

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Furrowfield School**

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108426

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Bell

Lead inspector: Alan Tattersall

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 272994

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	49
School address:	Whitehill Drive
	Felling
	Gateshead
	Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE10 9RZ
Telephone number:	0191 433 4071
Fax number:	0191 420 0905
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Paul Tinnion
Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Furrowfield is a school for boys aged 11 to 16 who have statements of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few pupils have additional special educational needs of autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Attainment on entry is below average as a result of pupils' special educational needs. Two thirds of pupils receive free school meals, which is very high for a school of this type. There are 14 residential places available for Monday to Friday boarding. Most pupils live in Gateshead and a few travel in from Sunderland and Durham. One pupil is from a non-white background but there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. There are fewer pupils in school than at the last inspection and boys and girls under 11 are no longer admitted.

There is a greater proportion of pupils who have additional social difficulties and have spent considerable periods out of other schools. Pupils enter school at different times in the year and several join between Years 9 to 11. There have been significant changes in senior managers, teachers and teaching assistants since April 2004. There has been a new headteacher and chair of governors from November 2004. The school continues to have difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers.

The school gained recognition as a science college in September 2004. It received a School Achievement Award in 2002 and a Healthy School Award in the Years 2001-3 and Investors in People Award in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20466	Alan Tattersall	Lead inspector	Art and design, Spanish, design and technology, English as an additional language
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector	
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	English, religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship, special educational needs
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, geography, history, music
21081	Charles Hackett	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Furrowfield School provides a **satisfactory** education for its pupils. Their achievements and the quality of teaching are satisfactory overall. Pupils are cared for well. The school is successful in improving pupils' behaviour and parents and pupils are pleased with what they are offered. However, the school has serious weaknesses. Provision is unsatisfactory in writing, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Although the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in subject leadership and governance is unsatisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- The school encourages pupils to develop good attitudes to learning and is successful in improving pupils' behaviour so that they behave well.
- Parents appreciate what the school has done to ensure that their children learn and behave better but want to be able to make a bigger contribution to helping their children.
- The new headteacher's leadership is ensuring rapid school improvements but as yet governors do not fulfil all their statutory duties.
- Ineffective leadership and management of mathematics, ICT, and physical education have resulted in unsatisfactory teaching and achievement in these subjects.
- There is insufficient attention paid to improving pupils' writing in all subjects and as a result their progress in this area is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design and work related learning.
- Although the results that some pupils achieve in GCSE are good, there are few other courses available for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers do not plan effectively to use of assessments of pupils' achievements for them to make better progress.

Improvement since the last inspection in 2001 is unsatisfactory. Most of the key issues have been resolved but the leadership and management of subjects remain unsatisfactory. Improvements to accommodation are very good and the improvement in pupils' spiritual development is good. However, standards have declined in most subjects; achievement and teaching and learning are no longer good and several aspects, including links with parents have become worse.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Achievement was good last year and better than similar schools nationally in GCSE in English, mathematics, science, art and design and history, but current achievement is **satisfactory**. Pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory overall but there is a weakness in writing. Progress in science, religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship is satisfactory but it is good in art and design and work related learning. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in mathematics, ICT and physical education because pupils are not taught well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** because teachers promote these aspects throughout the day. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and their attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good. This represents good improvement since they joined the school.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education and of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. It is good in art and design and work related learning. Teachers are successful in improving pupils' behaviour and this forms a good basis for pupils to learn. However, not all teachers plan lessons effectively, or make use of assessments to ensure that work in class matches the needs of all pupils. Teaching assistants provide good support to ensure that pupils behave well but are not always utilised effectively in lessons to help pupils. The school has difficulty in recruiting specialists to teach and lead subjects. One impact is that there are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and physical education. Teachers do not plan sufficiently well to promote pupils' writing, numeracy and ICT in most subjects. Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, pupils are not taught appropriate skills in ICT in Years 10 and 11. Work related learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11, the course at the local college, work experience and careers guidance are valuable preparation for the next stage in their lives. However, the range of subjects that pupils follow beyond Year 9 does not provide accreditation opportunities for all pupils. The good variety of activities at lunchtime and visits enrich pupils' learning well. Accommodation is very good and resources good. The quality of care is good. Pupils receive satisfactory guidance and support. The residence provides well for the small number of pupils who reside during the week. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas through the school council. Links with schools, colleges and the community are satisfactory. However, links with parents are unsatisfactory. Parents have little involvement in school beyond attending their child's annual reviews of progress and they have few opportunities to give their views overall.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall leadership and management are **satisfactory**. In the few weeks since her appointment, the headteacher has identified most of the improvements that the school needs and has a very clear vision to achieve them. However, subject leadership is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient checks on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and planning for the development of subjects is unsatisfactory overall. Governors are committed to the aims of the school and contribute well to the good management of finance. However, they do not find out for themselves sufficiently what is happening in school and one consequence is that they have not fulfilled all their statutory duties.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents hold the school in high regard but would like more information about their children's work. Pupils have a positive view of the school and like what it does for them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve teaching, learning and leadership and management for mathematics, ICT and physical education.
- To provide pupils with the opportunity to extend their writing skills in all subjects.
- Increase the range of courses and accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that governors have a more thorough understanding of what is happening in school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
- Improve the links with parents; ensure that they are sufficiently informed and involved in their children's learning and are able to give their views.
- For teachers to use assessments more effectively when they plan for pupils their lessons.

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Pupils should follow the appropriate curriculum in ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Provide parents with the legally required annual information of the school's work.
- Attendance figures need to be reported correctly in the prospectus for parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

*Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects.*

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement for all pupils is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Last year pupils gained more passes in GCSE in several subjects than the national average for similar schools.
- Although achievement in speaking and listening and reading is satisfactory, pupils' do not gain the necessary skills in writing.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education are unsatisfactory because teachers do not plan suitable tasks for them.
- The high standards that pupils achieve in art and design are a strength of the school.
- Pupils are highly motivated in work related learning and consequently develop a good range of skills.

#### **Commentary**

1. The standards<sup>1</sup> that pupils achieve are satisfactory. Pupils' records show that many pupils made good progress last year to be able to undertake the Standard Attainment Tests at the end of Year 9 in English mathematics and science. However, mainly because of the low level of pupils' attainment on entry to the school, their interrupted education and the fact that several enter school in Year 9, few pupils achieved the expected national average. GCSE results have been good in the past two years Last year all of the twelve pupils entered gained passes in art and design and most in mathematics and science. Seven achieved passes in English and in history. This was a good improvement on the creditable results of 2003. However, standards have declined in most subjects since the good achievement evident at the time of the last inspection.
2. Pupils of all abilities make equally satisfactory progress overall. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) because they receive the support they require. However, there are missed opportunities throughout the school for all pupils to make better progress. This is because teachers do not always plan their teaching on what pupils know, understand and can do. This has a negative effect upon what pupils can achieve in lessons.
3. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in speaking and listening because teachers provide pupils with opportunities in most lessons for them to communicate through answering questions and sharing their views. All pupils have the opportunity to contribute verbally to lessons and participate in discussions and this helps them to develop satisfactory communication skills. The progress that pupils make in reading is satisfactory. They read individually to teachers or share a book with the class in English lessons. They follow tasks to improve their techniques in pronouncing unfamiliar words by learning to recognise parts of word and build these up to pronounce the new words. Although pupils' writing skills are promoted satisfactorily in English lessons, this is not the case in other lessons and overall, pupils fail to make adequate progress in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not to national standards.

4. In mathematics, pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they are not taught well enough. Tasks are not matched closely to pupils' ability. For instance, pupils may be required to complete work, which is much too easy for them and does not stretch them. Pupils fail to make sufficient progress in ICT. There is no assessment of their skills, consequently teachers do not have sufficient information to plan effectively for them to make more progress. Although pupils may demonstrate skills in using computers, they do not receive sufficient systematic instruction and guidance on how to improve. Pupils' achievement in physical education is unsatisfactory since lessons are not planned to develop pupils skills sufficiently. For instance, lessons may not progress beyond playing games of basketball or football, without any planned guidance for pupils to develop their talents or abilities. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory overall.
5. Pupils throughout the school are developing good skills in art and design. The high standards evident at the last inspection have been maintained through skilled teaching that ensures that pupils continue to develop individual interests and increase the variety of materials they use to express their ideas. Pupils make satisfactory progress in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. The achievement of pupils in attending practical skills training courses at college and work related learning (WRL) in Years 10 and 11 are good. The experiences that they gain are particularly valuable for pupils to develop vocational skills relevant to their future needs. They work together and undertake community service, developing an awareness of their responsibilities and understanding of citizenship by improving the school garden and a wildlife area.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are **good** as is their attendance and punctuality. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- When there is sufficient encouragement, pupils develop a desire to learn.
- Pupils would like more opportunities to discuss their needs with adults.
- The way that pupils behave in the local community is a credit to the school.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to be independent or to take responsibility.
- Opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness have been improved.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are noteworthy.

### **Commentary**

6. Many pupils were disaffected in their previous schools and Furrowfield is successful in improving pupils' involvement in learning. Pupils say they like school and older ones are clearly aware that the school is providing them with opportunities to achieve personal success. Pupils are keen to contribute ideas and are able to work together effectively. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, pupils were able to recall and share information about religious signs and symbols because they listened carefully to each other's contributions.
7. Parents and pupils raised concerns that there are instances of bullying in school. However, they feel that these are dealt with effectively. Relationships between pupils are satisfactory and between the majority of pupils and staff are good. Pupils report that they would feel comfortable to talk about problems with the majority of teaching and residential staff. However, because of high levels of supervision there are few times during the day when informal but confidential conversations between pupils and adults can take place. Although resident pupils are able to talk to an independent listener, other pupils do not have access to a counsellor or an independent person.
8. Assemblies and a satisfactory programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education provide a framework for developing pupils understanding of social and moral issues and of

themselves and their place in the wider community. The school teaches pupils to behave well in public and this is reflected in their attitudes and behaviour during their visits into the community. Pupils are rightly proud of the environmental improvements they have achieved and of the Christmas party for senior citizens which they host each year. The school has a long history of being involved in raising funds for national charities such as 'Guide Dogs' and pupils take pride in the contribution they make to these organisations. There are good opportunities for pupils to be engaged in meaningful activities at break and lunch times. These contribute effectively to their social development and to ensuring that there is little inappropriate behaviour at these times. Although pupils' social and moral development is satisfactory, there is not enough emphasis on teaching pupils to organise or take responsibility for themselves.

9. During the day pupils behave well because of the high levels of supervision and rigid procedures which have been implemented. These are effective in helping to manage the movement of pupils between lessons and in ensuring that the end of each day is well controlled. However, each teacher has different class rules and pupils' behaviour reflects the expectations of the individual teacher. This results in pupils behaving better in some lessons than others. The school has a satisfactory system of points and rewards to promote and monitor pupils' behaviour but the targets set for pupils do not always help them learn the skills they need. Although the discussion that pupils have about points and behaviour are useful in 'compact' periods, there is little discussion about the points that pupils are awarded for their attitudes and behaviour in lessons to further develop pupils' understanding of the value of good behaviour.

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	48	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0

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

10. There was only one fixed term exclusion in the latest reporting year. Although there have been several since September, this was because of difficulties caused by changes such as the induction of so many staff, new to their posts and consequent increase in incidences of violence. Incidents have reduced considerably to the expected low level since then as pupils have become more used to the school's new management and staff and the established measures to improve behaviour.
11. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development has been improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Throughout the school there are good quality displays which celebrate different world faiths, provide multi-cultural images and examples of work by artists such as Van Gogh and Lichtenstein. Although there are very good examples of the display of pupils' work in some classes, overall there is insufficient celebration of pupils' achievements around the school and opportunities are missed to raise pupils' self-esteem. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through religious education and assemblies but there are few opportunities for them to visit local places of worship, such as mosques, temples and synagogues or to have their understanding enhanced by visitors from major world faiths. Occasionally, pupils write creatively and express their feelings. For example, pupils in Year 8 write enthusiastically about the sights and sounds experienced on a recent trip to South Shields beach. Pupils show respect for each other when they read out their contributions and are clearly motivated by the activity. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of their own and other cultures through the literature they read and music and art lessons.

## Attendance

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.1	School data :	7.4
National data:	10.5	National data:	8.7

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

12. Pupils' attendance is better than in similar schools and is good. This is the result of pupils' satisfaction and interest in attending school and the school's measures to make improvements. This represents a good achievement since many pupils were reluctant to attend their previous schools and some had been absent for long periods. Parents know that they must inform the school in case of absence and any unexplained absence is quickly followed up by the school and attendance encouraged. Pupils value the rewards that they receive for good attendance and are reminded of this in regular discussions about their attendance. Punctuality is good and this has been maintained in spite of the recent change for many pupils to make their own way to school rather than by organised transport.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education, the curriculum, teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Pupils are cared for **well** and guided and supported **satisfactorily**. The way that teachers guide pupils to improve their behaviour enables them to access education. Partnerships with other schools and links with the community are **satisfactory** but links with parents are **unsatisfactory**.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. The assessment of pupils' work is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Successful teaching in art and work related learning (WRL) leads to pupils achieving well.
- Teachers are skilled in encouraging pupils to behave well.
- The school's measures to improve lesson planning are beginning to have a positive effect.
- Weakness in teachers' subject knowledge and specialist skills impedes improvements to teaching and learning in mathematics and physical education.
- There are missed opportunities to improve pupils' skills in writing, numeracy and ICT.
- There is a suitable range of assessments but teachers do not make the best use of them when they plan their lessons.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4 ( 13 %)	12 ( 37%)	12 ( 37%)	4 ( 13 %)	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 but care should be taken when interpreting the data since each lesson represents three per cent.*

13. Although the quality of teaching and learning is judged to be satisfactory overall, it varies between teachers and subjects. There is good and very good teaching throughout the school but evidence shows that there is also unsatisfactory teaching. The school identified the need to improve the quality of teaching in its development plan but recognises that there has been limited success in making improvements. A challenge has been the departure of several established teachers and the induction of new teachers and teaching assistants since April 2004 and the inability to recruit specialist teachers. The weakness in the leadership of subjects, which is unsatisfactory in several subjects, has hampered the school's intention to improve teaching.
14. There are strengths in teaching in several subjects that lead to pupils making good progress on these occasions. Teachers are receiving guidance on how to improve their teaching and in particular the way that lessons are planned. English and religious education lessons often begin with a good discussion that enables pupils to give their views and develop an interest in learning. In a very good English lesson for pupils in Year 8, the teacher ensured that pupils knew what they had to do through a lively discussion of a visit they had made to a beach. Consequently, pupils quickly developed a list of verbs about the seaside. The teacher's planning for them to compare each other's efforts at the end of the lesson enabled them to judge their success. The summing up by the teacher clarified what they would be studying next in English and geography hence increasing pupils' interest in the subjects. However, there is a whole-school lack of consistency in teachers' planning which leads for instance, to teachers omitting to make the purpose of the lesson clear to pupils.
15. A strength in teaching throughout the school is the way that teachers work to improve pupils' behaviour. This leads to behaviour being good in most lessons. Often, pupils have difficulty behaving but the systems that teachers employ usually bring pupils around so that it does not have a significantly negative impact on their learning. Although teaching assistants make an important contribution to maintaining discipline and improving pupils' behaviour, there are many instances where teachers do not make effective use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning. There are exceptions for instance, when the assistant leads lessons in physical education. Often though, teaching assistants have not been given a role in class and as a result, opportunities are missed for instance, for the teacher to target tasks to pupils according to their needs.
16. Teaching and learning are not effective in a number of subject areas. This is particularly evident in mathematics and physical education where the lack of specialists to teach the subjects has led to the provision being unsatisfactory. In mathematics teaching is often based upon pupils completing work from textbooks with little intervention by staff to help pupils to develop skills and knowledge. Few resources are provided to make lessons interesting and inspire pupils to make more effort. There are weaknesses in the marking of mathematics assignments, which prevents pupils receiving clear advice of how to improve. Since there is very little planning for physical education lessons and activities are not chosen in relation to what pupils should be learning in each year, there is no evidence that pupils are making the required progress.
17. Teachers do not plan well enough to enable pupils to improve their skills in ICT in relation to what they have learned before. This is because pupils may often simply use computers for a particular task without receiving systematic support to move forward in their knowledge and understanding. There is a lack of guidance for teachers in all subjects throughout the school on how to plan to promote pupils' skills in ICT in their lessons. Consequently teaching and learning in ICT is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning is satisfactory in English lessons and this includes the promotion of writing skills. However, teachers' planning in most subjects does not ensure that pupils have enough opportunities and guidance to improve their writing skills. Where opportunities are provided they are often limited to completing worksheets, which are not consistently, matched to pupils literacy skills. Throughout most subjects teachers fail to include the promotion of pupils' numeracy skills in their lessons.
18. There are strengths in the teaching of art and design that enable pupils to make good progress. Through clear instructions, work tailored to pupils needs and effective and systematic instruction, pupils engage well with the tasks. Consequently most produce work in art of which

they are proud. Pupils develop an enthusiasm for work related learning through the teacher's effective methods to ensure that pupils recognise that their efforts are valued. Pupils know the routine for the practical sessions where they collect their safety equipment and get ready quickly for the teacher's briefing which underlines work that they have already covered in class. This is very concise so that pupils are confident in the practical work that they will perform in the environment and consequently they are relaxed, expend much effort on their community tasks and enjoy the pleasure in helping to improve their environment.

19. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall. It is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 when pupils' progress is assessed for the courses they undertake. The school has a number of suitable systems through which teachers' record and monitor pupils' achievement but this information is not used effectively to match work to pupils' different abilities. The attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is checked each year using the National Curriculum guidelines. However, teachers do not do this accurately enough to provide a clear picture of each pupil's ability since for a minority of pupils the measures are not sensitive enough to identify the small steps in achievement that they make. Pupils will often be assessed as having achieved a certain level when they have only acquired some of the knowledge and skills. As a result, teachers do not have sufficiently detailed information to enable them to plan for pupils' individual needs. For instance, lower attaining pupils often require significant levels of support to complete work while higher attaining pupils are not challenged. This is leading to satisfactory rather than good achievement in some subjects.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. Opportunities for enrichment are **good**. Resources for learning and the accommodation are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils receive good guidance to prepare them for leaving school.
- There is a good range of visits and activities at lunchtime and in the residence to enrich the pupils' learning opportunities.
- The school has made a good start to improving the range of courses and accreditation for pupils.
- The curriculum for ICT does not meet statutory requirements and there are weaknesses in the way that pupils learn mathematics and physical education.
- There is not a consistent approach to ensure that pupils improve numeracy, ICT and writing skills in most subjects.
- The school intends to raise standards in the science through partnership with a local school.
- Residential and classroom accommodation provide for pupils very well overall.

### **Commentary**

20. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, work related learning, careers education and guidance and the programme to prepare pupils for leaving school are well organised and complements the satisfactory provision for PSHE and citizenship throughout the school. As a result, pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their lives. Although careers education is good for pupils from Year 9, planning for careers education in Years 7 and 8 is recognised by the school to need further development and is satisfactory.

21. In the last year, several teachers have organised a good range of visits out of school for pupils to support them in their learning. Art, geography, and the leavers' programme have made the most extensive variety of visits. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the opportunities provided to participate in extra-curricular activities at lunchtime, particularly to play games of football and basketball with the staff. Pupils who board in the residence value joining in with the extra activities available in the evenings.

22. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 complete science assessments in their ICT lessons. Pupils may use computers to make presentations of their work, otherwise there is no planning for pupils to develop specific skills in ICT or to have an opportunity to obtain an accreditation in the subject. Although pupils study all the elements of mathematics that they should, there is not enough emphasis upon pupils using and applying their knowledge. In physical education, there is a lack of a suitable plan for what pupils will learn and too much participation in team games at the expense of a different activities such as gymnastics or outdoor adventurous activities.
23. A strength in the curriculum is the opportunity for pupils to achieve grades in GCSE. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have the opportunity to make choices in the courses they want to do. All pupils study the same prescribed five GCSE subjects. The school recognises that the 14-16 curriculum is too narrow, particularly for pupils who do not reach GCSE standard and is seeking ways to improve the range of courses for them. One such initiative is the good link with a local college to enable pupils in Years 10 and 11 to gain college certificates in vocational skills related to car maintenance, engineering, wood work and metal work leading to NVQ level 1.
24. The school achieved 'science college' status in June 2004. There is now the potential to improve achievement in science, mathematics and information and communication technology. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the school's new status on learning and achievement. The achievement of 'science college' status will also provide good opportunities for the school to work with the partner school for pupils to share learning and hence improve opportunities for inclusion.
25. The school and residential accommodation has improved very well since the last inspection and is now good. It is spacious and clean and maintained to a high standard. There is a high commitment from all staff and pupils to take great care to maintain the pristine condition of the building and no graffiti or damage is evident. The provision of new specialist accommodation is an important development. There are, however, a few weaknesses in the design. For instance, there is a lack of storage in the art and design and technology rooms and the latter has not been fully equipped. The facilities for the storage of chemicals and preparation of resources in the new science accommodation are inadequate. This limits the use of the science room for storing ongoing GCSE science coursework. A bungalow on the school site is used well to support the programme for pupils who will leave the school and to develop pupils' vocational skills in Years 10 and 11. There are very good areas for organised play and sports.

### Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good** and the support, advice and guidance provided is **satisfactory**. The way in which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes good care of its pupils and there are good procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- The good advice provided for pupils ensures high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils share their ideas for improvement with the school.

### Commentary

26. Because of the caring environment in school, pupils feel valued and are treated with respect. Procedures for child protection are good. The school has a nominated child protection officer who is well aware of her role and has attended recent training. The child protection policy is extremely thorough and comprehensive. Arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety are good. The school regularly carries out health and safety audits and frequent risk assessments take place. There are good arrangements for first aid and several staff are fully trained in

procedures. Accidents are recorded meticulously and the school keeps thorough records of incidents to log carefully the action taken.

27. There are satisfactory procedures to assess pupils' personal development and provide support. Pupils receive good support and guidance throughout the day from staff during form periods, within lessons and around the school. Information is used satisfactorily to set targets but there are weaknesses in several of the targets set for pupils in their individual education plans. These are not sufficiently well focused on what it is that pupils need to achieve so that they can improve. This makes the monitoring of progress difficult for those pupils. Induction arrangements for pupils are satisfactory. Close links are maintained with pupils' previous school and staff obtain full details of pupils' difficulties and problems prior to their admittance. Pupils receive satisfactory information about their progress and suitable advice on how they can improve. Pupils commented that they have confidence that staff will take their concerns seriously and although some bullying does take place, when it is brought to the attention of staff it is dealt with well. Pupils help to compile the school rules in conjunction with staff so that they know and understand them well.
28. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The school council is a lively forum, which meets regularly to discuss matters of general interest. Staff listen to its recommendations and act upon them if appropriate. For example, the council recently requested the senior managers to change the rules to enable pupils to wear shoes in school instead of plimsolls and this has been adopted. The school uses PSHE and citizenship lessons to give pupils the opportunity to share their views and opinions. Pupils are given a few opportunities to take responsibility as lunchtime monitors, taking charge of equipment and raising money for local charities. Both pupils and parents appreciate the use of the very good residential facility to assist them in settling down into school routine.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

There are **unsatisfactory** links with parents but **satisfactory** links with other schools, colleges and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has rightly recognised the need to improve contact with parents.
- Parents are satisfied with the response when they raise concerns and feel that they are dealt with appropriately.
- Parents would like to receive more information about what happens in school.
- The school does not involve parents enough through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- There are plans to improve relationships with local businesses and the school is increasing its involvement with other schools.

### **Commentary**

29. Although parents are satisfied with the provision that the school makes for their children's welfare, the links that the school has with them are unsatisfactory and is an area the school has identified for improvement. Parents interviewed during the inspection week confirm that they were comfortable about approaching the school with questions, problems or complaints. When they called or phoned they were able to speak to the person they requested and were pleased with the result. There is good contact with parents for pupils' annual review of special educational needs. The 'compact' arrangement to provide incentives for pupils to attend, behave and achieve is also a positive feature of the joint working between the school and parents. The school does not arrange formal meetings for parents beyond the arrangements to review pupils' statements for instance through consultation evenings. However, staff contact parents by telephone or letter if there are any concerns regarding the progress of individual pupils. The school has appointed a home-school liaison officer but owing to other duties he has made relatively few home visits. This is unfortunate since parents have stated that their views are not

sought and the school does not have a mechanism to take good account of their suggestions or concerns.

30. Parents want to know more about what their children are doing and overall, the information provided for parents is unsatisfactory. They appreciate that pupils may be too old for 'home-school books' but would like more information for instance, in the form of newsletters. A good development is the recent provision of weekly reports for the parents and carers of all pupils in Year 9 and for a few pupils in Years 7 and 8. This is providing more of the information that parents want. The school produces a prospectus but this is compiled in a formal way and is not 'parent friendly'. The governing body has failed in its statutory duty to provide to report all the required information to parents of the school's progress in the past year. Pupils' progress reports are produced on a termly basis and contain good information on a subject by subject basis of what pupils have studied and the progress they have made, but targets for improvement are not sharply focused.
31. Links with the community are satisfactory. Regular visitors in to school include members of the Salvation Army, local vicar, members of the police community liaison and the local drugs-awareness co-ordinator. Pupils raise funds for the 'Mercy Ship Charity' and various local charities. Although the school recognises the need to forge more links with local businesses, these already provide work experience places pupils in Year 11 and members of the community come in to school to assist in lessons and take part in assemblies.
32. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. The school has formal links with Gateshead College, which takes students in their metalwork and engineering departments. The headteacher and deputy headteacher visit local schools to advise and help them with behaviour management and the school has strong links with Dryden Special School. The school is participating in a wider partnership that will bring advice and benefits to pupils since the headteacher is a member of the 'Professional Management Group' for the local education authority and is also an active member of the 'Raising Achievement Group'.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. Governance is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Senior staff ensure that the school is a safe and orderly environment.
- The new headteacher has a very good vision of how the quality of education can be improved.
- There has been insufficient monitoring of teaching and the curriculum by senior staff.
- Leadership and management of many subject areas are weak and fail to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Governors are supportive, but have failed to ensure that all their statutory duties have been carried out and that they have sufficient first hand knowledge of the workings of the school.

### **Commentary**

33. Senior staff place understandable importance on ensuring that pupils follow a structured day and are well supported by staff. This is effective, particularly for those pupils who have severe behavioural problems. It ensures that pupils arrive for lessons on time and teachers have every opportunity to teach without their lessons being disrupted by poor behaviour. Senior staff provide good support for their colleagues by being around the school at lunchtimes, between lessons and at the end of school, ensuring that the routines of the day are maintained at all times.
34. The headteacher, although only having been in school for eight weeks prior to the inspection, has quickly realised that there are many aspects of the school's work that are in need of improvement. For example, she has identified the need to implement a national teaching

strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to provide lessons with a consistent structure. She has also arranged for advisors and consultants to come into the school to support staff. Individual meetings with all staff have taken place or been arranged for the near future and a clear link is being established between their work and their professional development. Staff demonstrate a positive commitment to participate in the major changes required to make improvements. The headteacher shows a clear determination to ensure that the school enables all pupils to achieve well. A particular strength is the way in which she is working hard to include all staff in her vision for the future. She is sensitive to staff needs and recognises the complexities of change and how this has the potential for an adverse effect on the smooth running of the school day.

35. The monitoring of what happens in the classroom has been weak. Teachers' termly forecasts for what pupils will learn, include very little detail as to how they would teach the topics they have put forward and how they would assess pupils' achievements. Senior staff have not previously given enough attention to monitoring pupils' progress and this has resulted in insufficient data being available to show pupils' progress and for realistic whole-school targets for achievements to be set.
36. The school's effectiveness has been reduced by the loss of a number of senior teachers in recent years, including four over the past 12 months. This has necessitated changes in the subject responsibilities of staff and partly explains why the leadership and management of subjects are unsatisfactory. The rationale for staff leading subjects is not clear in all cases. For example, the teacher responsible for mathematics is not a specialist and lacks guidance of how to manage the subject throughout the school. Therefore the monitoring of the work of other teachers who teach the subject is not taking place and there is no check on the progress of pupils. In ICT the subject leader does not know how ICT is being taught by his colleagues. Ineffective management has had a negative impact on learning in mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education and science.
37. Governors are clearly committed to the school. Those who met inspectors expressed their determination to ensure that the school provides a good level of education for its pupils. Their decision to re-advertise to find a suitably strong candidate before interviewing and appointing a new headteacher shows their resolve in this. They are hampered in their work by the external administration arrangements for recording the minutes of their meetings. For example, the minutes of their meeting held in May last year were not distributed until December. In addition, the minutes of their meeting in November are still not available. This means that aspects that governors should have been addressing from previous meetings are not being addressed. For example, governors were under the impression that a recent National Care Standards report of the residential facility was very favourable. In fact the full governing body was not aware that the report made many recommendations for the improvement of the residential provision. These weaknesses have contributed to governors not having a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Recent improvements have been made to address these weaknesses, for example, there are now more frequent visits by governors to school to monitor aspects of the curriculum. Arrangements to monitor expenditure are good but there are insufficient systems in place to evaluate its effectiveness.
38. Governors have not ensured that they are carrying out all their statutory duties. They have not ensured that they have produced a report of the required information for parents for the previous 12 months. This means that parents have not been given important statutory information on items such as pupils' attendance and school expenditure. Pupils' attendance rates are not published correctly in the prospectus for parents. In addition governors have not ensured that pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a proper opportunity to study ICT.

## Financial information

### Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	897538	Balance from previous year	112352
Total expenditure	892096	Balance carried forward to the next	117614
Expenditure per pupil	17127		

39. Governors and senior staff appreciate that the carry forward last year was high but funding had been earmarked for new staff costs. Currently the surplus is half of the carried forward figure and a good proportion of this is intended for to improve learning resources, training and staff costs.

### WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

*One lesson, a visit to a wild life area, and a visit to a college, were observed. There was discussion with staff and pupils and an analysis made of pupils' work and teachers' planning.*

Provision for work related learning is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme pupils follow is relevant and they find it interesting.
- WRL makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development, and prepares pupils' well for leaving school.
- There is a wide range of well-established work experience placements that provide good opportunities for pupils to consider future occupation.
- The school intends to build on the success of WRL by extending the range of courses available.

### Commentary

40. The work related learning programme in Years 10 and 11 encompasses a good range of activities including a leavers' programme, community service, work experience, college courses, and careers education and guidance. The quality of teaching is good and the programme is well led and managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. Pupils respond well to the more relaxed but very successful approach that staff adopt to the management of pupils' behaviour. In a bungalow and garden which is detached from the main school building, pupils make good progress learning how to mix mortar and lay bricks, build a barbecue, preserve fencing, landscape the garden and grow vegetables. Fifty hours of community service is successfully built into the WRL programme. Part of this service is at a conservation area that enables pupils to learn how to prune trees, and maintain grass and pathways. Pupils also keep a local common free from litter, and cater for a senior citizens' party at school.

41. Overall, the WRL programme makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. The combined elements of the programme enable pupils to be well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. They learn to work as a team, manage their behaviour in public and college settings, and prepare snacks and drinks. No opportunity is provided however for pupils to further practice their personal, social, vocational and key skills through co-operative ventures such as mini-enterprise projects. This limits the scope to promote their personal and social development, particularly as only a few pupils benefit from the excellent common rooms in the residential facility.

42. Links with local employers enable pupils to learn vocational skills through work experience in Year 11. The range of placements is diverse, for example, work in hotels and shops, clerical, care, school and accountancy assistants, joinery, engineering, catering, and work in sports and

leisure centres. Pupils make their own choices and travel to their placements independently. Staff maintain close links with the employers and pupils during the experience, and there is a good review procedure after completion of the placement.

43. Careers education is good. Although in Years 7 and 8, careers education focuses well on pupils' self-development, the quality of planning is not as good as in Years 9 to 11. Links with a local college enable pupils in Year 11 to gain college certificates in, for example, motor vehicle body repairs, engineering, metalwork and woodwork. These certificates in vocational skills can lead to NVQ level 1 when they enter further education. The school plans to make the 14 to 16 curriculum more flexible and broaden the range of vocational courses and respective accreditation on offer, for example by linking with other colleges.

## **RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

Residential provision is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The accommodation and the resources provide pupils with a very high quality living environment.
- The school has made a good response to the recommendations for improvements made in a recent National Care Standards inspection.
- There is a good range of activities for pupils to take part in during each evening.
- Routines and structures in the evenings and mornings are effective in settling pupils and ensuring that they behave in an appropriate manner.
- There are limited opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibilities.

### **Commentary**

44. Pupils have moved into their new residential accommodation within the last year. It is purpose built and of very high quality. Individual rooms are spacious and very well decorated and pupils can display their personal belongings and customise their personal rooms as they see fit. Their needs are well catered for with a very good range of showers, toilets and bathrooms, lounges and recreation facilities. Although there is also a very pleasant dining room, pupils still go to the school dining room for their evening meal. Appropriate plans are being developed for pupils to be able to eat their evening meal in the residential facility.
45. The residence was recently re-inspected in relation to National Care Standards. Their report recognised the improvements the school had made to its residential provision since the previous inspection and made more recommendations for further improvements. The school has responded well to these and developments for instance, the creation of a key worker for each pupil is having a very positive effect. An action plan was drawn up and a number of items are still outstanding. These include, ensuring that the Head of Care has a suitable qualification.
46. Discussions with pupils confirm that they enjoy being there, are relaxed and very much appreciate the efforts of the staff team to support them. They report how much they enjoy the activities. Recently they had the opportunity to meet with an external independent listener and they have good access to a private telephone to keep in touch with their homes. In discussion, pupils say how much they like being in the residential facility. The routines for each evening are very well planned, they give pupils the opportunity to have time on their own in which they can relax in their bedrooms and complete their homework. There are also organised activities, such as basketball in the gym and trips out to the local leisure centre. However, all pupils are expected to take part in these activities. Whilst this is appropriate for pupils new to the school, it is not giving older pupils the chance to make decisions about how to use their free time in preparation for when they leave the school. Routines at bedtime and in getting pupils up in the morning are relaxed and well considered. However, there are no different expectations for older

pupils, which mean there are missed opportunities for them to take on increased responsibility for their own welfare. For example, older pupils have no opportunity to plan and cook their own meals or to independently travel to out of school activities.

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

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

*One lesson and a part lesson in Spanish were observed but it is not possible to make judgements about provision. Five lessons were observed in English. For both subjects pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held with pupils and staff.*

#### **Spanish**

47. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive a lesson each week in Spanish. They follow a suitable programme of lessons to enable them to learn everyday Spanish vocabulary. Although much of pupils' work is based upon worksheets, they occasionally have the opportunity to express their own ideas in sentences. It is positive that pupils receive worksheets of different difficulty, however the planning is not closely linked to help to develop pupils' overall literacy skills. Pupils in Year 7 learn to use words and phrases to greet each other and to describe their appearance. Currently, they are learning words associated with clothing. By Year 9, pupils listen to questions in Spanish about favourite sports and with help they can give the answer. With encouragement, they are beginning to link words together to answer in phrases.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Across the school teachers provide suitable opportunities in English and other lessons for pupils to learn speaking and listening skills.
- English lessons enable pupils to develop writing skills but other teachers do not plan adequately in other lessons to improve pupils' writing skills.
- Assessment is not used satisfactorily to plan for pupils to make better progress.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently to help pupils to develop language and literacy in most subjects in the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

48. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory overall. Pupils achieved satisfactory standards in national tests at the end of Year 9. Seven pupils in Year 11 were entered for GCSE at the end of last year and they all passed. However, pupils' achievements have declined since the last inspection when standards were judged to be good.

49. Achievements in speaking and listening are satisfactory overall because teachers' provide suitable opportunities for pupils to participate in interesting discussions. When asking questions, teachers are careful to ensure that pupils have enough time to answer, and that the remainder of the group shows respect for their efforts. Because pupils are prepared to listen to each other they are able to build on each other's accounts. For instance, a Year 10 discussion about bravery helps pupils produce a good draft report for a newspaper article because they have shared their ideas. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for questioning and discussion during lessons in all subjects. In lessons where relationships are good, pupils are confident to express themselves. Pupils talk readily and politely to visitors. Drama lessons provide further opportunities to encourage pupils to give their views.

50. Achievements in reading are satisfactory. The majority of pupils admitted to school have very low 'reading ages' and a small number of pupils have progressed to demonstrate reading skills,

which are in line with pupils of the same age nationally. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to practice reading and to develop reading strategies by regularly listening to them read. They encourage pupils' interest in books by reading stories to them at the end of some English lessons. The range of reading materials has been recently updated and younger pupils, for example, are beginning to enjoy authors such as *Roald Dahl*.

51. Achievement in writing is unsatisfactory. There are appropriate plans to promote writing in English lessons and these are successful but this is not the case in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of simple punctuation but are not able to apply this consistently to their work. Handwriting and spelling practice is provided for younger pupils and this is leading to improvements to pupils' weak handwriting and spelling skills. In discussion pupils show satisfactory understanding of the major characters in the texts they study, for example, 'Frankenstein' and 'The Canterbury Tales'. In successful well-planned lessons, teachers provide short well focused writing tasks which pupils complete more readily. The use of information technology increases pupils' skills in writing and provides an opportunity to improve their work. For example, pupils in Year 10 use word processing to improve the first draft of their work on comparing different types of bravery. However, planning is not systematic for the use of ICT to improve pupils' literacy skills. Writing, handwriting and spelling have been identified by the school as areas for development.
52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinators are both new. A subject audit has been completed and the need to improve resources has been identified as a priority. A new system for both long and short-term planning has been introduced. This has led to the intention to make it clear what pupils in Years 7 and 8 will learn in a lesson but this has not yet had an impact on learning. Although teachers support each other in lessons there has been no formal monitoring of English or literacy across the school. The co-ordinators have established plans to improve the subject and are aware that they need to work closely together to improve writing and literacy across the school and to address weakness in assessment so that they use this better to plan for pupils to learn more.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

53. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Most teachers encourage pupils' speaking and listening skills by encouraging discussion and by using words that are specific to the subject. For example, pupils in Year 7 confidently answer questions about the story of Jesus recalling what they learned from previous lessons because each remembers something different and this prompts other pupils' memories. Teachers do not consider if there are opportunities to promote pupils' reading skills when they plan lessons. Pupils are aware of the difficulties they have with writing and often respond in a negative way when asked to write answers or to write at length. However, teachers are not providing enough opportunities for them to practice and improve their basic skills. This is particularly lacking in science for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in history for pupils of all ages. Pupils rarely practice writing skills in many subjects because teachers rely too heavily on worksheets and because they have not identified in each subject how they could promote pupils' literacy skills. There are exceptions and in a PSHE lesson for pupils in Year 7, the close matching of the writing tasks to pupils' needs and careful explanation enabled pupils of all abilities to write answers to challenging questions about the police force.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning is not adequate to provide stimulating work or to make effective use of teaching assistants.
- Teachers' knowledge of pupils' progress is insufficient because their achievements are not checked regularly.

- Lessons are not linked to pupils' ability levels or their previous achievements.
- Pupils do not follow all parts of the subject in equal depth and they have few learning resources to increase their interest.
- Last year more than half the pupils in Year 11 achieved a GCSE pass.
- The subject is not managed well enough and there is no link between the work of the three teachers who teach mathematics.

### **Commentary**

54. The quality of the teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory. Teachers are not specialists and rely very heavily on the use of textbooks. This means that in many lessons pupils are working independently through exercises in their books. Although this is ensuring that pupils cover a range of topics, it is not generating an interest in the subject among pupils. Although teachers plan for teaching assistants to offer individual advice and support to pupils, they are used infrequently to enable pupils to work together co-operatively.
55. There are no systems for checking how well pupils are achieving, beyond pupils periodically completing tests based on work covered in the textbooks. A scrutiny of completed tests, shows that even if pupils lack an understanding of a particular aspect of mathematics, teachers fail to plan or adapt their lessons to take account of these. Pupils work hard in lessons and produce a considerable amount of work. Consequently, the achievements of many in lessons are satisfactory. However, the marking of their work does not encourage them to extend their skills or knowledge or understand what they need to do to improve. In addition, the written work of pupils in Year 9 shows that their efforts have been marked as correct even though incorrect. This is poor and does not show sufficient respect for pupils' efforts.
56. There are very limited resources used in mathematics for example, objects to help pupils understand shapes. In addition there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use mathematics for investigations, which means that pupils receive narrow experiences in this aspect of the National Curriculum in mathematics.
57. Last year many pupils were successful in passing GCSE. This, for these pupils represented good achievement. However, the unsatisfactory teaching in the subject means that the current pupils lack the expert guidance to develop their skills in mathematics to maximise their opportunities to achieve examination success.
58. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. A new co-ordinator has taken over the subject during the current academic year. He is a non-specialist who has been moved from responsibility for another subject area. There are no systems in place for him to monitor the teaching of his colleagues or the progress that pupils are making throughout the school. There is little evidence that the three teachers collaborate to ensure that there is a link between the work that pupils undertake in each year group. The new headteacher has recognised the weaknesses within the subject and has made arrangements for local education authority advisors and consultants to come into school to offer support to improve the provision and is seeking to appoint a mathematics specialist.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

59. Numeracy is not well promoted in other subjects. There are unsatisfactory arrangements to check how staff are planning for mathematics. There are a few examples where teachers encourage pupils to develop numeracy skills. For example, pupils read scales of equipment and in conducting experiments Year 10 and 11 pupils will read data produced from experiments. Pupils measure wood before they cut it in design and technology but little other use of mathematics is evident.

### **SCIENCE**

*Three lessons and a part of a science lesson were seen. Evidence was also obtained from an analysis of pupils' work, discussions with staff, visitors and pupils.*

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Year 11 achieved well in GCSE single science last year.
- The written work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory since they have few opportunities to write.
- The use of assessment in planning lessons is unsatisfactory overall.
- The school has high aspirations to improve science through working closely with another school.

### **Commentary**

60. Achievement in science is satisfactory overall. Many pupils have gaps in their education prior to entering Furrowfield but in Year 9 in 2004, more than half the pupils achieved at a level that indicates they could achieve a pass in GCSE by the time they leave school. The science GCSE results in Year 11 in 2004 showed that pupils who were entered achieved well, with mainly C to G grades. Year 11 pupils improve the presentation of their GCSE coursework in the time allocated for ICT and as a result, the evidence they collect from their investigations is presented to a high standard. All pupils study the same GCSE and make the same progress. However, if they do not reach the standard to be entered for GCSE there is not an alternative qualification available at the appropriate level and they do not receive accreditation.

61. Very few opportunities are provided for pupils studying for GCSE to write about their science work. This is because the teaching focus is mainly upon practical work, listening and discussion. As a result, writing in science is unsatisfactory, particularly the writing of analyses and evaluations following an investigation. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Although pupils throughout the school are not always given work to do that matches their needs nor the aims of lessons always made clear to pupils, there is a strength in the way that several pupils are able to set up equipment for themselves and work with some independence. This is because the teacher has provided expert guidance. The insistence by teachers and teaching assistants on pupils' high standards of behaviour is successful. Teachers are less successful in planning for teaching assistants to support the development of pupils' subject knowledge and skills because they have not received enough training in this area.

62. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The senior management team and governors have provided a great deal of support to lead developments in the subject. They have a clear vision of how standards in science can be raised through the recently acquired science college status with a partner school. This vision, however, is not yet reflected in the work of the subject leader in having an impact on improving the quality of pupils' learning and standards in science.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not taught an appropriate curriculum.
- There are no systems to monitor the progress pupils are making or to plan effectively for the development of the subject.
- Weakness in leadership and management contributes to pupils' unsatisfactory achievement.
- There are good ICT resources, including a good range of computers and appropriately an ICT technician has been appointed.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the teaching of many subject areas.

## **Commentary**

63. The progress of pupils is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow a planned course of work. Although ICT is on the timetable for these pupils, an observation of lessons shows that they are used as additional science lessons where pupils will use computers if appropriate. There is not systematic planning for pupils to make progress in ICT. There are opportunities to use ICT in subjects such as science and music but there is no planning of what work will be covered in each subject area. Provision in the subject has deteriorated since the previous inspection.
64. Year 8 pupils exhibit skills in using a desktop publishing package and show that they can take outline designs and make changes to create their own. All pupils are also competent at accessing the Internet and using a search engine to find suitable sites. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a commercial scheme, which covers all the required aspects for ICT. However, there is no link for instance, between what pupils know and can do and what is planned in a lesson. Consequently, the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.
65. There is no system for recording pupils' achievements. This means it is not possible for the school to demonstrate the progress that pupils have made. During a lesson for pupils in Year 10 to use the computer to complete a science project, a pupil showed a very high level of skill in developing an interactive presentation using hyperlinks. However, pupils do not have the opportunity to take examinations in ICT. This is unsatisfactory and means that pupils are being denied an opportunity to have their work and skills recognised.
66. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is not aware of how much ICT is being used by the teachers in the school and there are no arrangements for him to monitor this. This means there is a haphazard approach as to what teaching and support pupils are receiving in the subject. The school has invested well in computers and the maintenance of these is carried out well by a competent technician. Staff are aware that not all computers are covered by a suitable Internet access safety system but they keep a watch on the web sites that pupils research. This deficiency is a priority for the school to address.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

67. Overall, teachers and teaching assistants have insufficient skills to make effective use of ICT or to offer appropriate support to pupils in their learning. Staff have received ICT training previously, but the school reports that this was unsatisfactory. There are exceptions, for example in a music lesson for pupils in Year 9, very good use was made of ICT. Pupils composed a song using computer generated organ and drums, using interactive sound sources. This provided a very effective stimulus and gave pupils a good understanding of how ICT can be used to extend their musical experiences. In addition in art, ICT is used well by Year 10 pupils to download information from the Internet to develop into designs.

## **HUMANITIES**

*One and a part lesson in geography and one lesson in history were observed. Judgements are not made about provision in the subjects. Two lessons were observed in religious education, pupils work and records scrutinised and discussions held with pupils and staff for all subjects.*

## Geography

68. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are interested in their work and present their written work and diagrams accurately. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils are motivated to use maps of England to locate cities and towns because the teacher provides an interesting context, namely the location of the teams in the football league. Pupils' written work is checked regularly. However, there is little written guidance provided for pupils to help improve their standards of work.
69. Pupils show understanding of geographical vocabulary. They compare the geography of different countries. They use co-ordinates to find places on maps. By Year 9, higher achieving pupils can interpret bar charts and numerical data about changing age profiles of different populations of people. A broad range of topics is planned and a good range of visits enriches the geography programme. There is, however, little use of computers to support learning in geography. There is extensive use of worksheets at the expense of pupils' own writing.

## History

70. A broad range of historical topics is planned from Years 7 to 11 where the emphasis is on developing pupils' knowledge of events, changes and people in past times. Planning documents however, do not identify how pupils' different learning needs will be met. Pupils are not challenged sufficiently to organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding. They rarely write at length in their own words or use computers. There is an over-reliance on worksheets where pupils fill in missing words from a given selection. An analysis of pupils' work during the inspection highlighted many gaps in written work and weaknesses in marking.
71. Pupils in Year 7 were interested to hear about the Norman Conquest and the Battle of Hastings even though they found it difficult to recall the facts without considerable support. Year 11 pupils listened well and asked questions during discussion about the Americans entering World War II. A good choice of video was used effectively to support learning in this lesson. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study for GCSE history since no alternative course is available. This provides a challenge for the growing number of pupils who enter school late in Year 11. Seven of the twelve pupils who were entered in Year 11 achieved grades in the range D to G last year. However, predictions are that most pupils will not achieve grades this year.

## Religious education.

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are interested in the subject and this helps them to concentrate to make progress.
- Good displays around the school increase pupils' awareness of world faiths.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to visit different places of worship locally

## Commentary

72. Teaching and learning and the progress that pupils make are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The topics chosen for lessons reflect the locally agreed syllabus and ensure that pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about religious traditions. Pupils in Year 7 compare religious symbols from a number of different faiths. Although they may arrive in class behaving in a disruptive way after a disturbed break time, the teacher's high expectations, insistence on correct behaviour, the good relationships and the well established class routines ensure that pupils' behaviour improves and they settle to work. Pupils are interested to discuss details of previous lessons about parables and the death of Jesus and this helps them to engage with the main activity to learn by starting from the standpoint of Christian symbols. Pupils enjoy their lessons and ask sensible and relevant questions. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of past topics and recall information, which is relevant to

their study of religious language and symbols. A weakness is the missed opportunity to involve the teaching assistants in contributing to supporting pupils' learning.

73. Pupils in Year 9 achieved well when the teacher generated an enthusiastic start to the lesson using rapid questioning that involved all pupils contributing. This quickly established their knowledge of the RSPCA. The bright and well cared for classroom provides an effective place for pupils to learn but there is a lack of display of pupils' work to enhance pupils' learning of language in the subject and to remind them of previous work. If teachers provide the opportunity for pupils to write, this is usually via a worksheet. However, these are not always effective in meeting pupils' needs. For instance, in a lesson for pupils Year10 to learn about a Buddhist Shrine, the text of the worksheet was too difficult for several pupils to read and the task too easy for others. It is good that the teacher displays the aims of lessons at the start. However, the value of this is diminished because the aims are not shared with the pupils or used as a means of evaluating how successful lessons have been.
74. Assemblies provide an appropriate opportunity for pupils to reflect on issues. The themes provide good opportunities for pupils to consider important issues such as morality, which are relevant to their study in religious education. The teacher has purchased some good quality resources, which engage pupils' attention and help them participate in lessons. Further improvements are planned and needed. The school has provided good quality posters depicting for instance, Buddhism. This enables teachers to refer to the images during lessons and assemblies and this increases pupils' awareness of different cultures.
75. The co-ordinator for religious education is new to the responsibility. Leadership and teaching of the subject are satisfactory and this has improved standards. Currently there are few opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship or for them to meet with and talk to visitors from other faiths.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and design**

*Two lessons were observed in each of art and design and physical education. Judgements are not made about provision in design and technology and music because only one lesson was seen in each subject together with a lesson in car body repairs at a local college. For all subjects, inspectors looked at evidence of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils and staff.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The GCSE grades in art last year were outstandingly good.
- Well-planned visits improve pupils' understanding and appreciation of art.
- Pupils become absorbed in their work and they develop individuality.
- Art resources are being improved to broaden the art course that pupils follow.
- Not all pupils are able to have their work accredited.

### **Commentary**

76. The work that last year's school leavers produced was of a very high standard and the twelve pupils entered achieved GCSE grades from A to F. Pupils' ability varies from year to year and this year there will be fewer grades obtained. However, pupils are still achieving well in terms of prior attainment especially since several pupils have joined the school in their final year. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection.
77. Pupils have made visits to the Sage arts centre in Gateshead and worked with community artists to create well crafted collages based on stained glass windows. They visit art galleries and have

participated in a local project at an outdoor area on a community farm to make a sculpture of a large wooden shark. Pupils' work shows a good reference to local artists such as their interpretations of the Angel of the North sculpture.

78. Most pupils are very interested in their work and this is because the teacher helps them to achieve success by guiding them to choose subjects and methods within their capabilities. This ensures that pupils are successful in completing their tasks and it provides the encouragement for them to persevere with more difficult tasks. For instance, pupils in Year 9 can choose to create their images on a computer with help from teachers and teaching assistants.
79. A strength in the effective teaching and consequent good learning is the respect that pupils have for the teacher's skills in demonstrating techniques to them. Pupils in Year 10 concentrated very well to understand how to show a three dimensional effect through shading. Since pupils are very clear about what they have to do they proceed to work independently and show originality in their choice of subject and medium of pencil or water based colour. Discipline is maintained well most of the time through pupils attending to their tasks and gaining satisfaction and self esteem from their achievements. When there is occasional significant misbehaviour, senior and other staff provide effective support to restore behaviour and minimise disruption to lessons.
80. The art and design teacher is also the subject leader and only took up post in September 2004. She has worked hard to continue and improve the planning for what pupils will learn. Currently, this includes extending resources available, particularly for three-dimensional work and has good plans for further improvements. A weakness is that pupils who do not reach the standard to be entered for GCSE assessment do not have access to alternative accreditation.

## **Music**

81. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy their music lessons because they are actively involved in composing music electronically. They are taught by a professional musician, who captures pupils' imagination through enthusiastic and innovative teaching. Sophisticated use of computer equipment and software enables boys to combine backing tracks, their own playing on a keyboard, and singing their own and others' songs, to create unique pieces of music. Pupils utilise electronic piano, guitar, brass and stringed instruments in their compositions. They enjoy composing music based on the famous personalities of people they know as well as themes like 'The Haunted Manor', 'Einstein on the beach' and 'Extra-terrestrial' music. Pupils are able to perform their musical pieces when pensioners are invited to school for a party. There is no opportunity for pupils who are interested in music to continue studying the subject after Year 9.

## **Design and technology**

82. The school has had difficulty in recruiting a specialist teacher and there has been a gap in lessons of over a year. Consequently, pupils up to Year 9 have fallen behind in their work. However, a temporary teacher, who is the subject leader, has been appointed and pupils have now begun to follow suitable lessons to enable them to develop their designing and making skills. The classroom is in the process of being converted into a specialist room, although much needs to be done to ensure that pupils have access to the full range of equipment. The subject leader has made a satisfactory start to designing a suitable course that will build upon the adequate series of task that pupils are undertaking. In Year 9, pupils select one of their designs from a range of sketches, drawings and ideas to create a game. They show an understanding of using hand tools appropriately to cut wood for instance, to make dice to use in their evolving board games.
83. Although facilities are not suitable for pupils to achieve accreditation in Years 10 and 11, they attend a good alternative course at the local college of further education. They are currently learning how to repair car bodywork. This enables pupils to consider the possibility of attending college when they leave school. Lessons make a strong contribution to pupils' WRL and their consideration of their future.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching skills for physical education are weak.
- Support staff who assist in physical education lessons make valuable contributions especially in improving pupils' behaviour.
- The curriculum offered to pupils is too narrow and fails to support their overall physical development.
- The subject is poorly managed and the plans for its development are unsatisfactory.
- There are very good opportunities at lunchtimes and in the evenings for pupils to play football and basketball.

### Commentary

84. The standard of teaching in physical education is unsatisfactory. Lessons are not well planned and although there was planning for a few lessons during the inspection, no reference was made to these during the actual lessons. Pupils are not being given sufficient support to develop their skills. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, a warm up taken by a support assistant was followed by pupils engaging in a game of football, with the teacher taking his place in goal. There was no skill training and no expectations for pupils to do anything other than have a game. It is because of these weaknesses that pupils make unsatisfactory progress overall in physical education. This represents a deterioration in the standard since the last report.

85. Support staff play a valuable part in ensuring that pupils' behaviour is acceptable. They insist on high standards and remind pupils of the expectations of the school for their behaviour and attitudes towards each other. They also show understanding of the techniques involved in specific activities. For example, in a Year 9 physical education lesson where pupils were following a fitness circuit, the support assistant demonstrated squat thrusts and press up which enabled pupils to complete these exercises correctly.

86. The leadership and management of physical education are poor. The subject file is very poor. It contains out of date planning and fails to show the activities that pupils will cover in each class and at different times of the year. There is no evidence that pupils' achievement and progress are being monitored, although there are grades allocated for their efforts in individual lessons. There has been no evaluation of previous work undertaken or how pupils' skills will be developed in different areas of physical education. The curriculum does not give pupils the opportunity to take part in a suitably wide range of properly organised activities. There is no opportunity, for example, for pupils to undertake gymnastics and there are no records to show if pupils have been involved in improving skills in swimming or outdoor adventurous activities.

87. Staff ensure that pupils have very good opportunities to play football and basketball at lunchtimes. This is particularly effective at generating pupils' interest and contributes to the development of their social skills. Many staff take part in these sessions and pupils enjoy the competitive nature of the games. There is a similar situation in the evenings where pupils join care staff in energetic games sessions in the gym.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Two lessons were observed together with planned opportunities to promote pupils' learning observed throughout the day and evening. Discussions were held with pupils and staff and pupils' work scrutinised.*

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils learn about life in the community that is relevant to their needs
- There is not a co-ordinated approach to guiding pupils to develop their knowledge of responsible citizens.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to demonstrate personal responsibility in school.
- The school encourages pupils to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- A few lessons in other subjects make a good contribution to enhancing pupils' learning.

## **Commentary**

88. Achievements are satisfactory. This represents a decline since the last inspection. The PSHE and citizenship course that pupils follow in specific lessons is satisfactory. It reflects pupils' needs and includes suitable elements to promote an understanding of citizenship. For example, younger pupils learn about police powers and the role of the police force. There are appropriate opportunities for discussion. The school has not considered which elements of citizenship can be reinforced through other subjects and although individual teachers frequently address relevant issues, opportunities are not consistently planned. For example, there is a significant emphasis on care for the environment when older pupils are involved in helping to improve paths and the appearance of nearby countryside as part of their WRL but this has not been linked to citizenship.

89. Pupils are taught social responsibility effectively through their participation in events such as fund raising for national charities but there is not enough emphasis on them being socially responsible within the school community. There are few opportunities for them during the school day to take responsibility for organising themselves or for managing tasks around the school. There are appropriate opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to learn consideration for the emotional feelings of both themselves and others and on improving pupils' self-esteem. The school council provides a good opportunity for pupils to discuss issues relevant to them such as bullying. Pupils are also considering the possibilities of cycling to school and this enhances their awareness of planning healthy living as part of the school's response to receiving a 'Healthy School Award' a few years ago.

90. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and one outcome is that an audit has been carried out recently and appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified. Other lessons for instance, in careers education enhance pupils' learning. Good provision is made for careers planning through work with the Connexions service. Work experience and college taster courses are effective in developing the social skills of older pupils and help them to achieve personal responsibility.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

\*In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not to national standards.