportunities to learn from one another.
57. Leadership and management are both good and, as a result, teachers work well together. The newly appointed head of department has written new schemes of work and set out clear objectives for improvement. Teachers have data about pupils' prior attainment, but do not always understand it or apply it. Good practice needs to be shared. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, overall. The department is now better organised and equipped. Good teamwork has produced improving results in the last three years.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Standards of literacy throughout the school are generally below average, although in some subjects such as history and geography they are at national expectation. There is a literacy policy known to staff, though not consistently applied. The school has organised training for all its staff, but this last occurred in 2001, so some repetition and updating is now needed. Words commonly used in the teaching of a subject are often displayed in the classroom, although not frequently referred to. Pupils are articulate, but in many subjects, they are not given sufficient opportunities for speaking. However, there are exceptions in practical subjects – notably art, design technology and physical education. The school could do more to promote reading in all years.

FRENCH

Until recently, provision in French has been **unsatisfactory**. However, there has been significant improvement in the last year, although it is too early to judge how this will affect standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is significant underachievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory.
- Expectations are often too low in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to support learning.

Commentary

59. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. Overall, there was no difference in performance between boys and girls, although girls' performance was significantly lower than the average performance of girls nationally. However, these results have to be seen in the light of the fact that the school entered a higher proportion of its pupils for the examination than is the case nationally. This makes results appear worse when compared with other schools.

There was a low entry in 2004 and results were very low. There has been a decline in results since the last inspection.

60. However work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are higher than recent examination results indicate. The reason for the improving standards is that the major staffing difficulties experienced by the subject over the past two years have now been resolved. Year 7 pupils are making satisfactory progress and high attaining pupils in Year 8 are beginning to understand and use the perfect tense. That said, standards remain well below average in Year 9 and overall achievement remains unsatisfactory at that stage. High attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, have little understanding of the three main tenses. Pupils lack oral confidence and do not have the opportunity to talk at length nor to produce pieces of extended writing. In general, pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language also underachieve, particularly in those lessons where there is a high proportion of these pupils with no extra support for the teacher.
61. Only a small number of pupils have opted to continue to study French in Years 10 and 11. However, standards in Year 11 are at an average level and this represents satisfactory progress compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Most pupils in Year 11 are able to use the three main tenses with confidence and have a good knowledge of vocabulary, though they write in simple sentences so that their writing lacks variety. Behaviour is satisfactory and sometimes good but, in some lessons, particularly for low attaining groups in Years 7 to 9, some pupils often have a negative attitude to their work. This is often gained from their previous experience in the subject when there was significant staffing instability, and this adversely affects achievement.
62. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, with examples of good teaching. Pupils learn well because planning is good. Lessons have clear objectives and activities are well sequenced so that pupils are able to consolidate vocabulary in a structured way. The best lessons have good starter activities and review learning effectively at the end. Good teaching methods ensure that, where attitudes are positive, pupils have ample opportunities to participate actively in lessons. However, teachers' expectations are often too low in Years 7 to 9. Classroom management routines are often not well established, allowing some pupils to lose concentration for much of the lesson. There is a lack of pace and challenge in many lessons. Inconsistent use of French by teachers means that pupils do not hear as much French as they should. Pupils' work is regularly and thoroughly assessed so that teachers are aware of pupils' level of attainment. However, in Years 7 to 9, they are not setting long-term challenging targets for pupils. This means that expectations are often not high enough and make it difficult for teachers to know when pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Teachers mark work thoroughly, point out mistakes and offer encouragement but they rarely set targets for pupils when marking their work. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are aware of the progress they are making in relation to their predicted GCSE grades. This is not the case in Years 7 to 9, where pupils have a limited understanding of National Curriculum levels. The subject offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a successful exchange with a school in Paris.
63. Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. The head of department has worked hard to raise the profile of French and its standing within the school and is well supported by senior management. As a result, staffing is now stable and new teachers are receiving good support. However, planning does not focus clearly enough on raising standards. Because of the decline in examination results and the increase in underachievement by pupils, progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall.
- The good and developing use of interactive whiteboards motivates pupils' learning.
- Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11.
- Assessment information is not sufficiently accurate and used to set high expectations.
- Most pupils demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour towards mathematics, although a significant minority finds concentration difficult.
- The head of department provides good leadership and shows increasing signs of effectiveness.

Commentary

64. Members of the mathematics department work extremely hard to provide interesting tasks that are structured well and which challenge pupils to learn. The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning because the teachers' exposition and questioning is based on good subject knowledge. There is a good working atmosphere in many lessons and pupils then make good progress. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
65. Pupils usually enter the school in Year 7 with well below average standards, overall, although for the current Year 11 standards were below average. Standards were below the national average in the 2003 Year 9 national tests and provisional analysis of the 2004 results indicates that standards are well below average. The results in both these years broadly match pupils' attainment on entry. The trend in standards to 2003 is above the national trend. Pupils' performance was average in the 2003 national tests in comparison with similar schools but early analysis of pupils' performance in 2004 indicates below average standards. There is a significant discrepancy between the teachers' assessments for mathematics in 2003 and the results of the national test, when pupils outperformed the teachers' expectations considerably. For example, 44.5 per cent of pupils gained the higher Grades 6 or 7 whereas the teachers' assessments were for 14.4 per cent. This indicates that teachers' observations and assessments are not yet sufficiently accurate.
66. Standards, by Year 11 in the 2003 and 2004 GCSE mathematics examinations, were below average. A lower proportion of pupils gained grades A* - C than nationally and the school did not meet its targets. However, for the current Year 11, nearly all pupils have already gained a Grade C or better in mathematics GCSE through early entry and three pupils are currently studying the AS syllabus. This indicates that standards are on course to be closer to average in the 2005 examinations.
67. Achievement is satisfactory to Year 9, although there is evidence of some underachievement as well as elements of good progress. There is no significant difference in the attainment of differing groups of pupils. Achievement is not as strong as teaching because pupils have difficulty applying independently to new problems the skills they have learnt. The department gives good attention to basic skills in mathematics. By Year 9, pupils in the second ability set demonstrated satisfactory numeracy skills in calculating fractions and decimals but they required more support in applying the ideas to probability. Standards of numeracy are below average, overall, by Years 9 and 11, although the higher-attaining pupils are usually quick and accurate.
68. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in the Year 10 top set demonstrate improving numeracy skills, for example, in calculating the areas of composite shapes. They are less confident in applying their skills independently and often require prompts from the teacher in order to understand the process. By Year 11, the top set demonstrated good understanding of trigonometrical relationships and had the skills to calculate unknown angles. They are less skilled at finding bearings. In a very good lesson with the lowest set in Year 11, the pupils achieved well because they were highly motivated by the creative use of the interactive whiteboard (IWB). With support, they translated a triangle to a new position correctly and used the correct notation to record the move. They enjoyed the challenge of using the IWB, which strongly reinforced their learning despite some unexpected changes of screen colour and other slips. Pupils who are taking the Statistics option in Year 10 have good

ICT skills and use them successfully to set out data in a spreadsheet. The pupils achieve well because the teacher has good subject knowledge, which he uses to good effect in encouraging a problem-solving approach.

69. The quality of teaching is good, overall. Most teachers establish attention and interest well, with positive relationships so that there is a good working ethos. As a result, most pupils have good attitudes to their work. The positive attitudes and behaviour of many lower-attaining pupils are strong features and help to promote their achievement. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to good effect in their demonstrations and explanation of an idea so that pupils often make good gains in skill. In some lessons, teachers promote good learning through their lively interactions with pupils, such as during practical measurement of area or inviting pupils to use the whiteboard. This is not fully consistent, however, and on a few occasions, questions are 'closed' and pupils' interest is dampened by an authoritarian manner. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory. There are some useful comments to help pupils improve and, occasionally, the level of a piece of work is confirmed. In general, however, the marking does not give pupils a sufficiently clear idea of how to improve. Moreover, during lessons teachers rarely make clear what must be learnt in order to reach the next level.
70. Subject coverage and progression through the school is satisfactory. Teachers' planning has clear learning objectives, although any reference to adapting the tasks for different groups of pupils is rare. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, as part of a whole-school exercise, and are helping to raise standards by setting targets for each student, although the use of diagnostic assessment to match teaching and learning requires improvement. The recently appointed head of department provides good leadership by encouraging active learning and has joined a local working group that is preparing fresh course materials. He is helping to raise expectations through working with senior management to monitor the quality of provision. Management is currently satisfactory, since it is too early for recent improvements to have had a significant impact on achievement and standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. The skills of mathematics and numeracy have satisfactory application in most other subjects, although for science there is little evidence of intended links. In design and technology, physical education and ICT pupils draw upon number and spatial ideas while making products, using games strategies or presenting data. There are informal discussions amongst staff, but the school has yet to establish planned links between mathematics and other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality technical support enriches and extends pupils' experiences of science through well-planned club activities and innovative links with primary schools.
- The objectives of lessons are clearly shared with pupils but expectations about their capabilities and the quality of their work are too low, hence standards and achievement decline.
- There are good features of teaching to share in the department but a need to explore inventive teaching styles where planning essentially centres upon learning.
- Test and examination results are analysed thoroughly to identify where extra support is necessary but identifying specific targets for pupils is underdeveloped.
- Permanent teachers mark work regularly but pupils do not always act upon useful comments and this is not checked by teachers. Messages about achievement are clouded where comments are too generous about the actual standards reached and progress made.

Commentary

72. Year 9 test results were below the national average in 2003 but average when compared with similar schools. This represents satisfactory achievement for many pupils in relation to when they started at the school. Girls' and boys' results were similar. Provisional results for 2004 were well below expectations compared with all schools and those that were similar. Many pupils underachieved. GCSE results were well below average at grades A*-C in 2003. Compared with the results of these pupils at the end of Year 9, achievement was unsatisfactory. The results of boys were better than those of girls. There was a significant decline in 2004; the percentage of passes at grades A*-C was less than half that achieved in 2003. Achievement was unsatisfactory for a notable number of pupils. Staffing difficulties have significantly and detrimentally affected standards and the achievement of individual pupils.
73. Current standards seen in Year 9 are well below average and achievement is, overall, unsatisfactory. Progress made is strongly linked with the quality of teaching. There were no problems capturing the attention of a Year 8 class as pupils, fascinated, learnt why and how their teacher could die if the chlorine gas being made was breathed in. A frothy liquid would gradually fill up the lungs! Further gruesome stories of its effect, coupled with seeing what happens when sodium meets water, left them in no doubt about the properties of these elements. Anecdotes were wisely used so that pupils understood the difference in properties between elements and their compounds; combined together, chlorine and sodium form a harmless salt. In contrast, class books show that, throughout the age range, many topics are not dealt with in enough detail, so that pupils' level of understanding is lower than expected. There are not enough opportunities for practising numeracy, using technical words, applying ideas, understanding how to investigate problems or representing diagrams well. Expectations about the quality of presentation are too low.
74. Standards in Year 11 are, overall, below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. There are pockets of good progress where pupils wish to achieve well because of good teaching. The actual rate of progress is related to how deeply teachers expect pupils to understand ideas. For instance, in a Year 11 mixed-ability class, all pupils made good strides in learning complex ideas about inheritance because of their teacher's high expectations of their capability to do so. They rose to the challenge of predicting successfully the nature of particular offspring. Opportunities to use computers are beginning to widen. Year 10 learnt more about variables affecting chemical reactions as they watched a simulation of particle movements in particular situations. Investigations are usually planned well; low attaining pupils have good guidance to organise their plans. However, investigative skills are generally underdeveloped because they need more emphasis in earlier years throughout class experiments. Class books show that a significant number of pupils do not take pride in the presentation of their work nor complete it.
75. The overall quality of teaching seen in lessons and revealed in pupils' books is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning ranged from very good to poor. A strong feature in good lessons is pupils' willingness to learn. Standards and achievement have been affected detrimentally by a shortage of permanent, specialist teachers; this has led to pupils' poor responses to work and lack of enthusiasm. They know what they are expected to learn because a lesson's objectives are clearly explained. Teachers know the topics well, so can readily help pupils overcome their misunderstandings; for example, in teasing out the meaning of 'inherited'. Demonstrations are skilfully done to explain an idea; there is scope, however, for wider use of different, interesting resources to illustrate an idea in different ways. Lesson plans need to focus upon how meaningful learning can take place rather than upon the organisation of activities. Dull planning, low expectations, too much teacher input and too little involvement of pupils in lessons because of narrow teaching styles impoverish learning.
76. Leadership and management of science are unsatisfactory because, despite the best efforts of senior managers, the department has experienced significant staffing problems and has

been without a head of department for a long time. Inevitably, this has resulted in lack of leadership, which is having a profound effect upon the work of the department and the standards reached. Consequently, improvement over time has been unsatisfactory. Members of the science department support each other well. A recent part-time appointment of an Advanced Skills Teacher has been made to support the team and work with the acting head of department, who has meticulously analysed test and examination results to identify underachievement. Specific targets for individual pupils that focus upon learning particular aspects of science have yet to be identified. Pupils' work is usually marked encouragingly but checks that pupils act upon helpful comments are not routine. Comments are occasionally too generous, which clouds messages about achievement. Astute monitoring of teaching and learning has yet to take place. High quality technical support makes a strong contribution to the department through innovative primary liaison and by organising a popular science club. New computer facilities are being used well; data logging is limited because of unsatisfactory equipment. Good use is regularly made of the library, local habitats, the River Thames at Deptford and visitors to the science club.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are below average.
- Good relationships exist between staff and pupils and the staff have a willingness to improve standards and achievement.
- Marking and other feedback to pupils does not give them enough information to know how to progress to the next level or grade.
- Resources are good and are used effectively.
- More challenge and pace is needed in lessons in order to raise standards.
- Teaching and learning strategies need more variety and excitement.

Commentary

77. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average, and they are below average in Year 11. The short course in ICT has now been discontinued. Progress across the school is satisfactory, as is achievement. Lack of coursework in the upper school prevents pupils from reaching the higher grades. Pupils of all abilities do not have well-honed problem-solving skills because there are too few opportunities in lessons to develop them. The introduction of a GNVQ course has provided motivation for some pupils in the upper school. Pupils are committed and working to a good standard.
78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good lessons seen. In the most effective lessons, pupils are encouraged to verbalise their thoughts by working in pairs and in small groups, as evident in the lesson on making flyers for a discotheque. Teachers have good subject knowledge; however, teaching strategies for starters and plenaries in Years 7 to 9 lack variety and do not encourage pupils to become independent learners. Pupil achievement is aided in the lower school by the good use of the network manager as a support teacher in lessons.
79. Assessment is not rigorous enough, as pupils do not know at which level they are working, or what to do to progress to the next level or grade. Systems for recording marks were not meticulous enough and therefore judgements, particularly at the end of Year 9, were insecure.

80. Accommodation and resources are good. Technical support is very good and the resources are kept in good order. The school Intranet is developing and allows good access to curriculum materials for GNVQ and GCSE ICT coursework and homework.
81. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The new head of department has only been in post since September, but has made a thorough review of the current situation and has produced a working paper to show where the problems lie and how to manage their improvement. The systems he has put in place since arriving are beginning to work to the benefit of the department.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. Progress in the use of ICT across the subjects in the curriculum has been good since the last inspection. Extensive investment in computers and interactive whiteboards has enabled teachers to support subject learning with the effective use of ICT. Not all areas are as confident as others in using the technology, and opportunities for use of ICT has not been written into all schemes of work. ICT was used successfully to identify variables in chemical reactions, to understand translations in mathematics and to aid language development for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils used the software design and technology to good effect when designing their products and in their coursework portfolio.
83. Pupil's achievements in ICT in other subjects are not fully recognised and are not integrated into the assessment of skills at the end of Year 9. Progress over time is limited, because pupils do not currently have sufficient opportunities to develop skills in using ICT for measurement and control. ICT was used well to enhance the work in displays around the school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory** with some good features.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and this leads to some good learning.
- Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and, overall, teaching is good.
- Fieldwork enhances what is taught in the classroom.
- Not all lessons contained work to address all the ability levels.
- Pupils are not always fully aware of how to improve their work.

Commentary

84. Overall, standards are below national averages. In 2003, the number of A* - C grades at GCSE was below national averages, and, although there has been a dip since the last report, they are improving. The results of boys attaining grade C are above those gained nationally.
85. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below national averages. Pupils of all abilities demonstrated in their work an understanding of the geographical processes and the impact they have on the environment. Pupils showed some confidence in their mapping skills and their ability to use text, diagrams, graphs and photographic images to access the information they need. As they progress through the school, their ability to present their work and write about their ideas improves. However, higher- and lower-attaining pupils would benefit from further challenge. The emphasis on the use of key words in all lessons is having some effect. In the work seen, pupils are working below national averages at the end of Year 11. However, given their attainment on entry and their relatively weak geographical skills when they join the school, overall, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in their geographic knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. Pupils of all abilities have a sound understanding of the use of case studies. Pupils listen well and use their thinking skills to enter in discussion and in answering teacher questions.
86. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although they would benefit from additional support to help them achieve their targets. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making progress owing to the way they apply themselves to their work. The achievement of both boys and girls is sound in the many tasks they are given.

87. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The use of assessment for learning is improving; marking is regular, with some useful comments, but lacks consistency. Pupils are not always clear as to what it is they must do in order to improve. Teachers plan their lessons well, with appropriate learning objectives, which they frequently share with pupils. They draw on a satisfactory range of resources to provide activities to stimulate pupils' thinking, interest and to help their learning. Skilful questioning and good oral assessment is helping many pupils to understand their learning but others need to be targeted so that they become involved in the lesson. The use of computers is developing and pupils are willing to research the topics they are given, using either their own resources or the school's computers. Pupils work well in lessons and benefit from the opportunities to take some responsibility for their learning.
88. Subject leadership and management are good. The monitoring of examination data and self-evaluation is good. Schemes of work are reviewed regularly and the use of fieldwork extends what is learnt in the classroom. Monitoring is in place and is having some effect in raising standards. The subject has dealt with the key issues mentioned in the last report and improvement since then is satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory** with some good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are good and they contribute to their learning.
- The use of computers needs to be further developed.

Commentary

89. Overall, standards are below the national average. In 2003, the number of pupils gaining A* -C grades was below the national average but there are signs of improvement since the last inspection.
90. By the end of Year 9, standards are below those gained nationally but improving. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of events over time. Pupils in all years handle source material soundly and are clear about interpretation and bias. Pupils can analyse sources satisfactorily and discuss historical issues in pairs and groups. Higher-attaining pupils are not always fully extended by the work they are given. Other groups make sound progress in their knowledge. Literacy skills and the use of historical language also improve satisfactorily.
91. Pupils were working at below the national average by the end of Year 11. Most pupils gain confidence in the use of source material and this greatly helps them in their understanding of developments over time. Pupils of all abilities have improved the quality in their writing; their presentation skills have improved, and this is shown in their longer pieces of work. Overall, achievement is satisfactory given that pupils enter the school with below average historical skills.
92. Overall, teaching and learning are good and occasionally very good. Teachers have a good command of their subject. Lessons are well planned, with objectives often shared with pupils. Skilful questioning and oral assessment helps pupils to understand and reinforce their learning. However, pupils need to be encouraged to extend their answers. The use of ICT needs to support learning and research more. The use of independent learning in pairs and groups is good but the subject does not always provide a sufficient range of work to address the different levels of ability in some groups. Pupils with special educational needs and English as

additional language make good progress, particularly when supported. Homework is set regularly and is sometimes used in subsequent lessons to check progress. Marking is regular, with some very useful comments on how pupils can improve.

93. Subject leadership and management are good. The head of department is clear about the department's priorities. The schemes of work give a breadth and depth to the curriculum and the use of historical visits extends what is learnt in the classroom. The accommodation is satisfactory, overall. In one room, there is a celebration of good work displayed. Monitoring is in place, which needs to continue to help a new member of the department. Management has dealt with most of the issues from the last report and improvement is satisfactory.

Religious education

94. Because the school is a Church of England school, the inspection of religious education and the school's religious ethos is the responsibility of the diocese and was not part of this Section 10 inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Mains strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good, particularly for those pupils following the GCSE course in design and technology graphic products.
- The standard of teaching is good, overall, with some very good lessons seen.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good and ensure that pupils gain much from the subject.
- There is not enough electronic control taught in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There are no computer-aided manufacturing facilities, apart from printers.
- Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is too harsh, since inspection evidence reveals that standards are better than those recorded in 2003 and 2004.

Commentary

95. Achievement is good because standards on entry in Year 7 are below average and by the end of Year 9 standards are average. The girls do better than the boys. The higher-attaining pupils achieve higher standards because they can express their ideas through high quality annotated sketches and are perceptive when testing and investigating familiar products. For example, when pupils begin to develop their knowledge and understanding of food products, they are able to identify how quality control is used in the batch production of biscuits. Achievement in graphics and resistant materials is also good; for example, when they design and make clocks and bubble bath containers. The progress made by lower-attaining pupils is good because of the well-targeted support they receive from their teachers.
96. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, results in the range of GCSE courses offered in 2003 were well below the national average. The resistant materials course has now been discontinued. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are improving and are now close to the national average. There are some high quality pieces of pupils' coursework, for example, in graphics where pop-up books and promotional products are made to exacting standards, and in food technology where pupils design a wide range of food products. Pupils generally perform better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects and this is particularly evident in the 2004 GCSE DT: Graphic Products results.

97. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with some lessons being very good in Years 10 and 11. In the most effective lessons teachers' preparation and classroom management are very good. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge, are enthusiastic about their subject and these features are used effectively to motivate their pupils. They use skilful, well-targeted question and answer sessions, keeping the pace of the lesson brisk with no time wasted. Pupils' learning is supported well with good quality worksheets. Pupils receive constructive comment on their work from teachers and therefore know what they have to do to improve, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
98. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has developed an effective partnership with her colleague, which contributes well to the department's further development. She is aware of areas in need of improvement and plans are in place to further raise pupils' attainment. There has been good improvement made since the last inspection and the department is now a stimulating environment in which to work. However, teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is too harsh. There is no teaching of electronics in Years 7, 8 and 9 and no computer-aided manufacturing facility. Nevertheless, the department continues to build on its strengths and is steadily improving. A committed technician provides support that has a positive impact on standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very rapid progress from weak entry standards; painting in Year 7 is often above average.
- Opportunities for 3-D work are still hindered by unsatisfactory storage and accommodation.
- Teaching and learning are very good, creating high levels of achievement.
- Pupils achieve very well at GCSE; 100 per cent A*-C results in 2003 was excellent.
- Pupils develop into independent learning very late, so Year 10 work is relatively immature.
- Some of the attitudes of Year 9 pupils are unsatisfactory; achievement is not so good in Year 9.
- Very good leadership and management provide a highly effective role model for new teachers.

Commentary

99. Pupils' very low entry standards improve rapidly, partly because their curriculum is carefully planned to predict and overcome weaknesses. Some Year 7 pupils' standards in painting and drawing, for example, in observational work using fresh fish, are above average because the teaching of these skills is very good. This is particularly so for boys. The majority of pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve very well in two-dimensional work. Progress in 3-D skills is satisfactory, but opportunities are still hindered, as in the last report, by inadequate storage and accommodation. Pupils in Year 9 do not achieve so well. Here, pupils have single 50-minute lessons in large classes and some have developed negative attitudes, actively resisting opportunities for good learning. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well, but standards are still below average at the age of 14. Low literacy skills and below average cognitive abilities impede pupils' understanding of how practical and theoretical aspects of the subject link together.
100. Pupils, therefore, start their GCSE courses with these deficits. They learn well and standards are currently average in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils' work matures significantly later in Year 11, and some recent GCSE results have been well above average, with 100 per cent A*-C in 2003. Although results fell to just below average in 2004, grades and current standards represent very good achievement for pupils of all abilities. Throughout the school, the work of

pupils with English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs, is seldom distinguishable from that of others. GCSE pupils enhance their work very effectively with ICT, particularly digital imagery. ICT is much less well used by younger pupils, though provision of computers has improved.

101. Teaching and learning are very good. The current job-share arrangement works very effectively because teachers work closely together, communicating well. All staff use their extensive subject knowledge well to provide pupils with a stimulating range of interesting resources. Curriculum planning is very good, ensuring study of projects that engage pupils' interest. Homework is very well used to extend all aspects of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skill. Work is carefully assessed and marked to provide useful feedback on how to improve. Class management is usually very good, despite some challenging attitudes, particularly from Year 9. Pupils mature late as independent learners, which delays the development of the required individual, personal interpretation of ideas until late in Year 11. Extra-curricular provision greatly assists in pupils' achievement of these elements.
102. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department provides a very good role model, which is used very effectively in the development of new teachers. Despite a fall in standards at Year 9, the department has improved well since the last report.
103. **Drama** was sampled.
104. The school has just introduced drama to the curriculum for Year 7 and for Year 10. The drama course at GCSE has clearly attracted a group of talented youngsters, academically of mixed ability but clearly responding to the nature of the course. In the lesson seen, learning was good; pupil's individual facility in the subject was being challenged appropriately by developing the rigour of working together. This was because the teacher had set up the work well, establishing clear expectations and clear parameters. Considering that they had only just started the course achievement was very good and standards were appropriate to the GCSE at this stage. Pupils had evident respect for the teacher and this underpinned the very good relationships.
105. Year 7 pupils were working at an appropriate level, given that they had only just started the course. Achievement was sound. The teacher, an experienced English rather than drama specialist, established a carefully planned, albeit relatively closed structure to the lesson, which allowed her to work with increasing confidence. The teacher has clearly high expectations and there was evident strong mutual respect between the pupils and the teacher. The routines and the expectations, along with the disciplines of the subject and working together, were being carefully and effectively reinforced. The teacher is planning to see an advanced skills drama teacher in operation in another school. This will be particularly useful in developing the skills and confidence to introduce a more open-ended, less tightly controlled element, into the planning.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject expertise.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Assessment procedures are very good and assist pupils' learning and achievement.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activity, which provides pupils with additional opportunities to develop their musical skills.
- ICT facility is limited to keyboards and restricts musical development in Years 10 and 11.

- Present accommodation for music is poor and significantly restricts the work of the department.

Commentary

106. Pupils enter the school with limited skills and variable musical experience. By Year 9, their work is average, stronger in listening and appraising than in performing and composing, but, nevertheless, they make good progress. Year 9 pupils have two lessons per week, which helps to raise standards.
107. There is some variability in GCSE results from year to year. Results are below the national average but above the school average. Pupils now have the option of an expressive arts course at GCSE as well as music GCSE, with the result that the number of pupils studying music in Years 10 and 11 has increased significantly. Standards are at present satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in all areas of the music curriculum. The lack of ICT equipment restricts pupils' range of musical experience, but good planning and pupil tracking ensure good progress.
108. Teachers have very good subject skills. Planning is very good, catering for pupils of different abilities well and lessons are generally well paced. The majority of lessons show high levels of challenge and pupils' response, although there is a need to encourage pupils to discuss and explain rather than give one-word answers in order to develop their skills and confidence in expressing themselves. Occasionally, class management problems detract from pupils' learning in the lower school.
109. Assessment is thorough and well planned. Pupils are assessed at the end of each unit of work and are set individual targets for the next assignment. Pupils' attitudes are mostly very good in lessons; they handle equipment carefully and work well either individually or in pairs.
110. There are a number of extra-curricular opportunities, which support pupils in the development of their musical skills. These range from the steel band to the choir. In addition, the department is open to pupils during lunch-times and after school to work on practical tasks. Well over a quarter of the school's pupils take subsidised instrumental and singing lessons.
111. Leadership of the department is excellent and there has been improvement since the last inspection in terms of curricular opportunities. This is in spite of limited resources – ageing equipment and the lack of ICT equipment apart from keyboards. Accommodation is a key concern. At present, music is housed in a temporary hut with one small classroom and two practice rooms, which is totally inadequate for current purposes and is leading to a restriction in pupils' musical development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staffing stability and improved rigour within the department are improving the attitudes and standards of pupils.
- Pupils make good progress despite unsatisfactory facilities.
- There is an improved curriculum balance in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

112. Standards are on a par with national averages in Year 9 and Year 11. There was no GCSE course in 2003, although below national average results in 2004 reflect the lack of continuity in pupils' learning, due to the considerable staff changes throughout their course.

113. In Year 9, practical skills and techniques are developing appropriately. Pupils are confident in leading others in warm-up activities and can discuss their work using relevant technical terminology. Achievement is good, pupils are keen to improve, they participate fully in lessons, take pride in their work and in their appearance. Behaviour is good, although there are occasions when interest wanes in the very long lessons. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, and those from different ethnic groups, make steady progress.
114. In Year 11, standards are average, overall, but there are individuals, particularly, but not exclusively, those of African or Caribbean heritage, who are performing at well above average standards in the core physical education programme. Practical skills are generally well developed but weaknesses occur in applying knowledge in GCSE theoretical work. Boys and girls, and those from different groups, readily support one another, and it is usual to see the most able pupils taking on coaching roles, offering advice and suggesting improvements in others' performances. Achievement is good.
115. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, with elements of very good teaching. Teachers are consistent in their expectations, applying greater rigour and discipline: pupils understand the rules and behaviour is very good, creating a good environment for learning. Support teachers are used sensitively and are well briefed to help pupils with special educational needs, ensuring good progress. In the best lessons, extension tasks stretch the most able and some excellent, positive and constructive feedback encourages the involvement of all pupils.
116. Leadership and management are good. The department has focus and shared vision. Much work has already been done to improve the image of the subject, monitoring is ensuring consistency among teachers, the curriculum review has addressed weaknesses in the curriculum for younger pupils, and extra-curricular sport has been developed to expand the range of activities available. However, the lack of adequate facilities on site and the effects of the very long lessons to allow pupils time to walk to pitches, remain concerns.
117. Extra-curricular sport is well supported by pupils. Additional sports offered through community programmes are encouraged and there are good plans for coaching programmes with local primary schools. Teams, and individuals demonstrate outstanding performances and the school has recently achieved great success in athletics. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE examination are very low; pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' attainment in their coursework is well below average and teaching and learning over time is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management of business education are ineffective in raising standards.
- There is good teaching of ICT skills and use of work experience to extend knowledge.
- Schemes of work lack detail and reference to the wider curriculum.
- The accommodation does not allow business education to be taught well.

Commentary

118. The results in the 2004 GCSE business education examination were well below the national average. Pupils' achievement, when compared with their prior attainment and results in other subjects, was unsatisfactory. A large percentage of candidates received a U grade, due to poor coursework, and teaching and learning over time has been unsatisfactory. The 2004

figures are part of an on-going trend and there has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Another reason for the below par performance of the department is the quality of leadership and management, which is insufficiently focused on raising standards.

119. The attainment of the current business education pupils mirrors the GGSE examinations results. They are insecure in their knowledge of basic concepts and knowledge of how one business aspect links with another. Year 11 pupils have been given the task sheet for their coursework assignment and a long-term deadline for its completion. However, there are no short-term targets to ensure a sustained effort and pupils have not yet been taught to understand the criteria that determine their grade.
120. Overall, teaching and learning in the lessons seen were satisfactory, reflecting some weaknesses and some strengths. ICT was well taught, with pupils benefiting from the teacher's expert subject knowledge in this aspect and good relationships, which promoted a positive learning partnership. Work experience was well used to extend understanding of the business world. Learning was unsatisfactory when unclear explanations of economic theory resulted in an increasingly unmotivated class. All learning takes place in an ICT room, which has poor facilities for normal teaching, and it is very difficult to have a range of lively teaching and learning strategies. Work is marked regularly but pupils are not consistently and precisely told what they need to do to improve.
121. Overall, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. A teacher who has a number of other important roles that affect her ability to focus strongly on business studies leads the subject. This is a one-person department, which results in professional isolation, exemplified by a lack of an up-to-date awareness of changing practice and higher national expectations. The senior management are aware of this problem and arrangements have been made for visits to centres of excellence as part of continuing professional development. This is important, as this teacher has never taught under a good, specialist head of department and needs to establish rigorous monitoring. Schemes of work lack detail and references to current curriculum initiatives such as citizenship and literacy. There are too few visits and visitors and links with the local business community are not good. Pupils would like to be able to use a wider range of textbooks and other resources.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education was sampled.

122. Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.
123. The well-planned PSHE programme is taught within the same time slot as citizenship and careers education and guidance, and during the week of the inspection the focus was on citizenship education. However, discussions with staff and an examination of planning and other school documentation indicate that the main topics are covered well in weekly classes, taken by all pupils. Interviews with pupils and a scrutiny of their work show that pupils are well taught about drug misuse and sex and relationships. A number of other topics, such as health and racism, are covered and a focus on self-awareness forms a good basis for careers education and guidance. Opportunities for assessment, such as self-review are methodically pin-pointed. A strength is the coherent approach to the delivery of PSHE; it is very well supported by the citizenship course and careers education and guidance. Consequently, pupils' PSHE is extended, helped by a team of specialist teachers who are able to ensure high standards. Great care has been taken to ensure that pupil interest is maintained by, for example, the use of drama workshops to raise awareness of drug misuse. The school's good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and its caring ethos, is a very positive influence on personal development. This is also enhanced because of pupils taking responsibility for involvement in the community as part of the citizenship course, which is taken by all pupils. Opportunities to be prefects or members of the school council reinforce personal and social education.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement in the GCSE short course examination.
- Good teaching of a well-planned curriculum by specialist staff in discrete lessons.
- Pupils are active participants in activities within the community.
- Some subjects miss opportunities to highlight and stress citizenship.

Commentary

124. Nearly all of Year 11 took the 2004 short course GCSE examination and 38 per cent obtained a high level pass. This is very good achievement compared with their prior attainment and results in other subjects. Pupils' response, and the written work seen during the inspection, confirms that progress continues to be very good. No significant differences between boys and girls or different groups were seen. A very well-planned curriculum ensures that personal, social and health education and careers education and guidance make a significant contribution to citizenship. Good teaching, and the pupils' positive involvement in the community, are equally important. Weekly lessons that are taken by all pupils promote the very good progress, and they reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. They thus begin their GCSE course with a good grounding in the subject; it is one reason for their high achievement in the examination.
125. Teaching is good. There are no significant differences between the key stages. Very good learning occurred in a Year 7 class, the result of the teacher's high expectations for attitude and academic standards. Very good relationships promoted pupils' confidence to effectively communicate some sensitive views about the role of families in modern societies. This emphasis on discussion as a means of extending understanding is a feature throughout the school. Older pupils comment favourably on the opportunity to discuss issues, such as a forthcoming debate: 'I work hard for my money, why should I pay for people who do not work? Very good planning ensured a systematic approach to this debate, extending pupils' awareness of some key aspects of citizenship and their literacy skills.
126. GCSE pupils undertake a wide variety of projects as part of their active citizenship studies, such as football coaching for younger boys and a presentation on the role of the local police. Teachers have ensured that they are extremely well supported by a structured framework that underpins this independent activity. Teachers focus on good research and communication in these projects and throughout the school. Year 9 pupils, for example, did some good in -depth enquiry into the tabloid press and other aspects of the media. They were required to think carefully about some of the issues and consequently achieved well. This was also the case in a Year 8 class on rights and responsibilities, where a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies maintained the interest of a class that had a large number of pupils with special educational needs.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A very strong head of department has recently left and there is no current head of department. The headteacher, who is specialist in this area, is overseeing this role. Teachers are benefiting from the high quality schemes of work and other innovations that have already been established. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed. Senior management are supporting her well as are the dedicated team of experienced citizenship teachers. The new teacher has some good ideas but obviously lacks experience and cannot immediately move the subject further, for example, by ensuring that all subjects follow the good practice seen in some departments, such as geography and design and technology, where citizenship is well integrated into the curriculum. The strong spiritual,

social, moral and cultural education underpins the planned curriculum provision effectively, as do the opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in the school community as prefects and members of the school council.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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