

INSPECTION REPORT

BRANKSOME SCHOOL

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114321

Headteacher: Mr H Gilfillan

Lead inspector: Mr Ted Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 6th – 9th December 2004

Inspection number: 268352

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	791
School address:	Eggleston View Darlington County Durham
Postcode:	DL3 9SH
Telephone number:	01325 380776
Fax number:	01325 282523
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Dr J Lloyd
Date of previous inspection:	1 st March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has 791 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 and is smaller than other secondary schools. Pupils are from predominantly white British backgrounds. There is a small proportion of Bangladeshi pupils and very small numbers of Indian, Chinese, other Asian, Caribbean and other pupils. Urdu is the first language of some pupils, but no pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly average, as is the proportion with special educational needs. Moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are the main areas of special educational needs, with very small numbers of pupils with dyslexia, speech difficulty or visual impairment. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. There is a small but significant number of pupils leaving the school at ages other than 16, with a similar number joining after the beginning of Year 7. Attainment on entry to the school is average overall, though with variations from year to year, and is sometimes above average, though many pupils have lower than average literacy skills, having difficulties with reading in particular.

The school is involved with Young Enterprise, the DfES School Performance Project and the Leading Edge Project. The school has Artsmark Award (2003), Healthy Schools Award (2004), Schools Achievement Award (2000, 2001 and 2002) and Investors in Children (2004).

There is some community use of school facilities for sports and arts and adult education.

The headteacher took up permanent appointment after Easter 2004, having been acting since September 2003, following the illness and retirement of the previous head.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10013	T Wheatley	Lead inspector	
19720	D Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
2893	J Manning	Team inspector	English, drama
2919	P Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	M Foulds	Team inspector	Science
30901	S Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology, business studies
19026	B Downes	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
12118	A Paver	Team inspector	History
2626	M Thompson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
1340	D Wigley	Team inspector	Citizenship, music
2628	J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
10275	J Cosgrove	Team inspector	Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school fails to provide a satisfactory standard of education. A significant amount of teaching is unsatisfactory, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils are frequently unsatisfactory and while a substantial minority of pupils achieve well many underachieve. After a period of disruption and absence in the senior management of the school, the newly appointed headteacher is giving good direction for improvements. However, the governance of the school is poor and the school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall, though in drama in Years 10 and 11 and art and design throughout the school pupils achieve very well.
- The school's teaching strategies to manage the poor attitudes and behaviour of many pupils are unsatisfactory, and lead to underachievement.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory and contribute to underachievement.
- The headteacher has a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. This is shared by the great majority of staff and improvement is already in evidence.
- Governors have little understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and do not support the headteacher effectively.
- The work-related curriculum and vocational education arrangements are good.
- Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good.
- Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, though where specialist support is employed, it is good.
- Staffing problems in mathematics, geography, French and physical education are adversely affecting standards.

Improvement since the last inspection in March 1999 has been unsatisfactory. Standards are still too low and achievement is unsatisfactory. Teaching is worse than it was at the last inspection. Attendance is still unsatisfactory. The vocational and work-related curriculum has improved and more pupils leave school with qualifications. The use of assessment information to set targets and match teaching to pupils' needs has improved and there has been some improvement in the quality of monitoring and evaluation in departments.

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

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2003, results were below the national average overall and the unconfirmed results for 2004 were no better, continuing the pattern of recent years. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' performance was low. Standards seen were below average in English and science and broadly

average in mathematics. They were above average in art and design, average in design and technology, citizenship and ICT, well below average in geography and French and below average elsewhere. Results at GCSE in 2004 were below the national average overall and similar to the results in 2003. Achievement was unsatisfactory, based on pupils' attainment on entry to the school but it was good in art and design and in drama. Standards seen were below average overall by Year 11. They were below average in English, mathematics, science, history, physical education and religious education and well below average in geography. They were average in design and technology, ICT, French, music and citizenship and were well above average in art and design. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory overall, which results in unsatisfactory personal development, attitudes and behaviour around school and in lessons. Attendance is unsatisfactory, as at the last inspection, and pupils' punctuality is also unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, though in over half of lessons they are good or better. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory and many teachers' management of pupils' poor behaviour is ineffective. Some teaching is good, showing high expectations and very good management of pupils' behaviour. Assessment is satisfactory and recent work is leading to improvements to teaching and achievement. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because of deficiencies in literacy, numeracy and cross-curricular ICT. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, though the quality of specialist support is good. Staffing, resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory.

The school provides satisfactory care for its pupils. Support for pupils' personal and academic development is satisfactory. There are satisfactory procedures for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Good links with the community and with other schools and colleges support pupils' learning and personal development well. The school has a satisfactory and improving partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership focused on improving teaching and raising standards. Management is satisfactory and improving. Monitoring and evaluation are good though the use of school performance information is currently only satisfactory. Governance is poor with governors knowing too little about how the school functions and having insecure procedures to deal with their responsibilities. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views overall are positive, although few actively voiced their opinions before the inspection. Most pupils enjoy being at school but a large minority show little loyalty to or pride in their school. The school values pupils' opinions and is improving the ways in which it involves pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Improve achievement by:

- Improving teachers' strategies to manage the poor attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- Working with pupils, families and support agencies to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that all pupils experience literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Ensuring the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is consistently good.

- Ensuring governors have an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have effective procedures to support the headteacher and school.
- Working to resolve the staffing problems in mathematics, geography, French and physical education and to improve the accommodation.

and,

- Ensuring statutory requirements are met for collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement by the majority of pupils is **unsatisfactory** overall, though it is satisfactory for gifted and talented pupils. Acquisition of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is unsatisfactory overall. Achievement is restricted by poor behaviour and high levels of absence among pupils, and by high levels of changes and disruption in staffing in some subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils underachieve overall, though they achieve well, and frequently very well, in art and design and in drama in Years 10 and 11.
- Poor behaviour of a significant minority of pupils interferes with the achievement and rate of progress made by other pupils.
- Staffing difficulties have led to underachievement in mathematics, geography, French and physical education.
- High levels of absence by a small minority of pupils contribute to unsatisfactory achievement.
- Pupils have unsatisfactory literacy and numeracy skills.

Commentary

1. Standards on entry to the school are currently broadly average. Over recent years there has been some fluctuation, with standards frequently above average in mathematics and science. Standards of literacy have varied, but have rarely been better than average and sometimes lower.
2. In the National Curriculum tests taken in 2004, results were below average in English and science and average in mathematics. This repeats the results of 2003 and there has been little change in recent years. Compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment, results were very low in English, mathematics and science and the progress made by pupils was very poor from when they entered the school.
3. Standards seen during the inspection were below average by Year 9 overall. Standards are below average in English and science and average in mathematics. They are average in design and technology, ICT and citizenship and above average in art and design. In history, music, physical education and religious education standards are below average and in geography and French they are well below average. Overall, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, which is better than the national tests in 2004 indicated as a result of work started in the school, but still not good enough. Achievement is satisfactory in English, taking into account the poor literacy skills of many pupils on entering the school. It is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, history, French and physical education. In geography pupils' achievement is poor. Elsewhere, achievement is satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily overall.
4. The GCSE results of 2003 were below the national average and the unconfirmed results for 2004 indicated similar results. Taking into account the performance of all pupils, results have fallen in recent years. However, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades, while still below average in 2004, has risen in recent years. Compared with schools with pupils with similar prior attainment, results were average, but compared with what the same pupils attained on entry to the school, results were below average. Pupils' progress over their time in school was unsatisfactory. Results in art and design and in drama were well above average with all pupils in both subjects obtaining pass grades and a well above average percentage

obtaining A*-C grades. In the school overall, results are comparatively good for the lowest attaining pupils; 99 per cent of pupils obtained at least one pass grade at GCSE.

5. Inspection evidence shows that by Year 11 standards are below average. They are below average in English, mathematics, science, history, physical education, and religious education. They are well below average in geography. In art and design standards are well above average and are average in design and technology, ICT, French, music and citizenship. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall, but it is satisfactory in English, citizenship, design and technology, history, ICT, French and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science and physical education and poor in geography. It is very good in art and design. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory achievement overall.
6. The main reason for underachievement is the poor behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys. This disrupts the learning not only of the pupils involved, but also of many other pupils, and is not dealt with effectively by teachers. This is evident in many subject areas, and not just where achievement is unsatisfactory overall. In addition, staffing difficulties in mathematics, physical education, geography and modern languages have had a long-term impact on slowing achievement. In physical education, the school has been unable to appoint suitable staff. Poor attendance and late arrival at lessons are also factors contributing to underachievement. Good and frequently very good achievement in art and design is due to high expectations, challenging work and effective advice and guidance for pupils. Recent work, under the leadership of the newly appointed headteacher, has made teachers more aware than they had been of the potential for achievement among pupils. The improved use of assessment information and focus on teaching and learning are starting to have a positive impact, but have some way to go.
7. Pupils' literacy skills are unsatisfactory and the school's recently introduced literacy policy has not been effectively implemented. There is some sound practice but it is inconsistent and is not effective in helping pupils improve their skills in English language. Pupils' numeracy skills are unsatisfactory and there is no established approach to teaching numeracy. While pupils gain numeracy skills in history, design and technology, science and art and design, elsewhere the acquisition of skills is unsatisfactory. Pupils' ICT skills are broadly average, but there are too few planned opportunities to develop and strengthen these further, due to lack of use of ICT in other subjects.
8. When taught in some mainstream classes, pupils with special educational needs do not attain satisfactory standards in relation to their prior ability or individual education plans. As a result, their achievement is unsatisfactory. However, where pupils with special educational needs are taught by specialist teachers or withdrawn for extra tuition, they attain standards in line with their targets and achieve well. The achievement of pupils from ethnic minorities equals that of other pupils; their learning is not inhibited by poor English language as there is no significant difference between their skills and those of other pupils.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.7 (31.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.0 (33.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.7 (31.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 141 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40 (38)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.7 (32.9)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 134 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is **unsatisfactory**. Their personal development is **unsatisfactory**, which results in **unsatisfactory** attitudes and behaviour around school and in lessons. Attendance has not improved since the previous inspection and is still **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality is also **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many pupils show little interest in lessons and have no desire to learn, though higher attaining pupils usually have positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unruly and aggressive and frequently disrupts lessons.
- Relationships are unsatisfactory overall, with pupils often being confrontational with teachers and with each other.
- Many pupils are often absent from school and arrive late for lessons, which affects their learning and achievement.

Commentary

9. Overall, pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are unsatisfactory. Many pupils, particularly in the higher attaining groups, co-operate, concentrate and apply themselves to the tasks set. However, a small but significant number of pupils is uninterested, has no desire to learn and frequently disrupts lessons, sometimes deliberately. Some pupils come into school with negative attitudes and show a lack of regard for basic classroom conventions such as listening to each other. On talking to pupils, few were seen to show strong loyalty towards the school and every day there is a huge amount of litter at break and lunchtime making the school look untidy and uncared for.
10. Behaviour around school is also unsatisfactory. Many pupils show disregard for teachers and the school code of conduct. Movement in corridors is rough and often aggressive, with pupils deliberately pushing others out of the way. During the inspection, pupils were heard to make inappropriate comments about inspectors. 'Smoking corners' are common. Relationships between pupils and teachers are too often confrontational with pupils 'pushing' teachers for a reaction. Behaviour in lessons is often better, particularly when handled and managed well by teachers. For example, in English, design and technology and science pupils work and behave well, because expectations are high, standards consistent and approaches understood. However, in many lessons pupils' behaviour constantly disrupts the lesson. Pupils frequently shout out, refuse to co-operate, distract others and are rude to teachers. This severely restricts the learning and achievement of all pupils in the lesson. The number of permanent exclusions is low, but fixed term and internal exclusions are frequent, with a higher proportion of girls involved than is usual. When pupils are removed from lessons for misbehaviour, the quality of support and help they receive is good overall.

11. Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is unsatisfactory, because the school has not established an environment of respect, fairness and tolerance. A significant minority of pupils have little sensitivity to the views of others and of the effect of their own attitudes and behaviour on others. Pupils say that bullying does occur and is generally handled appropriately by staff. However, some pupils say that problems continue afterwards and that intimidating behaviour is a regular part of life. Some pupils say that behaviour has improved a little with the new headteacher and the use of the duty teacher system, but strategies to manage behaviour are not used consistently by all staff.
12. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory and the school works hard to provide opportunities for pupils, with activities and experiences to broaden their outlook. For example, there are many visits to museums, theatres and cinemas and pupils are involved in writing, poetry, art and music workshops and productions. Some Year 8 pupils produced some sensitive poetry reflecting on world affairs, when working with a poet in residence.
13. The attendance of many pupils is unsatisfactory and has not improved since the previous inspection. Well over a third of pupils attend less than 90 per cent of the time and this regular absence and lack of continuity contributes to the unsatisfactory achievement they make. Much of the absence is condoned by parents and although the school is now involving them more, many parents still do not appreciate the value of education or the link between attendance and achievement. This term there is a better awareness of attendance issues amongst pupils and parents but as yet this has had little impact. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory, both at the beginning of the day and to lessons. Pupils lack urgency when moving around school and many lessons begin up to ten minutes late. Lateness to registration is often accepted as inevitable by some teachers.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	10.4
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.0
National data	1.1

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

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	759	117	1
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	19	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **unsatisfactory** overall. The quality of care and guidance for pupils is **satisfactory** and the school has **good** links with the community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **unsatisfactory**. Assessment is **satisfactory** and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, because of frequent difficulties with pupil management in middle and lower sets.
- Teaching is very good in art, and good in music in Years 10 to 11 and citizenship in Years 7 to 9, leading to effective learning and good achievement.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in French in Years 8 and 9, and in mathematics, history, and geography throughout the school, leading to underachievement.
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers plan lessons well, have good subject knowledge and use resources well to enhance their lessons.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- In a number of areas assessment is good and is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards.

Commentary

14. Teaching is unsatisfactory in around three out of every 20 lessons, and is worse than at the time of the last inspection. Whilst some of the weaknesses identified, for example assessment, have improved recently, the overall quality of teaching and learning has not. It remains good or better in around half the lessons seen. There is more unsatisfactory and good or better teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 where it is mainly satisfactory. Overall there is a lower percentage of excellent teaching than is usual. Teaching and learning are good in music in Years 10 and 11, in citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and very good in art and design throughout the school. Teaching is unsatisfactory in French in Years 8 and 9, and in mathematics, history and geography throughout the school. It is better with higher attaining groups than with others.
15. The main strengths are in lesson planning which takes into account pupils' needs, good use of resources, and teachers' good subject expertise, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Homework is satisfactorily used to extend and reinforce learning. In the best lessons in art and design, pupils were supported to learn independently and maturely by encouraging them to explore their responses and pursue their personal interests, building on previous work and experiences. They undertook research confidently and well. Pupils' self-esteem was developed by taking responsibility for their own work and by very high quality individual support and guidance from expert teachers, both in school and at the local college. Teaching was both motivating and challenging and pupils responded by becoming totally engaged and engrossed in their work.
16. The major weakness is that learning is affected by pupils' poor attitudes, particularly in large classes. Whole-school procedures to ensure good behaviour are not consistently effective and there is a lack of strategies to engage pupils in their learning. Time is frequently wasted in lessons because pupils do not routinely follow classroom conventions, such as listening to each other. In a well-planned Year 9 graphics lesson, for example, pupils' lack of interest and the distracting behaviour of a small group of boys slowed the learning of the whole class. Higher attaining pupils generally have better attitudes to their work and the pace and rate of learning in top sets are consequently better. Where available, teaching assistants are not

consistently used well. There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning, often because access to facilities is difficult. Teaching and learning are badly affected by frequent pupil absence, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

17. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent, even though it has improved since the last inspection. Improvement has been rapid over recent months and is contributing to raising standards. It is good in design and technology, ICT, English, science, and in French in Years 10 and 11. It is very good in art and design throughout the school. It is unsatisfactory in physical education and in history in Years 7 to 9 and poor in geography. Where it is used well, teachers make good use of the recently introduced systems and information to set pupils clear and realistic targets for improvement. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and monitored to identify and deal with underachievement swiftly. GCSE grades and levels are understood by pupils, who know what they need to do to improve. This is particularly good in Years 10 and 11, as teachers are familiar with GCSE and GNVQ criteria. Pupils are given useful feedback through marking of class and homework and in lessons, to help them improve the quality of their work. In Years 10 and 11 French, for example, careful and conscientious marking and good use of assessment information are used to inform lesson planning and to give feedback to pupils. This results in written coursework of a good standard from a very low baseline. Assessment is used well to plan the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
18. Where the assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory or poor, teachers do not have a secure understanding of National Curriculum levels and tend to inflate achievement. Assessment is also inconsistent and confusing for pupils, progress towards their targets is not reviewed and marking does not support the improvement of their work.
19. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory overall. The school's literacy policy has not been in place very long and implementation is not complete. As a consequence, some pupils' learning is restricted by poor literacy skills. The teaching of numeracy is inconsistent with some good practice but not in all subjects. Teaching of ICT skills is unsatisfactory mainly due to poor access to computers.
20. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory overall. Where pupils are taught by special needs specialists, teaching is very good and pupils with special educational needs learn well. Although teachers have been trained in meeting the requirements of pupils with special educational needs, they do not pay enough attention to the needs of these pupils when planning lessons. There are some examples of good practice, in English and art and design, for example. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are good. They contain specific targets and good information about teaching strategies that can be used to help pupils learn better. However, teachers do not use them well enough to help pupils and to raise standards. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good and provide consistent data to set new targets for pupils. Where they are made good use of by teachers, teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 115 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	10 (9%)	48 (42%)	40 (35%)	16 (14%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** overall. Accommodation and resources are **unsatisfactory** but opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In too many subjects provision does not match the needs of most pupils.
- Provision for those with special educational needs is inadequate to help pupils reach their targets.
- Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for work-related learning and for preparing pupils for the next stage of their lives is good.
- Teaching rooms are often too small for teachers to be able to support pupils adequately.
- Resources for learning are unsatisfactory in science, history, physical education and ICT.

Commentary

21. All of the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. However, recent changes to include work-related curriculum activities in Years 10 and 11, to group pupils according to their capabilities and to provide more time for English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 are not fully established. The timetable arrangements for modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory, because classes are too large for pupils to learn effectively. The religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school teaches a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) that meets statutory requirements for teaching sex education and drugs awareness issues.
22. Grouping pupils according to capability is starting to show some benefits, but is not yet used well enough to provide work suited to the level of each class in all subjects. The curriculum arrangements in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, geography, music and physical education are unsatisfactory, because not all pupils receive work to match their individual needs.
23. In Years 10 and 11 the number of subjects has been reduced, to offer more time to fewer subjects, so as to prepare better for GCSE. That all pupils must follow a vocational or work-related double option is good and timetable arrangements to manage college links are well made. Overall, curriculum planning fits well into the 14 to 19 programme. However, pupils following junior apprenticeship courses miss some lessons in their other subjects. Not all catch up and this reduces their achievement. Present arrangements limit the other option choices at age 14 of those who choose double science and, equally, deny those who follow single science the opportunity to study sciences in sixth form.
24. Provision across the curriculum for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT is unsatisfactory and does not blend into a coherent curriculum strategy. Consequently, equality of access and opportunity is unsatisfactory.
25. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as other pupils. The school has adequate numbers of teaching assistants for special educational needs and where they are deployed to support classroom teachers they are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs. However, the deployment of the co-ordinator for special educational needs and of teaching assistants is ineffective overall in helping teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
26. The school makes good provision for careers education from Year 7. Links with colleges of further education, the sixth form college and local training providers are strong. The school has good relationships with Connexions, who are based in the school and who, along with other agencies, contribute to the careers programme through PSHE lessons. The school is part of the 'Aim Higher' initiative and promotes a wide range of careers-based activities to raise aspirations. Learning mentors support pupils and particularly disaffected pupils on the Year 11 vocational course. There is a good level of business and commercial support and links with the armed forces and with public service providers are good.

27. The school provides a good range of vocational training courses enabling a small group of pupils linked to the local college to study a range of skills-based options. The range of accreditation is good, with several NVQs and applied GCSE for health and social care and for leisure and tourism. Pupils enjoy the courses and respond very well to the opportunities and challenges. The school also provides a good skills-based course for groups of boys in building construction. These pupils carry out useful projects around the school, including bricklaying, carpentry and the use of pre-cast concrete to construct benches for the school and the local community. Work experience is very well planned and the school arranges relevant and stimulating placements for all pupils. The preparation and debriefing for those on work experience are good.
28. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Participation in sport and other activities is satisfactory. Participation in the arts is good overall, being very good in art, good in English and drama and satisfactory in music.
29. Staffing is unsatisfactory, despite strenuous efforts made to recruit staff. The school is passing through a period of staffing turbulence which particularly affects geography, mathematics, modern languages, music and physical education. Support staff match the demands of the curriculum effectively where they are available. Staff performance management has been revitalised and now all staff have targets linked to wider whole-school improvement. It is too early in the programme for the changes yet to have made any measurable improvement. Induction of staff is satisfactory overall, with a 'buddy' system in place to provide informal support and a source of advice, as well as more formal arrangements. Continuing professional development of staff is now well structured, with requests for training being considered against whole-school targets. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is good. Links to the universities of Durham and Sunderland are strong. The school is in the process of adopting the national workload agreement so that, now, cover supervision for absent staff and general administration are operated by the school office.
30. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Overall, a shortage of space leads to insufficient flexibility for extra groups, and hence there are large numbers of pupils in some classes. Teaching rooms in several subjects are too small for classes and teaching and learning suffer. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers are unable to give appropriate individual support to pupils and control of the classes is hindered. In several departments there is insufficient storage space. Facilities are unsatisfactory in science, where there are too few laboratories and these are too cramped for practical work. Rooms are also unsatisfactory in geography, where some teaching rooms can be reached only by passing through others. Playing fields and swimming facilities are good, but the indoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is good in drama, where there is a spacious and well-arranged studio. Almost all departments are efficiently arranged in suites and the school has a large, very pleasant learning resource centre. Some areas of the school, for example the gymnasium, are too cold in winter. These physical conditions provide a poor learning environment. Although there is no lift in the school, most subject areas are accessible to the disabled.
31. Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall, though there has been improvement since the last inspection; the formula for distribution of funding is now openly discussed and decided. There are weaknesses in science, history and physical education. Resources for ICT in subject areas are unsatisfactory and access to computers for subjects other than ICT is difficult. However, there is a rolling programme to improve this as funds become available; further computers and interactive whiteboards have recently been purchased. Provision of resources for pupils with special educational needs helps them to make satisfactory progress.
32. The learning resource centre is an attractive area with the recent addition of computers and other learning resources. It is used effectively for lessons at lunch times and after school. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a **satisfactory** level of care for its pupils. Support and guidance for pupils' personal and academic development are **satisfactory** and pupils' involvement in school development is also **satisfactory**. There are **satisfactory** procedures for pupils' welfare, health and safety.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for careers education and guidance is good, which prepares pupils well for the world of work.
- Pupils are actively involved in the development of the school through the school council.
- The use of morning registration time is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

33. Support for pupils' personal and academic development is satisfactory and improving. Changes in the pastoral structure in the current term mean that each year group now has a progress manager to monitor and support pupils' progress. The role of the form tutor is also more focused on raising achievement but it is too early to see the impact of this. Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are good and this information is now shared more with pupils to help them understand how well they are doing.
34. The school is committed to looking at different ways to help those pupils who find it difficult to handle the usual school day. A group of Year 11 pupils follow an alternative curriculum with greater emphasis on work placements and college courses and for many of them this is successful. The greater number of vocational courses now offered gives pupils the opportunity to follow more appropriate routes, which is giving them more self-confidence.
35. Pupils receive good information and support to help them make appropriate decisions about their future once they leave school. Through good information from school and good links with local colleges, pupils receive a good insight into post-16 choices. This is doing much to raise the self-esteem and aspirations of many pupils and more pupils now go on to some form of further education after Year 11.
36. Many teachers know individual pupils and families well and respond to their needs and problems personally and quickly. However, the persistent lack of a cohesive and consistent approach towards managing behaviour means that some pupils will not go to teachers to report problems such as aggressive and intimidating behaviour as they feel it will not help the situation. Use of the morning registration time is unsatisfactory and a missed opportunity to reinforce positive values and relationships. During the inspection, much of the time was spent chatting, with pupils paying little attention to their tutor.
37. There is an increased emphasis on recognising achievement and pupils enjoy the whole-school assemblies where they publicly celebrate and acknowledge each other's successes. Pupils have more confidence in the school council since the appointment of the new headteacher. They feel that it works well and is listened to more readily now.
38. The school pays satisfactory attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. There is an effective child protection policy which follows the local authority procedures and good use is made of outside specialist agencies available. The management of health and safety issues across the school is becoming more structured and risk assessments are in place.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Good links with the community and with other schools and colleges support pupils' learning and personal development well. The school has a **satisfactory** and improving partnership with parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with local business and community are widening the opportunities and experiences for pupils.
- Good links with colleges are helping raise pupils' aspirations.
- Some parents do not support the school over ensuring pupils' regular attendance.
- The written reports on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory

Commentary

39. Over the past year, the school has initiated good links with local businesses and the local community. This has been a deliberate and successful effort to develop and support a curriculum suited to the needs of its pupils and to give pupils experiences that broaden their horizons and encourage them to look to the future. The Business Partnership group was set up by the school and meets regularly to set up projects that benefit the school and community alike. A current project, for example, involves a group of Year 10 pupils working with people from environmental, energy and local groups to design and make a wind turbine to improve the flow of water through a local beck. A local company has worked alongside the Young Enterprise group, helped produce DVDs of the Christmas concert and advised on the use of technology in music.
40. The school enjoys good and improving relationships with the local community association and they have worked together on the summer playscheme and the Branksome Carnival. Every year, the school hosts a Christmas lunch and entertainment for elderly friends and residents and pupils often help at events in the community centre. School facilities are used by various groups and recently adult education classes have begun. Co-operation of this kind is raising the profile of the school and bringing more people on site, which is helping to break down the barriers between home and school.
41. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed good working relationships with local colleges and training providers which support the vocational courses and alternative curriculum well. These relationships are doing much to give pupils confidence, help them acquire practical skills and prepare them well for future employment. Pupils have recently made and erected fencing and seating for the school and are now making seating for a residential home for the elderly. Students from the sixth form college have been mentoring Year 8 and 9 pupils to help them with their option choices and to encourage them to think about continuing their education. Similarly, the school has a good friendship with Teeside University which is also helping pupils think to the future. Good partnerships with other secondary schools mean they help rather than compete with each other. Expertise is shared in a practical way, which helps teachers to develop their skills.
42. The school has a satisfactory and improving partnership with parents. Parents have had a limited involvement with the school over recent years, but this situation is improving rapidly. The school now recognises the need to make this partnership more vital and interactive. Through better consultation and appropriate information, it is developing a greater range of opportunities to involve parents directly in the school and in their child's learning and attendance. Many new initiatives have been set up recently to find out what parents think and want, and to involve them more in their children's learning. Surveys and questionnaires are now used at parents' meetings, to get their views, and communication with parents has improved. The school works hard to ensure that parents whose home language is not English understand the work of the school and how well their children are doing and there is a growing

representation of Bangladeshi families at parents' meetings. Reporting progress to parents has also improved greatly and parents are now invited to three target-setting days each year with their children to discuss progress in each subject with tutors. The school is reviewing the annual written reports to parents. Currently reports are unsatisfactory as they do not give parents a clear indication of progress or what pupils need to do to improve. The comments and targets are too general and bland.

43. There are satisfactory formal and informal links with parents of pupils who have special educational needs. The school reports difficulties in getting parents to attend reviews for pupils with special educational needs, where these occur.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. Governance of the school is **poor**. Leadership is **satisfactory** overall and the leadership by the headteacher is **good**. Management is **unsatisfactory**. Financial resources and staffing are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and what needs to be done to bring about improvements.
- Governors have little understanding of the weaknesses of the school and provide little support or challenge for the headteacher.
- Management is unsatisfactory, though recent changes in organisation and increased responsibility are leading to improvements.
- The school has a large deficit to its budget.
- Disruption to staffing makes it difficult to implement and ensure consistency in planned improvements.

Commentary

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school has come through a period of severe disruption at senior level which has slowed down many needed changes. The newly appointed headteacher is providing strong leadership. He has quickly established systems to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and begun to implement changes in teaching and the curriculum to raise standards and improve achievement. There is considerable support among senior and other teachers and the morale of all staff is high, despite weaknesses in the school now being recognised.
45. Management has some strengths but is unsatisfactory overall. At senior level staff are working hard to establish monitoring and evaluation strategies and to share and introduce good practice in teaching and learning, use of assessment information and the management of poor behaviour by some pupils. There is also a strong move to make heads of department accountable for standards and achievement in their subjects, to share existing good practice, and to provide them with the support they need to do this effectively. This work is at an early stage and while staff are very responsive, the level of effectiveness is variable and has yet to show in evidence of higher standards. In addition, staffing difficulties mean that there are no permanent heads of department for mathematics, geography and physical education and there is staff turbulence elsewhere, all of which makes improvement planning and implementation hard. Nevertheless, the management of the introduction of the use of assessment information, for example, has been good and there is good practice leading to improving achievement in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, art and design and French.
46. The headteacher has a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve, and he is attempting to resolve difficulties or establish changes on many fronts. This is proving difficult, given the staffing and financial difficulties and lack of support from governors. Nevertheless, he

has established a review of the school improvement plan to which all staff have contributed; the plan is realistic and achievable in time, with a high level of commitment among staff to bring about improvements.

47. The school makes good use of its links with other schools and colleges to bring in expertise and experience to help in raising standards. In particular, its link within the Leading Edge Project is being particularly helpful in widening teachers' experience in management, teaching and behaviour management issues.
48. The school's leadership in providing for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Training for teachers has not been sufficiently effective in helping them to meet the demands of the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. This is especially so where pupils' targets involve improvements in behaviour. Management of provision for special educational needs is also unsatisfactory. The school has not been imaginative or creative enough in its deployment of the co-ordinator for special educational needs and teaching assistants to give support to staff and thus to raise standards. The school's governors do not provide a strong enough direction for the school in developing provision for special educational needs. Statutory requirements are fully met.
49. Governance of the school is poor. Governors have very limited first-hand knowledge of the everyday running of school life. Meetings of sub-committees are too irregular, and records of some important meetings are incomplete. There is a lack of procedures for important issues such as discipline. Too little has been done to address significant underachievement, recognised and reported on by the local education authority. Financial procedures and control are satisfactory, though they are not adequately monitored. There has been some work done to establish or improve procedures in recent months but not enough to ensure all procedures are secure. Governors have not ensured that statutory requirements for collective worship are fully met.
50. Approaches to financial management are unsatisfactory, but improving. Previous procedures had not enabled the school to monitor its budget closely enough and the timely action taken by the new headteacher and the bursar has not yet been fully effective. The audit report of 2003 validated financial controls as being satisfactory. The local authority now provides close budget monitoring and support at clerical level. The current budget deficit is within approved limits and formal arrangements have been made to manage its reduction.
51. The application of the principles of best value is unsatisfactory. The governors do not monitor the processes of the school closely enough. Consequently they do not obtain good value for their spending. In particular there is no efficient finance committee that meets sufficiently regularly to closely monitor the very tight budget. (The school receives and spends per pupil substantially less than the average school nationally.) Instead, the bursar presents financial information to full meetings of the governors on a termly basis. Funds provided for pupils with special educational needs are properly allocated and appropriately spent. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money and shortage of funds limits the ability of the school to recover from its present position.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,603,008	Balance from previous year	- 16,834
Total expenditure	2,657,368	Balance carried forward to the next	- 71,194
Expenditure per pupil	3,360		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

What is the effectiveness of work-related learning?

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a wide range of courses and qualifications.
- Pupils learn effectively about work.

Commentary

52. The school provides a coherent and effective programme developing all three strands of work-related learning.
53. All pupils follow a work-related or vocational course in Years 10 and 11; consequently the school contributes strongly to 14 –19 vocational pathways and all pupils learn about work. The school offers a wide range of vocational and work-related courses and accreditation is offered through applied GCSE, GNVQ intermediate level, the National Apprenticeship Scheme, and Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) certification. Links with the local further education college, the sixth form college and local business and training providers are very good.
54. Pupils learn well about work, because the careers education is well planned from Year 7 and intensified in Year 9 and afterwards. The school is part of the 'Aim Higher' initiative and provides a wide range of careers-based activities. Pupils are well prepared for extended education and work.
55. Pupils learn well from work because most undergo a well-prepared work experience programme and others practise extended work experience through the vocational course in Year 11 for disaffected pupils or through the junior apprentice scheme.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good use of assessment procedures is starting to have a positive effect on raising standards after recent disappointing test and examination results.
- Pupils in the higher sets write well on topics from literature and the media but spelling is often inaccurate in sets below these.
- Irregular attendance and a negative approach to work from a significant minority of pupils lead to low achievement.
- Lack of access to the learning resource centre reduces the chances to promote an interest in reading.
- The systematic implementation of the literacy strategy provides a good structure to help most pupils learn.

Commentary

56. Results in the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003 were below the national average. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show a slight improvement. Compared with similar schools, results were well below average in 2003, and in recent years have been well below those in similar schools. In the current Year 9, standards seen were below the national average. Considering standards pupils attained were below average on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory achievement.
57. Results in the GCSE examinations in English and English literature have risen slowly over recent years, but not as fast as the national trend; in 2004 results in English and English literature were below average. This was caused by the irregular attendance and negative attitudes to learning of a significant proportion of the pupils, mainly but not exclusively boys. The standards of current Year 11 pupils are below the national average, but pupils have made satisfactory progress since they entered the school, after a dip to well below average when they were in Year 9. Pupils in the higher sets achieve well, especially in literature and media, where their essays show depth and sharpness of analysis. Pupils with special educational needs at all ages achieve as well as others when they have specialist teaching and are supported by teaching assistants, often in small groups outside the normal classroom. Drama results in 2003 were outstanding and in 2004 were very good. In English, the recent improvement in standards is directly attributable to the careful planning for future lessons that teachers are now doing, based on an analysis of data from regular tests. Pupils are becoming more aware of what their targets mean, and they have a better idea of how to reach them.
58. English teachers apply the structure of the literacy strategy to most lessons with good effect. As a result they engage pupils in discussion and move them on at a fair pace in work that generally suits their needs. There is good speaking and listening in lessons where pupils are allowed to think for themselves and are given useful prompts to help them with their ideas. This was seen in a really good lesson on a difficult poem, where Year 11 pupils had gained enough confidence by the end of the lesson to take on the discussion themselves. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are not good listeners, despite being given clear instructions for the work. Teachers do not vary the activities enough in some lessons and these pupils are not always set regular practical tasks that will motivate them.

59. There is some good writing by higher attaining pupils in Years 9 and 11. In Year 9 the top set have a clear understanding of Lady Macbeth's character and give insightful examples from the text to prove her 'seductive charm' and 'manipulative deviousness'. In Year 11 pupils analyse the content of advertisements well and apply what they learn to practical tasks of their own devising. Spelling from many pupils, particularly in the middle and lower sets, is inaccurate and work is untidy. Teachers rarely set tasks for pupils to use ICT to encourage a pride in presentation, though they do employ imaginative ideas to support pupils' understanding of numeracy through graphs and diagrams as visual support to their learning.
60. Standards in reading aloud are below average, but most pupils enjoy the chance to read and most try hard. Their understanding of texts is average. The study of drama in Year 10 supports reading development. English classrooms and the learning resource centre have a very good selection of interesting and suitable fiction and the learning resource centre is a very inviting area for reading and research. However, access to the learning resource centre is limited, because there is no librarian. This means that reading is not promoted as forcefully as it should be to raise standards of literacy in a school where levels are low.
61. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. With the higher sets teaching is usually at least good. In the past it has been unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where standards have been allowed to slip to unacceptable levels. Better planning, good use of the literacy strategy and a determined approach to classroom management alongside the good assessment and marking already noted have led to improved teaching and learning. Some pupils bring poor attitudes to the lessons from outside the classroom, but all teachers manage pupils well, establish a reasonable learning climate and help them to settle to learning.
62. Satisfactory leadership and management have encouraged good teamwork through mutual support in the classrooms and a systematic approach to course planning, especially for Years 7 to 9. There is sound monitoring of teaching and learning, though, and good moderation of standards by joint marking. There is still not enough rigour to ensure that all pupils are challenged to think for themselves, but this is improving in some classes.
63. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with improvements in GCSE results and good assessment work. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have been allowed to slip and attitudes and behaviour are not as good as they were.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. Many pupils struggle with reading and writing and standards are low. They also lack confidence in speaking at length and they answer mostly in monosyllables, except in top sets in English. Listening is poor because many pupils lack the power of sustained concentration and activities do not often give them a practical opportunity to shape their ideas orally before writing. There is not a high enough focus on improving literacy in the school as a whole beyond some attention to raising awareness of technical terminology in most subjects. Marking does not give support to poor spellers, and lack of time in the learning resource centre reduces the opportunities for reading and research. Apart from good attention to literacy in English, art and design, drama, design and technology, the most successful subjects, this is an underdeveloped aspect of school planning.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory for middle attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9. This is linked to pupils' negative attitudes and difficulty with pupil management.

- Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11 and contributes to raising standards.
- Teaching rooms are too small for the large classes in Years 7 to 9 and adversely affect standards and achievement.
- There is insufficient time to cover the GCSE syllabus in sufficient depth in Year 11.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.

Commentary

65. In teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003, results were well below the national expectation. Results in GCSE French in 2004 were well below average and were lower than expected on the basis of pupils' prior attainment. In addition, 24 pupils who studied French in Years 10 and 11 were not entered for the examination, because they failed to complete coursework or to prepare for oral examinations.
66. Inspection evidence shows that standards are well below the national expectation in Year 9, representing unsatisfactory achievement. A few higher attaining pupils reach national expectation and sometimes above, and their achievement is satisfactory. They understand and use past tenses in simple texts and conversations fairly confidently. Pupils in the lowest sets reach standards that represent satisfactory achievement. Middle attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 reach well below expectation, representing unsatisfactory achievement. This is due to persistent low-level disruption which slows the pace of learning and to insufficient opportunities to hear and use French in a significant minority of lessons. However, learning is better and standards have risen in Year 7, where new arrangements have been put in place. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
67. Standards for the small group of pupils, mainly higher attaining girls, who choose to study French in Years 10 and 11 are around average and achievement is satisfactory. Written coursework is prepared well by a process of careful redrafting, vocabulary is securely memorised and knowledge and understanding of grammar develop well from a low starting point. Pupils' speaking skills are well below average and pupils lack confidence, accuracy and fluency. Listening skills develop well from a low base.
68. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Most of the teaching and learning seen was satisfactory and some was good. Individual lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, teachers have good subject knowledge and resources are used well. However, the pace of learning is frequently slowed by difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour, which also limits the French used for the conduct of lessons. The cumulative effect is slow progress, particularly in the development of speaking and listening skills. Over time, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9, particularly in groups of middle attaining pupils. Large groups are taught in cramped rooms where, due to a lack of space, teachers cannot provide individual support or feedback on work. It is difficult to spot pupils who are not working hard enough quickly and often teachers work harder than pupils. Oral work is difficult in such large groups, particularly as pupils frequently find it difficult to listen to each other and classroom conventions are not well established throughout the school.
69. The teaching and learning of higher attaining pupils, who are generally well motivated, and of lower attaining pupils who are in slightly smaller groups, are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Work is marked regularly, thoroughly and positively but rarely provides guidance on how to improve. Feedback given in lessons is good. In Years 10 and 11 assessment is good, closely linked to GCSE criteria, marking provides good guidance on how to improve grades and pupils have realistic targets. Use of ICT is unsatisfactory, because the department does not have access to facilities.
70. Time for French is inadequate in Year 11 to cover the GCSE syllabus in sufficient depth. It is supplemented by weekly, voluntary, pre-school classes. This is unsatisfactory provision.

Leadership of the department is satisfactory and some aspects of management are good. However, management overall is unsatisfactory as improvement since the last inspection has been too slow. The issues of insufficient use of French, and limited speaking by pupils in Years 7 to 9, have not been resolved.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory due to staffing turbulence and the poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils.
- Staff are well led and operate effectively as a team despite subject management being only temporary.
- Assessment is used well in Years 10 and 11 to generate targets which are shared with pupils and parents and which are beginning to be used to steer improvements in standards.
- Whole-school numeracy is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

71. The department is passing through a period of staffing turbulence which is having an adverse impact on pupils' attainment. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were close to the national average, but well below average when compared to results from schools with similar prior attainment of pupils aged 11. The most recent results of 2004 represent a further slight fall with little difference between boys and girls. In the GCSE examination taken in 2004, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C was well below the national average and represented a marked fall from the 2003 results.
72. Standards seen are average overall by Year 9, though achievement is unsatisfactory taking into account pupils' above average levels of attainment on entry to the school. However, the achievement of a significant minority of pupils is satisfactory; in one upper set where behaviour and attitudes to work were very good, pupils worked on problems related to areas and circumference of circles, correctly rounding answers to the desired degree of accuracy. A lower attaining group of pupils began work on first order algebraic equations, though some displayed weakness with basic numeracy which detrimentally affected their achievement. Pupils with special educational needs reach satisfactory standards, taking into account their low prior attainment. By Year 11, standards are below average overall and achievement is unsatisfactory. Behaviour problems inhibit the achievements of some pupils and some classes of lower attaining pupils are very large, making it difficult for teachers to control them effectively. A minority of pupils achieve satisfactorily. For example, a class of higher attainers starting work on algebraic inequalities quickly mastered the new symbols. Another class following the foundation tier programme made satisfactory progress in calculating angles in triangles and rectangles. However, some pupils display weakness with basic algebra, for example not recognising that a given square has two possible roots rather than one. In-class support is available and is effectively deployed.
73. Teaching and learning overall are unsatisfactory, but during the inspection week examples of good and very good teaching were seen. This represents a fall in quality since the last inspection, entirely the result of staffing issues. In lessons that were unsatisfactory, pupils lacked a work ethic. Disruption to the flow of work is common and attitudes and behaviour of many in these classes are unsatisfactory, taking no account of the learning needs of other pupils. Attendance in lessons is poor, worse in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, and this reduces the achievement of pupils. In all years, timekeeping is poor, so that in the lessons seen only two began on time, and up to ten per cent of time was frequently lost in others. In those lessons where teaching is good, teachers display a good command of the subject and

set high standards for both work and behaviour. However, in some other lessons, teaching techniques, and in particular teachers' questioning does not engage more than one or two pupils at a time. Although pupils have a sound grasp of ICT, no lesson was seen where pupils used computers to support or develop their mathematical understanding.

74. The department is coping satisfactorily with a period of staffing turbulence. The acting head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management under difficult circumstances and has implemented a number of necessary changes. For example, the department now uses targets extensively and operates sensitive systems of monitoring pupils and lessons. Information gained is used to adjust teaching materials and to identify those pupils who would benefit from support in their learning. Despite the systems of marking seen in some work being good, they are not employed consistently by all teachers. In part, this is a result of staffing changes and is another factor that adversely impacts on standards.
75. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Since then, GCSE results have remained broadly static but pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to work and the use of time have all worsened. Staffing in the department has also become problematic. The overall quality of teaching has also declined, primarily because of weak behaviour control systems, coupled with large groups of often difficult pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Numeracy across the school is unsatisfactory. Changes of staff have meant that no one in the mathematics department co-ordinates numeracy. The school recognises the need for numeracy to be incorporated into the work of other subjects but, other than a short training session some years ago, many subjects have done little. However, some departments such as history and design and technology have moved ahead of others, effectively employing numeracy to support their work. Science liaises with the mathematics department in an ongoing attempt to reach a common approach, particularly with respect to graph work.
77. Standards of numeracy vary across the school and between departments, but overall are unsatisfactory. History makes good use of numeracy. For example, when pupils worked on the 1851 census for a local village they constructed population pyramids and bar charts to provide an analysis of occupations. Design and technology use geometry effectively in construction work and for scaling in plans and drawings. In many departments where numeracy has a significant role to play, such as in physical education, geography and mathematics itself, it is unsatisfactory.
78. The teaching of numeracy is unsatisfactory. Whilst numeracy is used to good effect in some subjects, opportunities are missed elsewhere. Timelines are used in English, in art and design pupils cope with scales, perspective and shape and in science, pupils construct and interpret graphs competently. However, teachers do not consistently plan the use of numeracy in lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory mainly due to past staff turbulence and pupils' weak literacy skills.
- Lessons are planned well and teachers make very effective use of very limited resources.
- Formal assessment is good, but the use of national data in the monitoring of subject performance is underdeveloped.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

79. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils in Year 9 in 2004, results were below the national average. Over recent years, results have risen in line with the rising national average and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, results are very low and compared with their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement has been unsatisfactory. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2004, results were below average. Results have improved but despite this, the 2004 results represent unsatisfactory achievement, taking into account that the attainment of these pupils when they entered the school in Year 7 was above the national average.
80. Standards seen are below average by Year 9. Pupils acquire scientific knowledge to varying degrees of sophistication. However, their depth of understanding is limited, even amongst the highest attainers, who often have difficulty in giving precise explanations. Most pupils carry out practical investigations confidently and efficiently, though they have difficulty predicting outcomes based on scientific knowledge. Most carry out simple calculations and interpretations of graphs, but weak literacy skills affect the standards achieved by pupils. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall. However, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of good teaching and very good classroom support.
81. In Year 11, standards are below average. Pupils have a sound knowledge base, but many lack confidence and are slow to grasp new scientific concepts. Weak literacy skills often result in brief and imprecise written work. Whilst the higher attainers have sound numeracy skills, graph work and data interpretation amongst the middle ability pupils is below average. Poor attendance of a significant number of pupils, especially amongst the lower attainers, is affecting standards. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. However, standards are rising and the present Year 11 pupils are achieving better end of module results than the previous year group. Pupils with special educational needs do not always make satisfactory progress in Year 11; there are insufficient suitable resources and for some pupils the scheme of work is not appropriate.
82. Over time, teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory. However, they are now satisfactory and in a significant number of lessons, good or very good. Lessons are well planned. Most are developed progressively and in the best, challenging questions involve pupils in the progress of the lesson. Interaction is almost always good and stimulates pupils' interest effectively. The less effective lessons are too prescriptive and do not fully extend pupils' depth of understanding. Teachers generally have high expectations of behaviour, and in all but a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, classes are managed well. Very good use is made of the limited resources and much practical and investigative work is used that keeps pupils engaged and supports their learning. Homework is not used well enough to extend work done in the classroom. Provision for literacy is generally good, although some teachers are insufficiently rigorous. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Marking has recently become much improved; it is linked to national standards and indicates how work can be improved. This is starting to have a positive effect on how well pupils learn. Technical support is of a high standard and is much valued by teachers.
83. Formal assessment is good and is recorded and monitored well. Targets are set and underachievement is identified. Pupils are aware of their progress and are given good individual support to improve. A structured reward system is providing some effective motivation.
84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a positive vision of how to raise standards that is shared by all staff. The department has recently emerged from a period of staffing instability, which has adversely affected teaching and learning. Strategies for raising standards are being implemented and are already having a positive effect; this is an improving department. Subject performance is monitored and evaluated satisfactorily, though

evaluation using national comparative data is underdeveloped. Teaching is observed and schemes of work improved, but links with primary schools are not strong enough to ensure effective continuity in the subject for pupils. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory; equipment is old and insufficient. Rooms are too small for the large-sized classes and there are insufficient laboratories. A shortage of ICT provision is limiting its development in teaching.

85. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because, although standards have risen, they have not done so sufficiently and pupils are still underachieving. However, the department has moved forwards on a number of fronts that are having a positive effect. Teaching in Years 7 and 8 has improved, teachers manage pupils better and they mark pupils' work consistently. Improved support for pupils with special educational needs, in Years 7 to 9, is helping these pupils to progress more effectively. Formal assessment is much improved and used to set targets. Teaching is now monitored and evaluated formally and improvements initiated in consequence.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 10 and 11 pupils taking the short GCSE course do not achieve well but achievement in the full course and GNVQ is good.
- Ongoing assessment is used effectively to inform the next stage in learning.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored or evaluated rigorously enough.
- Cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

86. Pupils start school with widely ranging levels of skill and knowledge in ICT. Overall, these are currently slightly above the national expectation. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004, results were close to the national expectation. Results of the full GCSE and the GNVQ course in 2004 were below the national average, but pupils achieved satisfactorily compared with their prior attainment. However, some of the pupils who took the short GCSE course did perform satisfactorily. Overall standards are below average but should be higher given pupils' good attitudes to learning and their capabilities.
87. By Year 9, standards are average, but in Years 7 and 8 many pupils, both girls and boys, achieve well; achievement by pupils in Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress, mainly because of their good attitudes to learning. In Years 7 and 8 pupils develop an understanding of word processing, data retrieval and analysis and searching for information but do not cover control systems. They create some good presentations by bringing together information and pictures. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of the need to use appropriate search methods and in learning to check the reliability of the information they collect. Standards by Year 11 are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In Year 10, pupils are beginning to understand about how to structure their GCSE and GNVQ coursework and some make good progress in understanding how to construct a spreadsheet and use a database. In Year 11, about a third of pupils achieve well and show a good understanding of how to use ICT effectively and efficiently. Others, however, reach only average standards and achieve too little. This is mainly because teaching occasionally lacks urgency.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and clear objectives mean that pupils know what is expected of them. Good use of paired and group work also has a strong impact on pupils' learning, enabling them to develop their ability

to work together productively. However, in a small proportion of lessons, teachers spend too much time talking, leaving insufficient time for either group or independent work. As a result pupils' motivation and interest wane and they produce too little. Often, it is the pupils' own desire to learn and achieve that ensures that learning takes place, rather than the impact of teaching. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their work and it is this that often has the strongest impact on their learning and achievement.

89. Broadly, relationships are good and teachers manage pupils well. As a result behaviour is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and also good in Years 10 and 11. New teaching materials for courses are beginning to have a positive difference to pupils' learning and are well matched to pupils' needs, and relevant questions push learning forward.
90. Assessment is satisfactory and occasionally used effectively. In Years 10 and 11 there is regular monitoring to track pupils' progress and predict GCSE and GNVQ results, and in Years 7, 8 and 9, end of year tests help teachers to judge achievement successfully. This means that teachers have enough assessment information to refine their teaching programmes and pupils have a clear view about how well they are doing. The national strategy for ICT is starting to make a difference in Years 7, 8 and 9 by providing more opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' learning and act on the information.
91. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is improvement since the last inspection. A significant feature is that the computer hardware has been up-dated. In addition, sound progress has been made in implementing the national strategy for ICT in Years 7 to 9. The ongoing monitoring and evaluating of teaching mean that there is an emphasis on improving quality and raising standards. There is very good technical support for the computer network.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. Overall provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop and apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers in other subjects. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised.
93. The use of ICT in subjects is limited by the access to computers; few classrooms have computers and those that do are used for dedicated ICT lessons most of the time. The library has some computers which are well used by pupils, although it is a small network.
94. Staff have been trained so that they can use applications and access the network, but the skills of individual teachers have not been used effectively to deliver the curriculum. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not always planned or co-ordinated well enough across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. However, technical support is good and the computer rooms provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers outside of lessons, when they can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.
95. The management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is very little tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of ICT and there is no specific policy for teaching ICT across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.

- Teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils' achievement is poor as a result.
- Leadership and management of the subject are poor.

Commentary

96. Results gained in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were broadly in line with the national expectation and fell markedly in 2004. GCSE results in 2004 were broadly average and better than in 2003. Boys performed worse than girls in the GCSE examinations. Results have risen only slowly since the previous inspection.
97. Standards are well below average in Years 9 and 11. Pupils do not learn an adequate factual knowledge of the topics they study, or develop the necessary interpretation and investigation skills that are essential to the subject. Pupils' achievement is poor. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement in geography is the poorest in the school. This is consistent across all levels of attainment and across the different ethnic groups in the school. Boys achieve less well than girls. Achievement for a substantial minority of pupils is adversely affected by their poor attendance.
98. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In most lessons teachers do not plan to provide a range of work suited to the range of ability found in most classes. Teaching strategies are limited and tend to provide lessons with an overdependence on worksheets, which pupils often find boring. In many lessons teachers do not have sufficiently strong strategies to deal with restless and inattentive behaviour. Because of this, geography makes an unsatisfactory contribution to literacy, numeracy, ICT, citizenship and work-related learning. In the minority of lessons, where teaching is satisfactory or better, pupils show satisfactory attitudes to work. In these lessons groups are either small or are top sets where pupils' attitudes are usually better. Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory because they do not make a substantial contribution to showing pupils how they can improve their work or to raising standards.
99. Accommodation for geography is unsatisfactory. The classrooms are too small for the large numbers found in many classes, especially as pupils grow older. The accommodation does not allow for easy deployment of resources, such as video recorders for example, and this has an adverse effect on the curriculum. It is also difficult for teachers and pupils to do many aspects of practical work. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are poor; there is no head of department and no effective strategies in place to help standards rise. Most issues raised at the previous inspection have not been successfully corrected. Standards have not risen significantly since that time. Geography has made poor progress since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall, though higher attaining pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, though there is some good teaching, particularly of higher attaining pupils.
- The school has provided insufficient training to improve teaching and learning.

Commentary

100. In 2004 results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were below average and lower than in the previous year. This represents unsatisfactory progress from average attainment on entry to the school. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results were well below average because of staff loss and represented unsatisfactory progress based on pupils' prior attainment. Results

were lower than in 2003, when results were close to the national average and pupils made good progress. Coursework, in particular, was good in 2003 and helped raise the overall results for lower attaining pupils.

101. By Year 9, standards are below average overall and achievement is unsatisfactory. However, the highest attainers achieve well, girls do much better than boys, but many of average and below average prior attainment, including those with special needs, make unsatisfactory progress. By Year 11, standards are below average but are rising. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. The highest attainers are buoyant. However, irregular attendance, unpunctuality and the unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority, mostly boys, all reduce achievement in Years 10 and 11. Pupils often demonstrate good understanding in lively talk, but writing tasks are not challenging enough and limit pupils' achievement.
102. Teaching and learning over time are unsatisfactory, though mainly good and satisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers are good subject specialists and in classes of higher attaining pupils this shows in the high expectations and demanding pace of work. In these lessons pupils learn well and reach good standards. For example, in a Year 9 lessons pupils achieved well in work they did about the development of democracy. However, in classes where higher, middle and lower attaining pupils are taught together, work is not sufficiently challenging or matched to pupils' needs. In the lowest sets some work is designed to contain poor behaviour rather than to extend learning. Teaching pupils with special needs is unsatisfactory. Where they are used, the use of videos and data projectors is good, because they provoke strong learning from powerful visual images. For example, a stark clip from a film about the Holocaust silenced a class. Pupils write well at considerable length, but literacy problems limit the quality of work. The use of numeracy is good. The highest attainers in Years 8 and 9 learn very well independently about American Indians but their research is limited by restricted access to computers. The use of assessment to improve standards is unsatisfactory. Marking is inconsistent. Though pupils in Years 10 and 11 know their target grades, they mostly are not helped to improve. Sensitive analysis of assessment information in Years 10 and 11 shows clear targets for improvement.
103. Leadership is satisfactory, but management is unsatisfactory because assessment is unsatisfactory and little has been done to improve teaching and learning, to improve resources or to provide increased access to computers. As a result, pupils' achievement is restricted. Issues for improvement have been identified but not fully acted on. The capacity for and commitment to improvement are good. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have improved due to improved assessment procedures and flexible curriculum arrangements in Years 10 and 11.
- Most pupils respond well but learning is occasionally spoiled by the absence or disruptive behaviour of older boys.
- ICT provision is underdeveloped and access to computers is difficult.
- Pupils have weak literacy skills.

Commentary

104. By the end of Year 9 the majority of the pupils attain standards below the expectations of the local agreed syllabus but this represents satisfactory achievement and progress in the light of their low prior attainment in this subject.

105. By the end of Year 11 those pupils who entered for the full GCSE examination in religious studies in 2004 gained grades of A*-C in line with the national average. This represents good achievement and progress over Years 10 and 11 and a big improvement on previous years. The pupils who entered for the short GCSE examination gained grades below the national average, but this represents satisfactory achievement and progress over Years 10 and 11 and an improvement on previous years. The majority of those who followed the short GCSE course but did not enter for the examination had similar attainment and progress to those who did. Overall this means that results were below the national average but indicated satisfactory achievement.
106. Inspection evidence shows that standards are below average by Year 9. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions as required by the agreed syllabus and can appreciate the significance of signs, symbols, practices and worship. Less pronounced are their demonstration of specifically religious skills and the application of the learning to their own lives and values.
107. By Year 11 standards are below average overall. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a flexible curriculum arrangement that enables them to follow a full or short GCSE course or a certificate course. Some, including the gifted and talented pupils, can therefore choose a fuller course and often gain improved grades with some teaching outside lesson time. Provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory.
108. Pupils have sufficient numeracy skills to tackle the topics studied but have weaknesses in literacy skills. Provision for the acquisition and use of ICT skills is underdeveloped and access to central provision is difficult. Pupils on the GCSE course usefully study and discuss moral issues and the subject's content often makes a satisfactory contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of all pupils and to citizenship skills. The majority of pupils respond well to the purposeful teaching they receive, but there is evidence that the attitudes, behaviour and absences of some pupils in the lower sets adversely affect the effectiveness of otherwise purposeful teaching. Their absences affect the continuity of learning and their presence is often disruptive.
109. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some good lessons were seen, characterised by good subject competence, good planning, good organisation and a good focus on getting pupils to understand examination techniques and marking conventions. This helps to explain the big improvement in results in the full GCSE examination. The only unsatisfactory lesson was one spoiled by the bad behaviour of a handful of boys in Year 10. Teachers are developing satisfactory assessment and tracking procedures and pupils are generally achieving predicted grades.
110. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have led over the past two years to a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in results and in curriculum arrangements. There is clear evidence from pupil questionnaires taken in recent years that there was in the past a resentment about studying what was considered to be a boring subject. The improvements are gradually working their way through the school, but have not yet had time to have a full impact on some pupils in the lower sets of Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements are fulfilled.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning.

- The processes used for assessment of pupils' attainment are good.
- Access to the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.
- Poor behaviour of a few pupils slows the pace of learning for others.

Commentary

111. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed that attainment was broadly average, but the unconfirmed results in 2004 showed a significant fall in standards. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results were well below the national average. Pupils' performance was worse than in most other subjects and had not improved from the previous year.
112. Standards seen during the inspection show improvement on the most recent teachers' assessments and GCSE results. This is mainly because new assessment procedures are being used effectively to monitor pupils' achievement and to provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work.
113. By Year 9, standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By Year 9 they have knowledge of the essential nutritional value of foods and cook simple dishes. Pupils have satisfactory skills to cut, shape and join so that they can make a range of articles in different materials, including wood, metal and plastic. They are competent in the techniques of drawing so they can communicate their design ideas. They understand the process of design but teachers do not provide sufficient planned opportunities for them to reach higher levels expected by the National Curriculum. The highest attaining pupils produce articles of good quality and express their ideas well. Lower attaining pupils make items of acceptable quality but they find it difficult to communicate their ideas clearly. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs ensures they make similar progress to their peers.
114. Pupils' attainment by Year 11 is average. Standards were higher in the food technology work seen but lower in graphics work. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Higher attainers specify a design brief and develop and express their ideas in a way that results in a good quality finished product in their chosen subject. Higher attaining pupils produce well-presented design folders. Almost all pupils produce satisfactory supporting materials to indicate how they have achieved their final design. However, the lowest attaining pupils do not provide detailed evidence to indicate how they plan and evaluate their designs. Where pupils use ICT, the quality of their work is improved, although in general, ICT is not used enough. Pupils with special needs are given good support and make similar progress to other pupils.
115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage most, but not all, pupils. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are mostly good. Lessons are planned well and provide a coherent learning programme. Teachers set challenging work, particularly for the highest attainers. Practical tasks are very structured and ensure pupils use their time well, though there is very little opportunity to develop individual creativity and imagination. Management of pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, though on occasions too much time is spent in maintaining discipline. For example, in a Year 9 graphics lesson too much was spent on disciplining pupils at the expense of learning graphics skills. Reinforcement and revision of previous work are satisfactory overall, though on occasion they are insufficient to support pupils' current learning. For example, in the presentation of drawings in GCSE coursework it was by no means obvious that pupils had studied graphics earlier. The time allowed for the design element of the subject is not used effectively and often does not allow pupils the required access to an analysis of manufactured products. There is a continuous emphasis on literacy skills and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their own vocabulary. Teachers are aware of targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs and use these effectively. These pupils make satisfactory progress, because teachers provide extra support for learning. Teachers' work is made more effective by good technician support.

116. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers generally provide encouraging and motivating comments. The best quality marking provides a commentary that shows pupils how to improve their work.
117. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment and the use of assessment are good; assessment information is increasingly used to guide planning and teaching. The head of department has established a programme for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils, to make predictions of grades at GCSE and to set targets for individual pupils throughout the school. The department still lacks appropriate resources to teach aspects of ICT, control and computer-aided design and manufacture. While work on assessment is clearly leading to rising standards, the improvement plan does not have raising standards as a stated priority. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well during their time in school.
- Teaching is very good; the high expectations lead to the attainment at GCSE being well above the national average.
- Very good enrichment and curriculum initiatives support the learning of higher attaining pupils; a significant number of pupils in examination classes gain the highest grades A* and A.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Assessment and its use are very good in Years 10 and 11 but are not accurate enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The lack of resources for ICT limits its use in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

118. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were below average and in 2004 the poor performance of boys impacted significantly on results. The GCSE A*-C results have shown an improving trend since the last inspection. In 2003 they were well above the national average and this rose significantly in 2004. Over a quarter of the pupils entered gained the highest grades A* and A. The achievement of all pupils was very good. Pupils performed significantly better in art and design than in their other subjects within the school.
119. Standards in Year 9 are above average, which is higher than the results of teacher assessments in 2003 and 2004. This is because staffing is now stable, assessment more secure and boys are doing better. Achievement is very good given that the pupils arrive with a lower than average level of skills and understanding. By focusing on pupils' research skills and analysis of artists' work from different cultures, standards are raised and pupils' independent learning skills develop well. Work shows a high level of individuality. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well when 'fast tracked' to follow the GCSE course. Their sketchbooks reflect a very high standard of technical skill in, for example, the use of watercolour techniques to portray the changing effect of light on landscapes. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well to the high level of individual support they are given. Literary skills are well supported by the written annotation and evaluation of their own and artists' work. ICT is used well for research; however, there are insufficient opportunities for all pupils to access resources and use it for creative purposes.
120. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils work with a high degree of independence and are positively encouraged to develop their own style. High standards are reached and

pupils confidently use a range of materials and processes to express their creative ideas. The achievement of all pupils is very good and is strongly supported by extra classes at local colleges. For example, the work of higher attaining pupils studying aspects of South East Asian art demonstrated very good research of textile techniques which could be applied to their final pieces. A strength of the department is the emphasis put on the pupils' personal response and pupils choose to study, for example, the war poets as inspiration for project work. The positive use of annotation, analysis and evaluation raises standards. Higher attainers' work often shows sophisticated understanding of concepts, whilst lower attaining pupils are given the support and guidance to express themselves confidently.

121. Teaching and learning are predominantly very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and they demand a great deal of the pupils. A high emphasis is put on pupils' capacity to work and think independently and this is well supported by the high quality of individual advice and attention given by the teachers. By involving pupils in challenging discussion, giving very clear explanations, demonstrating techniques and building in an element of humour, the teachers stimulate and motivate pupils to do their best. One very good lesson began with a pupil playing the bagpipes as an example of the effect of music on mood and expression. Teachers manage pupils very well and their high expectations of behaviour create a positive attitude in pupils. Projects are very well planned and lessons include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of ability. In examination classes, teachers work hard to motivate pupils by positively encouraging them to extend work in their own time and this significantly raises standards. Homework is used very well to build on pupils' research and investigating skills and pupils are given the responsibility of completing work over a period of time.
122. The quality of assessment is very good in the Years 10 and 11 and good in the Years 7 to 9. Assessment information is thoroughly analysed in Years 10 and 11 and used well to plan the curriculum. In Years 7 to 9 a rigorous approach is being developed to ensure accuracy in the assessment of levels which will aid better precision in analysis. Assessment systems within the department give pupils a very good understanding of what they have to do to improve. Marking is very helpful with achievable targets set. Pupils are involved in self-evaluation and peer evaluation, which builds on their personal development.
123. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good; examination results have continued to rise and the achievement of pupils is now very good.
124. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department promotes a culture of high expectations and achievement and the department has a very strong commitment to raise standards. The head of department is chairperson of the Curriculum Development Group Primary Sector Group, an advanced skills teacher and the lead teacher for the local education authority. These experiences are used to good effect to support the work of the department. Schemes of work and policy statements are very clear and informative and regularly subject to review in response to changing demands. A high emphasis is put on the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and citizenship development by building aspects into all projects. Very good enrichment and curriculum initiatives such as links with the local college, working with artists in residence, art clubs and visits, strongly support the learning of all pupils, but particularly that of higher attaining pupils.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategies for dealing with poorly behaved pupils in some lower ability classes in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, so pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Assessment procedures at the end of Year 9 are unreliable.
- Programmes of study do not include a systematic reinforcement of keyboard skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Insufficient time is allocated to music in Years 10 and 11, creating a barrier to the raising of standards.
- The department has insufficient computer technology, notably for work in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

125. In the Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2004, results were judged to be in line with the national expectation, but this is an overestimate of attainment, because assessment procedures are inaccurate. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, all pupils obtained a pass grade. Results were below average, but pupils achieved well considering their starting point in Year 10, with four of the nine pupils gaining A*-C grades, and two of these gaining A grades.
126. Standards are below average by Year 9, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory as most start with below average levels on entry to the school. Only lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 were observed during the inspection, but analysis of recorded compositions, scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils confirm that standards overall in Year 9 are below average, and that the most recent end of Year 9 teachers' assessments were too generous. Pupils have competent aural awareness, and are developing reasonable composition skills. Keyboard skills are underdeveloped due to an unstructured way of teaching them, and this is a barrier to raising performance standards at the end of Year 9. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11. Overall, pupils have average standards, though individual boys in Year 11, notably, have good composition and performance standards. All have a secure knowledge of composition techniques, being able, for example, to accurately analyse minimalist music.
127. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but are unsatisfactory with lower ability groups in which a significant number of pupils have serious behaviour problems. Strategies for dealing with these pupils are ineffective, and the use of support staff is inadequate. In satisfactory lessons, teachers' planning is effective, and structured to provide challenging activities for pupils of different capability, leading to competent performances. The teacher always allows time in the lessons for pupils to review the performances of work achieved, demonstrating progress made. In unsatisfactory lessons, pupils, who have no intention of working, constantly interrupt lessons, and this affects the achievement of the minority of focused pupils. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. The teacher has good subject knowledge, and pushes the pupils on, enabling them to produce a good quantity and quality of work.
128. Leadership is satisfactory. The music teacher is relatively new to the school, and has developed some areas of the department effectively. Schemes of work have been completely reviewed and improved, though some areas, such as the teaching of keyboard skills, still need to be reconsidered. Management of disaffected pupils is unsatisfactory. Year 10 and 11 pupils do not receive enough tuition time, and do not receive free individual instrumental tuition, which is their entitlement. Some pupils on the GCSE course do not have individual tuition at all, which is a barrier to raising standards. The department has insufficient computer technology, particularly affecting standards in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, though good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is already showing improvement in the raising of achievement, and ongoing assessment in the classroom is beginning to raise pupils' awareness of how they can improve. The school band and school choir both attract good numbers of participants, and the band, especially, is a credit to the department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall, though results in the GCSE examinations have improved over the past two years.
- Links with primary schools are improving, contributing to rising standards on entry to the school.
- Pupils' underachievement is caused by the high turnover in staff and lack of a subject leader to organise provision.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 10.
- Accommodation is inadequate.

Commentary

129. Difficulties with staffing have resulted in broken continuity in teaching and loss of interest and motivation by pupils. This is a significant factor in the underachievement of pupils.
130. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well below average and they have not improved over the past two years. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a low level of skill and this has been recognised by the appointment of a school sports co-ordinator to improve links with primary schools. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were just below the national average in the main course, but with all pupils achieving a pass. In the full GCSE games course, results were well below average, and in the short GCSE games course results were above the national average, with all pupils achieving a grade.
131. Overall, standards are below average by Year 9. Standards are average in netball; knowledge and understanding of the game and its rules are secure. Standards are below average in gymnastics where pupils in Year 8 do not appreciate the technique of balancing. Their knowledge and understanding of body tension and stillness are below average and they have not progressed sufficiently from Year 7.
132. By Year 11 standards are below average. Lower attaining pupils have little enthusiasm for learning; many of them are unsuited to an examination course. In badminton, standards are well below average with pupils having poor knowledge of the game. Standards are adversely affected by pupils' unsatisfactory and sometimes poor attitudes, particularly by a significant minority of Year 10 boys. There is a high proportion of non-participants and absence from lessons and this also contributes to the low standards and achievement. The higher attaining pupils following the GCSE course produce average standards and achieve well on the course, because they have positive attitudes to their work. Their knowledge and understanding of risk assessment, when applied to a range of sports, are above average. Some pupils produce written work of a good standard, often showing pride in their work. Pupils with a special educational need are integrated into all lessons and achieve similarly to their peers. However, there are no specific arrangements made in the teaching for these pupils.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although there is a little unsatisfactory teaching and the standard has deteriorated since the last inspection. Teaching is good where there has been stability in teaching, such as in the GCSE course, leading to higher attaining pupils performing well. Unsatisfactory teaching results from poor management of pupils, many of whom are un-cooperative and have no interest in improving their learning. Teachers plan their own lessons without reference to any schemes of work, so progression and continuity are unsatisfactory. Marking of pupils' work for GCSE is inconsistent. Predicted grades are given to pupils for the forthcoming examination, but only in Year 11. Written work is

limited and in Year 10 there are no comments in marking to enable pupils to improve. Pupils do not know how well they perform and what they need to do to achieve better. There has been insufficient attention given to the use of ICT, numeracy and literacy.

134. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is no head of department, though the headteacher makes a considerable effort to support the department. There is insufficient time to cover the National Curriculum fully and girls and boys receive different amounts of time. Assessment is inconsistent and reports to parents do not indicate what pupils have done and what they know or understand.
135. There is a limited range of extra-curricular activities. School teams are successful in netball and football particularly, and some pupils have gained individual success at regional and county level in football, badminton and rugby. Links with the local rugby club are good and use is made of the school's facilities for football and orienteering. Accommodation indoors, particularly, is inadequate and the hall restricts the range and quality of the curriculum. Resources are unsatisfactory; there were only two footballs available for a GCSE lesson and gymnastic mats are unsuitable.
136. Improvements since the previous inspection have been unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has deteriorated. Standards have fallen and many pupils underachieve. There are no strategies in place to raise achievement and although results at GCSE are improving, they are mainly below average. Leadership and management, and assessment have also deteriorated.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies – applied GCSE

137. The subject was sampled. One session was observed and teaching and learning were good. Teachers' use of questioning and explanation, review of pupils' progress, structure and pace of activities and use of ICT are good. This leads to pupils gaining a secure knowledge and understanding of business practice. The review of pupils' work and teachers' planning showed good progress over time and regular marking which included comments about the levels achieved. The review of pupils' work and discussions with pupils during the lesson showed that standards are above average. Pupils are completing their second module and the majority are achieving higher grades than in the first module.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHE)

PSHE

138. Personal, social, health and citizenship education was sampled. All pupils receive a weekly lesson taken by their tutors. Programmes of study are comprehensive, and they contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In addition, there is separate provision for drugs and sex education by the school nurse and school counsellor. Theatre company performances address issues such as road safety, drink driving and relationships. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good in Years 7 to 9, and were satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and pupils overall achieved average standards.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 lead to satisfactory achievement.

- There is good quality curriculum provision in tutorials.
- Effective strategies are in place to encourage pupils to take responsibility in school and in the community.
- Provision for the inclusion of citizenship into subject schemes of work is underdeveloped.

Commentary

139. Citizenship is principally taught through well-planned lessons in tutorials, which all pupils have once a week. The subject is taught within the good quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, and contributes to pupils' social and moral education. Pupils in the current Year 10 have just started a GCSE short course. An audit of provision for citizenship elements within all curriculum schemes of work has been undertaken and while much happens informally, no clear strategies have been established for ensuring that all subjects include such provision within their schemes of work. Reports for pupils in Years 7 to 9 were produced last year, and reports for Years 10 and 11 pupils were included in the tutors' comments on reports to parents. Very good links with the community are being established.
140. Standards by Year 9 are average overall, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils had well-reasoned views on black and white racial issues, and made perceptive comments about such issues after watching excerpts of a video showing *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In an excellent Year 8 lesson, there was a high quality debate about laws which are directly relevant to the pupils. By the end of Year 11, standards are average, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Year 10 pupils have good understanding of the election process in this country, and Year 11 pupils, in one lesson, made accurate and sensitive comments about the uneven distribution of wealth in the global community.
141. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is particularly successful, teachers display an appropriate sense of humour, demonstrate enthusiasm, and enable pupils to think for themselves and present their views. A good use of resources is made to focus pupils, such as the video of *Oliver* which gave rise to a lively discussion on children's rights in one lesson. Lessons are well planned and informative worksheets are used. Generally, teacher/pupil relationships are good in citizenship lessons, with some effective strategies used for dealing with disaffected pupils. These good relationships lead to pupils using better oral skills than are found in other curriculum areas. Pupils see the topics being addressed as directly relating to them, and their lives, and they enter quite willingly into class discussion.
142. Leadership is good. A full policy statement for how citizenship should be taught has been produced. Progress is regularly monitored by the co-ordinator and members of the senior management team. Management is unsatisfactory, as strategies are not in place to ensure elements of citizenship are included in all subject areas. Many activities operate, through which pupils take responsibility. The school council is an effective means for pupils to present their views. Pupils are effectively involved in environmental activities, working with primary school children on sports activities, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and a peer education scheme. The school recently gained Investors in Children status for work on local matters. A Young Enterprise Group has run a business scheme, and members of the school council have joined the Darlington Youth Assembly. In some work on bullying, a pupil recently discussed bullying issues with the Prime Minister's wife at 10 Downing Street.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	5
Attendance	5
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5
The quality of education provided by the school	5
The quality of teaching	5
How well pupils learn	5
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	6
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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