

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE ROMSEY SCHOOL**

Romsey, Hampshire

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116421

Headteacher: Mr Peter Warburton

Lead inspector: Rose Godfrey

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 258824

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:	1080
School address:	Greatbridge Road Romsey Hampshire
Postcode:	SO51 8BZ
Telephone number:	01794 512334
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	23 March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Romsey School is an average sized, mixed comprehensive with very strong links with the local community. The school is a specialist language college, in partnership with the neighbouring school in the town. It received the Schools Curriculum Award and the School Achievement Award in 2000 and was awarded Sportsmark in 2002. This thriving community school provides for the needs of the local community, mainly in terms of adult education, family learning, local fitness clubs and activities and drop in facilities. The school has strong links with local primary schools to promote sports, community action and youth work. Pupils live in the town of Romsey in Hampshire or in its immediate locality, including the outskirts of Southampton, and come from above average socio-economic backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. The school has steadily increased in size since the last inspection and now has 1080 pupils. Only a small number of pupils enter or leave the school at times other than is normal. There are more boys than girls on roll. A small minority of pupils are from ethnic minority groups or have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils' eligible for free school meals is below average. There are an average number of pupils on the special needs register, thirteen of whom have Statements of Special Educational Need. The majority of these pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Five pupils, with statements, receive support in the school's specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2047	Rose Godfrey	Lead inspector	Art
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector	English as an additional language
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English Citizenship
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
33727	Nicholas Vinall	Team inspector	Science
23850	Jenny Michell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
8859	Tom Dodd	Team inspector	Design and technology
27058	Kathleen Cannon	Team inspector	Special educational needs Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Geography History
22953	Peter Dacombe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15304	Reg Fletcher	Team inspector	Music
33131	Glen Hayes	Team inspector	Physical education
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Personal, social and health education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The Romsey School is an effective school, with many strong features, which provides good value for money.** The school is not demonstrating sufficiently its identity as a specialist language school. Good teaching and learning has been secured across the school. Excellent provision is made in links with the community and in the work of the special needs unit for pupils with autism.

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

- Extensive links with the local community, well developed through dynamic, innovative leadership.
- Very good progress by special needs pupils attending the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit resulting from excellent provision, including opportunities to take part in normal lessons.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are not high enough and pupils' progress is too limited.
- Extra-curricular and enrichment provision is very good, especially in sports and the arts.
- Disruptive behaviour by a minority is inhibiting the learning of others.
- Monitoring of classroom behaviour and evaluation of implementation of improvement plans have not been sufficiently rigorous.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities for spiritual development.
- Legal requirements are not met for citizenship, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and collective worship.

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998. Good progress has been made since that time. Standards have been sustained at well above average levels. Teaching and learning are good and the consistency of quality across the school has been improved. The restructured senior leadership team are effectively led by the headteacher. Good pastoral provision continues to support well the personal and academic development of pupils. The use of ICT has been increased across the school and the teaching of personal, social and health education is now good. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 now includes more appropriate, additional courses for pupils whose attainment is low. Further development is still needed to reduce disaffection amongst a similar group of less well-motivated pupils in Years 8 and 9. Insufficient progress has been made with extending the spiritual dimension and meeting statutory requirements for the provision of collective worship.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	All Schools			Similar Schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	A	A	A	A

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

**Achievement is good.** Overall, pupils' attainment on entry to school is above average. By the end of Year 9 standards reached in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. By the end of Year 11, standards are also well above the national average and pupils achieve very well. Standards are strongest in mathematics. In English standards are weaker in Years 7 to 9, mainly due to poorer achievement amongst boys. Standards in modern foreign languages, although satisfactory overall, are not sufficiently high for a specialist language school. The school almost met its challenging 2003 target for GCSE average points score per pupil. The overall trend in GCSE examinations results over the past five years has been below the national average. Pupils of all abilities, regardless of ethnicity or special educational needs, make very good progress through Years 10 and 11 compared to schools with similar intakes. In 2003, nearly all pupils achieved at least one GCSE A\* to G grade and the proportion achieving five or more A\* to G

was well above average. Pupils' application of ICT skills in Years 10 and 11 is, at best, satisfactory. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, especially that of boys in French.

**Pupils enjoy being in school and the majority get on well with adults and other pupils.** Most behave well and are increasingly mature and responsible. Good provision is made for pupils' social and moral development but there are insufficient opportunities for spiritual development. Attendance is good with average levels of unauthorised absences. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school are satisfactory overall, although the lack of motivation of amongst a significant minority disrupts the learning of others.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education overall, which includes some very good features. Teaching and learning are good.** Teaching quality was judged to be good or better in almost three quarters of the lessons observed. This reflects a clear focus in the school's action plan on developing 'the effective lesson'. The very small number of unsatisfactory lessons did not identify weakness in any specific area of teaching. Staff are constantly seeking ways of improving pupils' learning and share practice in making lessons more effective. Subject knowledge, lesson planning and varied teaching styles are strengths which provide challenge and enable most pupils to learn well.

The curriculum ensures good provision for gifted and talented pupils and increasing flexibility is improving provision for less well-motivated pupils. Good pastoral care is supplemented well through increasing use of a range of contributors. Learning support assistants support well those students with special educational needs. The school has built up excellent links with the local community through its own work and by networking with primary schools and other colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership is good overall and the management of the school is good.** The governing body has a clear view of its role and understands most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Not all statutory requirements are met. The good leadership of the headteacher and the leadership group has provided a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, raising standards of achievement and increasing the inclusivity of the school. Recent appointments have strengthened the school's leadership capacity at all levels. The effectiveness of the school's well thought out procedures for self-review and evaluation are reduced by lack of rigour in their application.

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

Parents have high expectations of the school and quickly identify any concerns they have about provision. The great majority of parents appreciate the good provision. Pupils welcome the increased opportunities provided to express their views. They believe that the school listens to their representations but they feel that there is further capacity for the school to respond.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

1. Review, with all key stakeholders, the future direction of the school in terms of specialist status.
2. Increase the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation so that it clearly identifies progress made in areas identified for improvement.
3. Ensure that the revised behaviour management procedures are effective in reducing the inappropriate behaviour of the minority of pupils which inhibits the learning of others.
4. Raise pupils' awareness of the spiritual dimension of all areas of the curriculum.

And to meet statutory requirements fully implement fully:

- the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship and the requirements for provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and collective worship.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects**

Pupils achieve well and reach standards in both Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations which are well above national averages. These standards compare very favourably with those pupils nationally who entered secondary school with similar end of Year 6 test scores. Pupils' achievements in modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory for a specialist language school. Boys achieve less well than girls in English and French, but the gap is narrowing in Years 10 and 11.

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

- High standards have been sustained in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations over the last five years.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and consequently standards are less satisfactory than in other subjects.
- Most pupils achieve well, including both gifted and talented and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in art and design, geography, physical education and music.
- A minority of less well-motivated pupils in Years 8 and 9 make less progress than they should, particularly boys in English and French.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils come into the school with standards of attainment above the national average. They make good progress and achieve well above average standards in their different subjects in both Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. High standards have been sustained over the past five years, since the last inspection. Standards in modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory, particularly for a specialist language school.

#### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average points score in 2003**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.5 (35.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.2 (38.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.9 (36.2)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 219 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Results in 2003 national tests in English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 9, were well above average compared to those found nationally and above average for similar schools. Overall the trend in test results is the same as that found nationally. Inspection evidence confirms that these high standards are being sustained. Standards are less satisfactory in history, ICT and modern foreign languages.

3. The great majority of pupils achieve well in the first three years. In English, mathematics and science, pupils' knowledge and skills are above national averages and in art, geography and music they make particularly good progress from more modest attainment on entry. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs across all years and most subjects is good. The school has made good use of current national developments to raise standards. The strategy's emphasis on teaching basic skills and providing a greater range of learning resources are major factors in raising achievement. Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. Progress is slowed for a minority of less well-motivated pupils in Years 8 and 9 and for boys in English and French.

#### **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	70 (65)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	40.7 (41.6)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 211 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. The school has sustained well above average levels of attainment in GCSE examinations although the overall trend in GCSE examination results is less than that nationally. In 2003 the results showed marked improvement over those in 2002 and the school came close to their GCSE targets agreed with the local education authority. The average points score per pupil matches the average for schools with similar contexts. Pupils achieve standards well above the national average in many subjects. Particularly high standards were reached in art and design, geography and physical education. Standards in history, media studies, modern foreign languages and religious education have not been as high as in other subjects.

5. Increased pupil effort and motivation combined with a greater proportion of very good teaching in GCSE courses result in an increased rate of progress in Years 10 and 11. Inspection evidence shows that standards are in line with national averages and that pupils of all attainment levels achieve well. Gifted, talented and higher attaining pupils, do particularly well in a number of subjects where the proportion of the highest grades are significantly above national averages. Procedures for recording the progress of individual pupils with special educational needs are good and contribute to the good progress made by these pupils. Girls perform better than boys but across subjects the gap is narrowing in Years 10 and 11. In subjects, such as geography, where teaching and learning strategies are adapted to the needs of boys, they achieve well. Successful strategies to improve pupils' achievement include elements such as 'subject clinics' and evening 'revision sessions' as part of the school's community provision. The school is working hard to overcome recent disruption caused by staffing difficulties, especially in science and music. Pupils' need to recover some backlog of learning caused by this disruption to staff continuity. Standards in citizenship are variable because there is no overall scheme of work for the subject.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES**

### **Overall evaluation**

6. Attendance is good. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall but vary from good in many lessons, to unsatisfactory for a significant minority of pupils who disrupt or harass other pupils. The school's provision for moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but further development of the spiritual dimension is needed.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils feel that the school is a friendly place and most are happy to come.
- The moral and cultural dimensions of personal development are good and there are good opportunities for taking responsibility which pupils appreciate.
- Some pupils, mainly but not exclusively Year 9 boys, are restless and disaffected in class.
- Pupils report some low-level harassment in and around school.
- There has been insufficient improvement in pupils' spiritual development.

### **Commentary**

## Attendance

7. Attendance is good. Rates have varied slightly in recent years but the new, thorough and detailed, attendance policy means that everyone now clearly understands the expectations. The school follows up concerns thoroughly and discourages the taking of holidays during term time.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.2	School data	1.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

8. Attitudes and behaviour vary but are usually at least satisfactory overall. The immature and distracting behaviour of some pupils slows the progress of learning in some lessons. This is balanced by the very good behaviour of many others. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about learning - especially in drama and physical education. The attitudes and behaviour of all pupils with special educational needs improve under the guidance of the co-ordinator of special educational needs. These pupils also receive good support from learning assistants in normal lessons where their attitudes and behaviour are no different from other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties appreciate the help given to them by the special needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants, as well as by their class teachers, and attitudes and behaviour are good in many lessons.

9. The school is committed to the development of reflective and independent young people. Pupils are confident and articulate and get on well with each other. The school is committed to being inclusive and pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs, including those from the special needs unit, develop good relationships with others, work well with each other and are confident that they will succeed and make good progress. A number of good opportunities are provided for taking initiative and responsibility such as the prefect system in Year 11, by mentoring other pupils including acting as 'reading buddies' for younger special needs children and by acting as guides at such things as parents' evenings. Work in the wider community takes place by fund raising for several needy causes and helping out with community events, both on and off-site.

10. Attitudes and behaviour depend on learning difficulty. The behaviour of some pupils with social or emotional difficulties is challenging. Many are dealt with well by the leadership team's 'parking' scheme, or by their form teachers and year heads. There are some occasions when the pupils do not behave as well as they are expected to and a significant minority of pupils continue to cause problems. The school has introduced a range of strategies to reduce this inappropriate behaviour, some aspects of which are beginning to have impact. However, a number of Year 9 boys are disaffected and can be disruptive. Some, not always the same, pupils in other years display disrespect and a lack of motivation. Teachers often manage this well through careful lesson planning and a variety of strategies, but good practice is not universal. In some cases poor behaviour is linked to a lack of challenge and consequent underachievement.

11. The school has a rate of exclusion that is relatively low. The overall number of fixed term exclusions involves only four per cent of the school's pupils. The school's commitment to inclusion ensures that every effort is made to address issues within school. As a consequence of this policy there have not been any permanent exclusions in the past three years. The school has effective procedures to re-integrate pupils.

### **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	994	68	0

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

12. Pupils' questionnaire responses and discussions with pupils throughout the school suggested that behaviour was a concern. Pupils complained of low-level harassment outside of lessons such as jostling, petty theft and intimidation by smokers. Although some of this occurs just outside school premises, enough pupils feel upset and worried for action to be needed. The lunch queue is a particular source of bad behaviour.

13. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Some aspects are stronger than others. Provision for moral development is good. The pupils are expected to have a clear sense of right and wrong and have high standards of behaviour. At times a minority of pupils do not always rise to these expectations but usually the guidance which the pupils receive is put into practice and the pupils conduct themselves well. Speakers from outside the school such as the police and prison service supplement a significant input from personal, social, and health education lessons. Topics in these lessons cover sex education, drugs and alcohol abuse. Themes in assemblies and at registration times also have strong moral aspects to them. The school has many codes of guidance and prospective parents receive a presentation from the headteacher on what expectations of behaviour are.

14. Provision for social development is good. Pupils particularly enjoy the very good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities which help them develop positive relationships. They participate well in, for example, inter-school sports fixtures. The personal, social, and health education programme also does work on the development of interpersonal skills. Group work in many subject departments helps the pupils to develop respect for other people's feelings and beliefs. Pupils readily discuss their views, although they are not always as responsive in listening to the views of others. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory but the multi-cultural dimension has still capacity for further development. Progress on this since the last inspection has been satisfactory but there is still more the school could to prepare its pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

15. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory and progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Opportunities exist in assemblies and during registration periods but teachers do not always make the best of these. Many pupils would benefit from being still more, so as to develop their reflective and listening skills. The religious education department provides many opportunities for the pupils to be quiet and to reflect but very few are provided elsewhere. This is still an area for development.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

16. The overall quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Much of the curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**. The quality of care enhances the provision. Links with parents are effective. The community provision is outstanding.

#### **Teaching and learning**

17. Teaching and learning are **good** and are responsible for pupils' good achievement. Assessment is **good** but the recent developments in marking need embedding across all subjects.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A large majority of teaching is good or better.
- Pupils respond positively to teaching which sets high expectations.
- A whole school focus on development of 'the effective lesson' has improved teaching and learning.
- Effective collaboration between teachers and learning support assistants enables good teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs.
- The application of the recently revised marking policy is too inconsistent.

## Commentary

18. Almost three quarters of lessons observed during the inspection were graded as of good or better quality. There were no significant differences between the proportions of good teaching in Years 7 to 11. In just over a quarter of lessons where teaching was very good or excellent, pupils made much better progress than expected and demonstrated very high levels of achievement. Satisfactory lessons offered insufficient challenge to pupils, they lacked pace or included low-level activities which did not stimulate pupils' interest or sustain their concentration. The five unsatisfactory lessons were spread across subjects and year groups and did not relate to any specific area of weakness. Inappropriate expectations were characteristic of these lessons consequently pupils' interest was not engaged, nor was their behaviour conducive to learning.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 144 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1.5%)	38 (26%)	66 (46%)	22 (23%)	5 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	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 a total of 30 or more lessons are seen.*

19. The good teaching is the result of the school's commitment to delivery of 'the effective lesson' which has been the main focus of its current school action plan. A series of initiatives have been introduced through implementation of this plan, the prime function of which is to improve learning and raise standards. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection. Both pupils and staff are increasingly using ICT to develop their communication skills and to make presentations on a number of issues. In geography and history the use of interactive whiteboards is proving successful in motivating pupils and improving their learning.

20. The strategy for improving pupils' learning, encapsulated in the current action plan, is proving increasingly successful over time. Teachers have a clear framework for planning lessons to meet the range of learning needs of pupils in different teaching groups. The principles of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are becoming well embedded in the teaching. Well structured lessons are based on clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils. Engaging starters and summaries drawing lessons to a close by reflecting on what has been learnt are also common features of good lessons. An agreed planning format has ensured that appropriate expectations are set for pupils of all abilities and also provides a clear framework within which teaching skills can continuously be evaluated.

21. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their willingness to respond positively to the high expectations set for them in their work. In lessons which demonstrated best practice, as for example in a Year 9 art lesson, pupils were provided with the assessment criteria and were encouraged to reflect on their work and evaluate for themselves how effectively they had met them.

22. Teachers are good role models and have high expectations of their pupils. Many provide a purposeful but relaxed learning environment. Pupils contribute a great deal to the success of many

lessons, as they arrive ready to work and sustain their concentration. When the teaching is good pupils are attentive, interested and are eager learners.

23. Teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Good quality in-service training has focussed on special needs provision. The school's internal web-site contains useful reference information about all types of learning difficulties, with strategies for dealing with them. Copies of the individual education plans are also on the web-site as well as in pupils' planners. Teaching of the Year 10 ASDAN course and low ability mathematics classes by the special needs co-ordinator is very good. Learning assistants provide effective help and support to pupils with special educational needs in timetabled lessons. Where pupils with special educational needs are taught in smaller groups with sympathetic teachers and learning support assistants, learning is very good. When pupils from the special needs unit join these lessons they participate fully and merge into the teaching group.

24. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are good and have resulted in an increasing amount of good quality information. The school has a well-developed assessment policy. The Assessment Manager system enables departments to input data easily and provides a wealth of useful information for operational use. Increasingly the data is being used in teachers planning, reporting to parents and tracking pupils' progress. Assessment information gathered by teachers is used well with academic tutoring sessions to identify areas that need to be worked on. This enables the setting of targets for pupils to work towards so that they can work more effectively towards achieving their potential. The correlation between predicted and actual grades is good and the system is providing teachers with important planning aids.

25. Departmental progress in embedding the new assessment procedures into their routines is too variable. Together with a comprehensive system of achievements and rewards the developing assessment process is making a positive contribution to pupil learning. Pupils are increasingly involved in reviewing their own work and in participating in peer evaluation so they are developing a deeper understanding of how assessment is linked with learning. Marking is generally satisfactory to good but there are inconsistencies within and across the departments. Currently some inconsistency is evident, which needs resolution, about the use of level grades and verbal and written comments to provide feedback to pupils about how they might improve their work.

26. Individual educational plans prepared for each pupil with special educational needs are well constructed and include relevant data and information about needs and strategies. The section on targets and success criteria is placed in pupils' planners in pupil-friendly language. Pupils are therefore continually aware of their two specific targets, can be involved in evaluation of success. This simple but effective system, which has evolved over time, ensures that pupils are involved regularly with discussing their own progress and reviewing their individual education plan with the special needs co-ordinator or an attached learning support assistant.

## **The curriculum**

27. The quality of the curriculum is good. Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, with a wide variety of enrichment activities. Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory. Accommodation and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum including a very good choice of subjects at GCSE level.
- There is a very good range of clubs, activities and trips outside the school day.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in religious education and citizenship.
- There is excellent provision for pupils from the special needs autistic spectrum disorder unit.
- The modern languages curriculum for pupils in Years 7–9 does not cater sufficiently for progression.

- Vocational options, notably National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), are offered to pupils for whom GCSE exams are less appropriate.

## Commentary

28. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which caters well for the needs of pupils. There is a wide variety of GCSE subjects on offer, including four languages. The open option choice system is successful in making sure that almost all pupils are able to follow their chosen GCSE options. The physical education curriculum is very good because its four areas are covered very thoroughly. In music the well-planned curriculum helps pupils to make rapid progress by the age of fourteen. In geography, a strong emphasis on practical work helps to motivate pupils and raise levels of achievement. In modern languages, the curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9 does not plan sufficiently for progression so pupils are not doing as well as they should be by Year 9.

29. There are many clubs and activities that pupils can take part in outside normal school hours. These are arranged in many different subjects. They include a good number of homework, revision and study skills clubs and programmes, as well as classes outside the timetable in design and technology, ICT, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. Visits and field trips enhance provision in humanities. Visiting performers and artists enrich the arts, working well with pupils. They, in turn, extend their experience in other contexts such as area and county sports events, festivals, exhibitions, bands, orchestras and choirs. In music the range, quality and variety of provision is excellent and parents are very appreciative of the performances which the school puts on. In physical education pupils also have excellent opportunities to participate in an extensive menu of activities which cater for different interests and abilities. In modern languages there are good opportunities to learn Spanish and Italian and there is a very good range of trips including three exchange visits. Within this vast range of opportunities, there are particularly strong links with the community.

30. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in two areas: religious education and citizenship. At present religious education is not taught in Year 11, and in Year 10, pupils are not given enough time to cover the subject in sufficient depth. Some work has been done to develop citizenship, including a citizenship day in Year 9 when the timetable is suspended and pupils are involved in workshops. However, there are no schemes of work or appropriate whole school planning to ensure that all strands of the citizenship curriculum are taught. Assessment in citizenship, although under development, is not yet in place. This means that pupils are not experiencing a sufficiently coherent programme based on the citizenship programmes of study.

31. The curriculum is adapted well for pupils with specific learning difficulties as and where necessary, with integration into mainstream classes. This provision includes some withdrawal of pupils for sustained intervention and support for literacy. Some Year 10 pupils take an ASDAN course, related to the world of work, taught by the SENCO, a learning support assistant and the Connexions adviser. SEN pupils often attend a useful lunchtime homework club supervised by a special needs teacher and learning support assistants. The specialist ASD unit caters extremely well for their pupils' needs. Good links exist with the other subjects, enabling pupils to follow the standard curriculum. Wherever possible pupils from the unit join in with normal classes and are included in the wider life of the school.

32. A small number of NVQ courses are available to pupils including horticulture, and painting and decorating. These help to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils and promote inclusion. The community department has a strong involvement with these courses and is planning imaginative practical projects of potential benefit both to the community and the pupils. There are plans to extend the provision of NVQ courses. This is a good start in developing vocational education in response to the government's 14-19 proposals, but at present only a few pupils are involved. The school has not yet committed itself to developing vocational GCSEs or GNVQ courses aimed at a wider ability range.

33. Accommodation is, good with some very good and some less satisfactory features. Very good facilities are available for physical education, special educational needs, science and the community, which makes extensive use of every available space in an outstanding range of provision. Accommodation for English, history, geography, mathematics, and religious education is good. Provision for modern foreign languages is satisfactory. The limited accommodation for art, ICT, music and drama is less satisfactory. The poor accommodation for design and technology has further limitations as a consequence of the split provision.

34. The school is working with determination to realise its aim of being fully inclusive. Every effort is made to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress, including the relatively small number from different ethnic groups. Several strategies are employed to promote the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including those pupils from the ASD unit. The reading intervention programme provides very valuable support for Year 7 pupils with very low reading ages. Withdrawal from some lessons for some pupils is helping them improve their literacy, though this does adversely affect their progress in the lessons they miss. Pupils from the special needs unit join timetabled lessons whenever possible. A clear measure of the success was observed in a Year 7 art lesson where these pupils were indistinguishable from the rest of the class. Resources are relevant and well organised in the special needs office and associated rooms, with well-used computers and a variety of reading matter, books and displays.

### **Care, guidance and support**

35. Pastoral care is good throughout the school. Support and guidance for academic progress and personal development are good. Arrangements for protection, welfare and safety are well embedded in practice. Involvement of pupils in the school's work and development is evolving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The ASD Unit enables pupils to succeed.
- Teachers work hard to help pupils achieve their potential.
- Good advice is given on careers and further education.
- Staff are willing to listen to pupils. Acting on their views is variable in practice.
- There are good arrangements for protection, welfare, health and safety.
- Induction arrangements are helpful and pupils value the welcome they receive.
- Monitoring of classroom behaviour is not consistent across all subjects.
- Some victims of bullying are not fully confident of redress and not all incidents are reported.

### **Commentary**

36. All teachers are committed to helping each pupil develop in the school community. Policies and procedures relating to welfare and child protection are well considered. Updating of the procedures to ensure compliance with revised national guidelines does, however, need to include clarification for all staff. Teachers vary in the extent to which they measure pupils' progress and behaviour in class. Health and safety is prominent in the life of the school and adverse issues are dealt with swiftly. Liaison with primary schools is very good and the induction process helps pupils to settle confidently into the school. Staff listen to pupils about their suggestions on the difficulties they face day to day. Action to resolve these difficulties often takes time. As a consequence pupils believe their views are not sufficiently valued.

37. Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly and consultations with pupils and parents are well structured. Welfare is well provided for with special care being taken of those who are at risk. Pupils are pleased with the good relationships they enjoy with staff and the way their work is carefully analysed. The clear advice they receive on their progress in some subjects is not universal across them all. Bullying is, in theory, not tolerated. While assurances are given that physical or verbal bullying will result in action, not all pupils are confident of redress, so incidents are not always reported. Some pupils have feelings of inferiority or guilt at being bullied. The new pastoral care

system is clear that dealing with bullying is an absolute priority. To maintain an orderly and secure community more positive action is required. Pupils generally hold positive attitudes towards the school.

38. The school has relatively few pupils whose first language is not English. Pupils from different ethnic groups, including a small number of pupils from traveller families, all receive effective support. Careful monitoring of the progress made by these pupils, including the setting of individual targets, ensures that their achievement is at least satisfactory. The special needs co-ordinator and the team of learning support assistants provide very good care and welfare for pupils with special educational needs. Support is provided in an appropriate warm, sympathetic and friendly manner but also focuses firmly on each pupil fulfilling their potential, and giving rigorous attention to their needs. The new base for pupils with autism is very much appreciated by them, providing a safe haven for vulnerable individuals.

39. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The subject is well led and managed and the department has a well-developed set of documentation. The teaching is now done by a small group of experienced, committed teachers. The teaching seen during the inspection was of a consistently high quality and is very good overall. The pupils respond positively to the teaching and they are well behaved and attentive. They show an active interest in their work.

40. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to express their views. The school council is an effective forum for taking all pupils' views into account. The pupils are also consulted through questionnaires which seek their views on bullying, what they like and what they would like to be improved in school. The school shares the outcomes of their representations with the pupils. In spite of recent developments pupils do not feel that as yet their representations have as much impact on securing improvements as they would like.

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

### **Overall evaluation**

41. Links with parents are generally good and they are happy with the school. Links with the local community are excellent and a real strength.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Innovative techniques are used to involve parents such as 'praise cards'.
- A huge range of exciting, dynamic ways which connect the school with the local community.
- Good links with other institutions have been built up in some subject areas.
- Reports to parents can be confusing.

### **Commentary**

42. Links with parents are generally good and parents are positive about the school and its work. They especially praise music and drama. Parents feel that the school helps to develop the whole child through offering responsibilities and the confidence this brings. There are several interesting, effective ways to involve parents. These include allowing Year 7 parents to 'shadow' their children through a school day, and the "praise postcards" which staff send out as an unusual surprise for good achievement, effort or behaviour. Parents also support events such as music performances and sporting fixtures against other schools.

43. A number of parents expressed concern about communications with the school, in particular getting information about their children's progress. Reports to parents are sometimes confusing in that grades or tick boxes do not always match written comments. Marking of work can be

inconsistent so not all pupils, or their parents, understand what level they are working at or how to improve.

44. Some departments have good links with other schools and colleges, such as mathematics which holds regular meetings and training days with other institutions. Physical education has very good liaison with primary schools as well as a range of inter-school matches. Modern languages also has links with primary schools and the Eastleigh consortium. Some departments, however, have fewer links other institutions.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Community links are excellent and a real strength of the school. The dynamic, visionary leadership of the community manager has enabled the school to reach out to all sections of the local community.**

There are pre-school groups, personal development courses for disaffected Year 9 pupils, run in conjunction with youth workers, revision classes for Year 11 pupils and their parents, and several clubs for leisure, recreation and special needs. Romsey school pupils are involved with the community in lots of different ways. They learn languages with their families, decorate the site as part of the NVQ in painting and decorating, act as stewards for the family learning day, as well as working in the community office as part of their courses in business administration. The centre also organises holiday courses and theatre trips, a bridge club and regular meetings for Romsey's blind people. There are ambitious plans for further development which will further strengthen links in music, art and GNVQ courses, as well as catering for gifted and talented pupils. The school is very successful in offering a range of learning styles and qualifications to include the widest possible number of people, and everyone benefits from this inclusive approach.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

45. Leadership and management are good. Governance is unsatisfactory as statutory requirements are not fully met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Outstanding leadership is provided for community provision and the special needs unit for pupils with autism.
- The governing body has very good procedures for strategic planning, financial management and control.
- The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership promoting high standards a commitment to learning and inclusion.
- The restructured leadership group has sharpened its focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards of achievement.
- An effective performance management system provides a good basis for further raising standards in subject areas.
- The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating its work lack rigour in their application.
- Statutory requirements for citizenship, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and collective worship are not met.

### **Commentary**

46. The governing body gives good service to the school. Whilst the governance of the school is good overall, the failure to ensure that the school fulfils all its statutory duties introduces an unsatisfactory dimension in the work of the governing body. A very experienced group of governors provides a clear sense of direction for the work of the school. The governing body is well organised and uses its committee structures effectively to manage its work. Through its main committees the governing body acts as a 'critical friend', offering both support and challenge. The governor's strategic group, made up of the chairs of committees, has a good involvement in whole school strategic development. The work of the headteacher is monitored effectively and governors have a

secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result of governors' strategic influence and effective working relationships with the headteacher, the school has achieved significant development since the last inspection. The school is not meeting its expectations as a specialist language college, which already has significant implications for developments in the future. Statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and citizenship across the school are not met. This is a major weakness which is recognised by governors as a high and immediate priority.

47. Leadership is dedicated to sustaining high standards and achievement in all aspects of the school's work. In particular, the headteacher, who took up post shortly after the last inspection, is committed to making the school more inclusive and increasing the emphasis on effective learning. Some clear progress has been made and the headteacher has ensured that improvement since the last inspection has been good. Recent restructuring of the school's leadership team has re-energised leadership at this level and there are already signs of increased impact resulting from recent initiatives. The school's systems for reaching decisions, devolving responsibility and ensuring good communication are effective. The leadership group works well as a team and produce clear plans to direct the focus on improving learning and improving the quality of provision. Improvement plans are well focussed with a manageable number of priorities and most operational elements in place. However, the lack of measurable success criteria reduces the effectiveness of monitoring the school's success in implementing its plans. This increases reliance on completion of tasks, rather than evaluating the differences made to teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.

48. The quality of leadership in many subject areas is good and in some areas very good. Recent appointments have increased the capacity of leadership at this level and the school is now well placed to secure improvements in standards. The school has introduced a useful system of supported self-review which has significant potential to support departments in identifying their strengths and areas for development. Increasing the rigour of these procedures will ensure that the full potential of this practice is realised.

49. The school manages its finances well. Governors are committed to preventing the school from having a budget deficit. The current budget has a secure surplus which has declined over the past two years as there has been increased demand to make use of contingency funds to meet ongoing expenditure. Plans to address the shortcomings in accommodation and resourcing of design and technology can be now progressed since improvements in leadership are realising better quality provision.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3698083
Total expenditure	3560613
Expenditure per pupil	3321

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	182084
Balance carried forward to the next financial year	137470

50. Strategic priorities are clearly identified and linked to the whole school plans which are carefully costed, an improvement since the last inspection. The school has a longer term strategic plan which augments the shorter term action plan designed to secure improvements in teaching and learning. Principles of best value clearly guide school decision making and allocation of resources.

51. Management is good, it is supportive and seeks to ensure accountability. Policies for planning, assessment, behaviour and special educational needs are starting to be reflected more consistently across the school. However, there have been a number of relatively recent changes in structures, such as those in the pastoral team. Revised systems and implementation of new

policies, such as the race equality policy and the marking policy, need to be further embedded in practice and current inconsistencies reduced. Good procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school but their application lacks the rigour needed to ensure they are used to best effect. The great majority of teaching is effective but subject leaders need to ensure greater consistency is achieved in the implementation of school policies, particularly in marking and assessment and in the implementation of the revised behaviour management policies.

52. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are good and provision for professional development is improving. There are clear strengths in the induction of new staff and arrangements for line management and performance management. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and personal objectives. Target setting and the monitoring of achievement are becoming well embedded and data is being used more effectively to influence the work of subject departments. The school is using opportunities to reduce the administrative workload of teachers, to enable them to focus on classroom teaching. The school is strongly committed to initial teacher training, including making effective use of the graduate training programme. It has strong partnership links with local universities and is exploring opportunities for further development of this aspect of its work.

53. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs and statutory requirements are met. The vision, extensive knowledge and understanding of the special needs co-ordinator enable her to provide very good leadership in this area of the school's work. There is a clear policy and a good, developing range of information ensures that all staff are kept well informed. The very effective management of the special needs department includes effective deployment and training of the valued team of learning support assistants who all have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Regular meetings with representatives of all departments in the school which has resulted in a more consistent approach to pupils with special educational needs across all departments. Good improvement is evident in provision for special needs since the previous inspection.

## **THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL'S SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT**

54. Excellent provision is made by the school's unit for pupils on the autistic spectrum.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of provision within the unit is excellent.
- Pupils make very good progress in reintegrating into mainstream classes.
- The level of support given by teaching assistants is excellent.
- The management and organisation of the unit is excellent.

55. The unit is attended by five pupils from Years 7 and 8, who have statements identifying them as being on the autistic spectrum. The standard of their work is average overall in comparison with national expectations for their ages, although some work is above average. All pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and they achieve very well during their time in the unit. In comparison with their below average levels of attainment on entry to the school, they make very good progress. They successfully attend some ordinary timetabled lessons such as art, English and mathematics, where they work alongside their peers. In these lessons it is difficult to identify which pupil is from the unit. In-class support is sensitively given to allow the pupils to fully and naturally integrate without highlighting their special needs.

56. Within the unit, the quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Pupils follow a parallel timetable to their classmates which means that they do not miss out on any subjects by being in the unit. The skilled, experienced staff work with the pupils on a one to one or one to two basis. Such is the level of their expertise that they are able to teach across the range of school subjects with confidence, including the teaching of modern languages. Lessons are well structured and pitched to the needs and abilities of the pupils, who respond very well to the teachers' expectations. Staff have

a very good knowledge of their pupils' difficulties and abilities, and relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.

57. No aspect of management has been overlooked and the organisation of the unit is excellent. The experienced, committed co-ordinator keeps excellent records and monitors the progress of individual pupils on a daily basis. Her assessment is used very well to inform pupils' individual education and behaviour plans, which are negotiated with pupils and their parents. Liaison with mainstream teachers is very good. For example, because of the nature of the pupils' needs, it is not always possible for them to participate in the usual physical education activities. In liaison with the physical education department, the unit manager has been able to arrange a separate session for her small group of pupils, who now receive weekly physical education in the main school. Annual reviews are well managed and supported by parents and external agencies. There is good input on learning from mainstream subject leaders.

58. The unit, which caters for up to twelve pupils, is a new addition since the previous inspection. The accommodation is excellent and very well appointed with good relevant resources. This provision could not be better.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Excellent provision, made for pupils attending Romsey School's special educational needs unit, enables them to make very good progress in mainstream lessons as well as within the specialist unit.**

Five pupils in Years 7 and 8 attend the school's special educational needs unit. All of the pupils have statements identifying them as being on the autistic spectrum. Visionary leadership has ensured very coherent provision for these pupils. Excellent opportunities are available to them both within the unit and through their inclusion in normal lessons with their peers. The exceptional organisation is informed by the unit manager's extensive knowledge and understanding of special educational needs. Outstanding use of the purpose-built accommodation ensures that all resources are relevant and used to best purpose. Pupils participate in all subjects, including modern foreign languages. Maximum benefit is derived from working both within the unit and in mainstream classes. This is achieved by organising a timetable which runs parallel to that of other Year 7 and 8 classes. Liaison with teachers in subject departments is well developed and pupils are well supported teaching assistants when they attend normal classes. Excellent teaching, for individuals or small groups, sets high expectations so pupils' responses are very positive. Experienced staff use their very good understanding of their pupils' difficulties and abilities to develop very positive relationships. Pupils who attend the unit make very good progress and achieve well.

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

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

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

59. Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve above average standards by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- The imaginative modular units of work in Years 7 to 9 provide pupils with good chances to write in different styles and for a number of purposes.
- The good application of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy is contributing to the raising of standards in the subject.
- The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is too large, particularly at the end of Year 11.
- A significant minority of lessons lack pace and rigour so pupils are insufficiently challenged and fail to make appropriate progress in learning during the time available.

#### **Commentary**

60. Attainment upon entry into school in all aspects of English is above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, so standards in English at age 14 are above average. In the most recent national tests attainment was above the national average, though below the average of schools with a similar pupil intake. Pupils sustain satisfactory progress in their GCSE studies in Years 10 and 11 and achieve above average standards in English language and literature. Girls significantly outperform boys in GCSE English literature, so the gap between grades achieved by boys and girls, is larger than average. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and members of special needs department with the result that they make good progress in relation to their abilities and identified targets for improvement.

61. The majority of pupils display good oral skills. Standards by the time pupils are 14 and 16 are above average. Most pupils are confident in articulating their ideas and opinions. Not all pupils are good listeners. A significant minority do not always listen to teachers' expositions and instructions or value the ideas and opinions of others. Most pupils in all years are good readers with a number of pupils having high order reading skills. Pupils in all years have a good vocabulary relative to their age and display good reading comprehension skills. This increases their ability to read and understand the range of poems, plays and novel studied in Years 7 to 11. Standards in reading at 14 and 16 are above average. Critical and analytical reading skills are well taught in school, particularly in Years 10 and 11, so the majority of pupils develop a good understanding of the challenging texts they read in their GCSE studies. This contributes much to their ability to write expressively about the factual and literary materials they have read.

62. Standards in writing at 14 and 16 are above average. Pupils improve their basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar in Years 7 to 9. They use them to good effect in a range of English activities allowing them to write in different styles and appreciate how factual information can be expressed in different ways. Many pupils produce good extended essays with few or no mistakes. Good use of redrafting skills give pupils regular chances to improve the quality of their work. A number of high ability pupils produce very good written work by the end of Year 11. They make a strong personal written response to questions, supported by good evidence from the text and well-selected quotations. Average ability pupils produce good written work but are less secure in responding to ideas, issues and abstract concepts in the poems, plays and novels they study.

63. The majority of pupils display positive attitudes to their work and are keen to learn. However, a minority of pupils take a passive approach to learning and do not always make a full and active contribution to lessons.

64. Teaching is good and some is very good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed with resources used well to promote good learning. The department applies the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy in an effective manner, with clear evidence that it is making a positive contribution to the improvement of standards in the subject. Where teaching is good and better teachers have high expectations of all members of the class. They provide pupils with a range of challenging activities which allow them to make good progress in both oral, reading and writing skills within a single lesson. In a very good Year 9 lesson pupils discussed, read and wrote about the emotive and persuasive language in political speeches prior to the start of the Iraq war. This also provided a good example of the department's valuable contribution to pupils' personal social and moral development. Where teaching is satisfactory, at best, pupils are insufficiently challenged. Pupils rather than teachers dictate the slow pace of the lesson and decide how much or little work they wish to produce.

65. Leadership and management are very good. In the comparatively short time the new subject leader has been in post she has introduced good new management and assessment structures. These are enabling the department to standardise its practices and to monitor the teaching and assessment of the subject. All other members of this hard-working department are currently exploring strategies for raising standards, in particular that of boys. The department provides pupils with an imaginative, demanding English curriculum with some very good modular units of work in Years 7 to 9. Pupils take part in a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including a reading club and visits to the cinema and theatre to see productions of the novels and plays they are studying. Resources for the subject are adequate. The department has its own computer suite, though this resource is currently under-used as a resource for learning.

66. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have risen since the last inspection, with good overall improvement in the subject.

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

67. The planned provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The expectation that several important areas of literacy development will feature in the work of subjects across the school is not being fully realised. The use and development of specific vocabulary, the modelling of answers and the use of writing frames remains unsatisfactory. Good examples of literacy development were seen in geography, history, music, religious education and science. The school has identified the need to re-assess this provision. This needs to be an immediate priority, as currently no one member of staff has specific responsibility for literacy across the curriculum and many new teachers have joined the staff since the original whole school training.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

68. Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils are not achieving as well as they should, so GCSE results have declined over the last three years.
- The most talented linguists continue to achieve well at GCSE.
- Pupils' achievement by Year 9 is unsatisfactory, due to inadequate curriculum and assessment.
- After a period of instability in staffing vigorous action is being taken to raise standards, teaching has improved and is now good.
- There is a very good programme of extra-curricular visits and exchanges.

69. Teacher assessments for 14 year old pupils match the national average. Girls attain significantly higher levels than boys. Not enough pupils in top sets reach higher levels, e.g. level 6. Standards seen in pupils' work in Year 9 reflect these teacher assessments. Pupils are relatively confident within the topics they are studying, and hold brief conversations, for example about part time jobs or about what they eat and drink. However, Year 9 pupils do not build up their language skills sufficiently for many of them to work confidently at either expected or higher National Curriculum levels. The introduction of an imaginative curriculum in Year 7 is already starting to raise standards for younger pupils as it promotes higher expectations.

70. Results in GCSE examinations in French and German have declined over the last three years and in 2003 they were below the national average. The most talented pupils on the other hand, achieved well with twice as many getting A\* grades compared to the national average. In French, girls' results were above the national average but boys' performance was poor, bringing down the combined results. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 showed some improvement when compared to the 2003 results. However, standards in some of the middle sets are still not high enough. Pupils can study a good range of languages at GCSE. Spanish has been introduced as an option and good extra-curricular provision is also attended by pupils from another local school. Italian has also been successfully introduced with after-school lessons where pupils are progressing well. However the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not provide well enough for progression in language skills such as the use of tenses or the development of written work of any greater length.

71. In 2003, pupils who were below average overall on entry to the school reached average standards in French by the end of Year 9. However, pupils are not doing as well as they should, especially when compared to their performance in English, mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11 the most able linguists make good progress. Pupils in top sets understood demanding taped listening material and in a German class pupils spoke clearly, with good pace, about school reports. However, achievement of pupils in middle ability groups is less satisfactory. Written work is often brief and shows that basic grammatical points have not been mastered. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress, as they are usually taught in small groups with pupils of similar ability and materials are closely matched to their needs.

72. Teaching is good overall and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. All lessons are well structured and have clear learning objectives. Teachers often use lively starter activities to engage the attention of pupils and get them working quickly. However, the range of learning activities provided in the main part of the lesson is often insufficient to ensure that pupils learn the new material with sufficient confidence. In some lessons, the teacher speaks too much English so pupils are not given enough planned use of the target language. The new Year 7 scheme of work encourages lively teaching and expects pupils to re-use phrases and vocabulary from earlier units in each new topic they tackle. For older pupils, well-planned and thoroughly resourced lessons, especially with higher sets, ensure satisfactory progress in learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly satisfactory in lessons, but their response to homework is often inadequate, both in learning new vocabulary and in written tasks. One reason for this lies in the schemes of work. This sets out clearly what is to be taught and when, but there is no advice on how to present topics in a way which captures the interest of pupils and provide an incentive to learn things quickly. Not enough emphasis is placed on pupils working creatively. As a result, some otherwise sound or good teaching fails to secure the commitment of many pupils to do their best. Teachers make very good use of the resources they have, including tape recorders, laptops and projectors. Foreign language assistants work alongside teachers, bringing an authentic perspective to the work.

73. Assessment procedures for pupils following GCSE courses are good. Pupils in all sets know their target grades. They are being more closely monitored and sit regular tests to check if they are making suitable progress and are on course to achieve their target grades. Pupils about to start coursework are given helpful explanations about what they need to do to get the best grade they can. With pupils in Years 7 to 9 the situation is different. Although teachers assess work using National Curriculum levels, they do not make pupils sufficiently aware of targets they should be aiming for, or what they need to do to reach them. The complex system of exercise books means that pupils' day

to day classwork is not well enough supervised, leading to very variable standards of presentation and organisation, especially for younger pupils.

74. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular visits and exchanges, including the Italian exchange. These make a very good contribution to pupils' wider cultural and social education. The faculty has done well to maintain and extend this programme in the context of a nationwide decline in home-to-home exchanges.

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers have a clear awareness of the need to bring about improvement in standards and a detailed action plan is being vigorously implemented. Good use is made of faculty meeting time to discuss teaching and learning as well as day to day management. On the other hand, the faculty's handbook does not promote a clear vision for its teaching and learning. Schemes of work require further development. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place, but need to focus more sharply on the quality of pupils' learning in lessons. The department has a full suite of well-equipped rooms and has benefited from considerable investment in ICT. The impact of this additional resourcing on standards is not yet sufficient.

76. Since the last inspection the school has been awarded shared specialist status for languages. Standards have declined and the achievements of pupils of differing abilities are too varied. Staffing difficulties have been resolved and there is evidence of recent improvement resulting from the action taken by the new subject leader. The school is not fulfilling the expectations of its specialist status and progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77. The quality of provision for mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving, especially for boys, and higher attaining pupils.
- Achievement is good overall, since most pupils work hard, although a minority in some classes disrupt teaching and learning.
- Teaching is good, but inconsistencies are evident in appropriateness of challenge, management of pupils and quality of marking.
- The leadership of the department is very good, with vision and drive for improvement, although monitoring is not yet fully effective.

### **Commentary**

78. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2003, and above those in similar schools. Mathematics results were higher than in English or science and showed greater added value. The trend of improvement has been faster than the national trend over the last four years, particularly for the higher levels. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above the national average, sustaining levels similar to the previous three years. Mathematics is amongst the subjects achieving the highest proportion of A\*-C grades, although the number of A\*S were adversely affected by coursework problems. At the end of Years 9 and 11 boys achieved higher results than girls, a reverse of the national picture.

79. In lessons standards were above national expectations but varied with the quality of teaching and the attitudes of pupils as well as their prior attainment. Achievement was greatest where expectations were high but work was well structured to build on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. In most lessons pupils were challenged to think through concepts and ideas; this was particularly successful when rooted in practical or previous experience. Good examples seen were Year 7 pupils developing their understanding of area and perimeter and the Year 8 top set calculating percentage increase and decrease using real-life problems. Achievement was less

where challenge was inappropriate. For example in the Year 9 top set's introduction to pythagoras' theorem based on algebraic proof, confusion was evident and little understanding shown of the basic concept and its use. However, a lower ability Year 9 class developed enough understanding, through practical experience of right-angled triangles, to quickly use pythagoras to solve problems.

80. Setting by ability has increased challenge and stretched the more able pupils. Year 11 top set reach very high standards, as evident in this year's GCSE coursework, their work books and a lesson on vector geometry. High achievement was also seen in middle and low attaining sets, where good teaching led pupils beyond expected levels. Learning by doing and investigating patterns enabled pupils in a Year 9 low set to understand the relationship between equations and straight line graphs. Pupils with special educational needs or low prior attainment achieved well by working in small groups with well structured schemes of work, often with extra help from learning support assistants. Teachers know their classes well, and have extensive assessment data from regular tests as well as feedback from lessons and homework. Teachers prepare pupils very well for external tests and examinations.

81. Teaching and learning are good, but inconsistent with excellent as well as unsatisfactory features. Planning and preparation were good, with interesting oral starting activities to lessons, to set pupils thinking and develop mental calculation. The best lessons involved a variety of timed activities, a fast pace, often with class or group discussions, investigations or practical work. Pupils were encouraged to explain their answers and methods, using correct terminology. Most pupils worked well together, usually in single gender groups, with little interaction between boys or girls. Class management varied, resulting in disruption to learning where pupils did not listen to instructions, being arrogantly rude in talking above the teacher. In a minority of lessons pupils' off-task chatter affected achievement, disturbing other pupils' learning and slowing the pace of the lesson. The use of overhead projectors with relevant software on laptops improves teachers' demonstrations, particularly of graphical concepts and methods. However pupils do not use computers sufficiently as part of normal lessons. Marking pupils' work with constructive comments has developed this year, but is inconsistent, with excellent examples helping pupils know what they do well and how to improve, but also many gaps and unmarked work in books. Pupils know their target levels or grades but are not sufficiently aware of how to reach them.

82. Leadership of mathematics is very good, with vision and a strong drive to improve. The head of department is a good role model as a teacher, and is now part of the school's leadership team. Management is good, review and monitoring are in place, but not yet producing consistency across the department. The full team of well-qualified, experienced teachers have good mathematical knowledge, and relevant in-service training. Frequent informal and formal meetings of the department facilitate the sharing of good practice. A regular mathematics clinic is held each week for any pupil needing help after school. There is joint teaching in the main feeder primary school and master classes are held for more able Year 6 pupils. Links with other schools and post-16 providers in the consortium are very good. Local firms such as Siemens are involved with the department, contributing prizes after judging the GCSE statistics coursework projects. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, with improved teaching and higher GCSE standards.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

83. The national strategy for improving teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is well embedded in the school, including numeracy across the curriculum. Regular numeracy quizzes and competitions take place in form tutor times, particularly in Year 8, raising the profile, enjoyment and importance of mathematics. Pupils' competence in mathematics is good, and supports learning in other subjects. Pupils are encouraged to verbalise mathematics, to be able to explain their own answers and methods, and to choose from a range of methods to suit their own learning style. The mathematics department has worked closely with other subject leaders to produce a useful graphical skills booklet and associated posters, applicable across the curriculum. Understanding and familiarity with graphs also features well in ICT lessons. Good application of numeracy was seen in several subjects. In design and technology appropriate use was made of linear measurement and weighing skills, and also of pupils' knowledge and understanding of shapes, networks and patterns. In science

numerical work, introduced from Year 7, becomes progressively more demanding. Algebraic formulae are understood and handled well, and statistical knowledge and skills are good. The next steps, already identified, are a whole-school focus on mental and written methods of calculation, the use of calculators, and improved monitoring and evaluation of numeracy.

## **SCIENCE**

84. Provision in science is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' standards and achievement are good.
- The strong subject knowledge of teachers is well used to enhance learning.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good for higher attaining pupils but inappropriate for a minority of others.
- Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils.
- Leadership is good.
- The use of assessment data is underdeveloped and inconsistent
- Inadequate resources hinder both teaching and learning, especially equipment for teaching.

### **Commentary**

85. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Girls gained slightly better results than boys, as occurred nationally. Teacher assessments in Year 9 were broadly in line with test results. In recent years results have improved at the same rate as the national trend. Results in science were a little below those for mathematics but were well above results for English. In 2003 one group of pupils took GCSE examinations in each of the separate science subjects (biology, chemistry, physics) gaining results significantly above the national average. All pupils achieved grades A\* to C, with girls performing slightly better than boys. Other pupils studied for the dual-award science GCSE with over half gaining a grade A\* to C, more than the national average. Boys' results were higher than girls' and higher than their other subjects. Overall in science the percentage of pupils gaining a grade A\* to c was slightly below the school average.

86. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with those nationally. Practical work is very well developed with pupils showing good laboratory skills and the ability to work safely, while collaborating well with their peers. In investigative work higher attaining pupils in Year 7 understand the need to control variables in order to ensure a fair test and to use a best-fit line in graphs. Pupils respond well to being challenged and employ good literacy and numeracy skills to support their achievements, but their information and communication technology skills are not employed. Standards for pupils with special educational needs are good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson where a majority of pupils had special educational needs or behaviour difficulties excellent management by the teacher enabled pupils to complete a practical task and understand the relationship between the energy released and the reactivity of different pairs of metals.

87. In the separate sciences pupils' standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Pupils pick up new ideas quickly and can apply them in unfamiliar situations. In a Year 11 physics lesson pupils first studied the theoretical properties of waves before being challenged to apply their knowledge in practical situations using microwaves. A high level of understanding and initiative was shown and the way they challenged each other was impressive. Pupils studying for dual-award science mostly make satisfactory progress,, but for some lower attainers the dual-award course is inappropriate, so their achievement is unsatisfactory.

88. Teaching and learning are nearly always satisfactory and are good overall. Over half the lessons were good or better with nearly three quarters at this standard in Years 7-9. Good relationships between teachers and pupils enhance learning. The strong subject knowledge of

teachers is effectively used when questioning pupils and illustrating theoretical ideas with a wide range of practical applications. Pupils' behaviour and concentration are usually satisfactory but poor behaviour occasionally affects learning, due to a lack of challenge and pace in the lesson. Homework is set and marked regularly, but with only a minority of pupils receive helpful comments about how to improve their work. Regular assessment tests make pupils in Years 10 and 11 well aware of their standards in relation to GCSE. The self-assessment procedures in Years 7-9 are used inconsistently and pupils are much less aware of their level of attainment.

89. Leadership is good. Five out of nine staff are new within the past year but there is a clear sense of direction and good team commitment to improvement. Management is satisfactory. Plans for improvement are at an advanced stage but have yet to be implemented. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching have started but are not yet used to disseminate the good practice seen. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Laboratories are bright and pleasant to work in with good displays of pupils' work but the split site has a negative effect on efficiency. The provision of textbooks has improved recently but an unsatisfactory lack of other teaching equipment too frequently limits learning in class. Some physics items are old and need replacing. Computer hardware and software are insufficient. Laboratory technicians give an efficient service despite the cramped conditions.

90. Since the last inspection standards have improved and the separate sciences curriculum meets the needs of higher attaining pupils better. A good range of teaching strategies is now employed with information and communication equipment used well for presentation and for experimental data-logging. There is, additionally, good capacity among staff for further improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Resources and the accommodation for teaching ICT are good.
- Technical support is good.
- The standards and achievement of pupils in Years 7-9 is good.
- Assessment, recording and feedback to pupils are unsatisfactory.
- Co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

92. In 2003 the results of teachers' assessments in Year 9 were above the national average. The pupils' work seen during the inspection, and discussions with them indicate that this is currently the case. No pupils were entered for the GCSE in ICT in 2003. The results of 28 pupils who took GNVQ were above average. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of pupils acquire ICT skills by studying for a GCSE in business and communications systems. The standard of the work in Year 11 is average, and grades obtained in mock examinations were below those in other subjects. The standard of one group of Year 10 pupils studying GCSE ICT is above average.

93. Most pupils show confidence in using computers in Years 7 to 11. Work in Year 7 shows good progress from primary levels, with pupils producing presentations for various audiences, creating spreadsheets, and entering and manipulating data. Year 9 pupils showed a good understanding of the impact of ICT on society data protection; they were also confident in collecting data and presenting this in appropriate graphical form. Achievement is good in Year 10. Much of the Year 11 business and communications systems GCSE coursework is incomplete and includes very little evaluation. There is little evidence in any year of work on control or data logging.

94. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is sometimes good. In all years pupils respond well to lessons where the teacher makes good use of the screen and involves them in starter activities and plenary sessions. Most teachers give appropriate individual support to students and where teaching is good teachers ask the right sort of questions to develop students thinking. However, in too many lessons the pace of learning is too slow and teachers fail to challenge all pupils or provide tasks matched to pupils' abilities. Learning objectives are not always met by all pupils and homework is not used effectively.

95. In all years most pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. However in Year 11 some tasks are not presented in a way that motivates pupils. Pupils have little understanding of how well they are doing or what they have to do to improve. Pupils are not given adequate feedback on GCSE coursework. Pupils have access, from school and home, to very good learning resources on the school's intranet.

96. Leadership and management of the subject is a recognized priority for the school. The new curriculum manager has plans for the development of the subject but they are not fully implemented. Leadership is good. There is much enthusiasm among the team of teachers and a commitment to raising standards. Management is satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 Strategy materials are being effectively used but the storage of portfolios of pupils' work is only at an early stage. There is no clear marking policy and this is a weakness. The recording of marks and assessments is not systematic and is not used to inform learning. Aspects of the National Curriculum delivered by other departments are not monitored effectively.

## **Information Technology across the curriculum**

97. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is generally satisfactory and is improving. Pupils' work shows evidence of using the Internet for research, word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheets in class work and coursework in many subjects. Very good use of ICT was seen in GCSE mathematics coursework. Recent national ICT training has raised the level of competence of staff; so many now use interactive whiteboards, laptops and projectors effectively to make their teaching more interesting.

98. Good practice was seen during some lessons in art, business studies, design and technology, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science. The ICT suites in humanities, mathematics and modern foreign languages are well used. The English suite was not seen in use during the inspection. There is still insufficient hardware in some areas and not enough suitable subject specific software, particularly in science. Although resources have been provided in all curriculum areas there is still no systematic co-ordination or monitoring of ICT across the curriculum.

99. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There has been a significant investment in resources; the ratio of computers to pupils is now 1:4:3. In Years 7-9 there are now discrete ICT lessons. In Years 10 and 11 ICT is delivered through business and communication systems, and science, to those students who do not follow a GCSE ICT course. There is good support from the network manager and technician for the installation and maintenance of equipment. Attainment has improved; it is now average in Years 10 and 11 and above average in Years 7-9. Although resources have been provided in all curriculum areas there is still no systematic co-ordination or monitoring of ICT across the curriculum.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

100. Provision in geography is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by Year 9 and at GCSE are above average.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Leadership and management of geography are very good.
- The use of ICT to support teaching is developing good skills.
- A minority of pupils have difficulty with their writing exercises.

101. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 because they are encouraged by their teachers to work hard. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their studies. As they move through Years 7-9 and encounter different areas of geography they receive good support from their teachers. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in class exercises.

102. Results in GCSE examinations have been sustained at well above average levels over the past five years. The proportion of pupils attaining A\* - C grades is also well above average. Girls out-perform boys at the highest level A\* and A grades. In Year 11 standards of work are above average. Most pupils have a clear view of how similar environments worldwide usually have the same characteristics. The higher attaining pupils can accurately plot statistical data on well prepared graphs. Gifted pupils are suitably challenged. Higher and average attaining pupils use their insights competently to describe and explain their understanding of geography. Lower attaining pupils can extract information and, with the close support of their teacher, make valid deductions about what the evidence tells them.

103. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. This is because teachers know their subject well. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good grounding in geographical skills developed from Year 7 on. As pupils progress through the years they gain the skill to use and interpret maps. Pupils use their sources competently to select relevant evidence. They explain well the reasons for population shifts or climatic changes. The majority of pupils at this stage have good recall of earlier work and move on well to new work. The less industrious often struggle to recall past learning and this hinders their progress to new work.

104. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. There is a consistent start to each lesson by identifying a clear aim which stems from the scheme of work. Each teacher gives a clear introduction to the lesson, refers to previous learning and instils a regular routine. Teachers provide an appropriate range of activities, which encourages the use of transferable skills such as writing in different modes, research, numeracy and ICT. There is active encouragement for students to adopt a range of learning styles such as appropriate question and answer to develop speaking, listening and memory skills. Teachers insist on high standards of presentation including accurate spelling and punctuation. A significant strength of the teaching is the emphasis placed on investigatory skills. There is good reinforcement of main points written up on boards and teachers make good use of visual aids.

105. Geography is well led and managed. Teachers work as an effective team. The subject development plans are excellent and there is good curriculum planning. The monitoring of students' progress is sensitive and thorough, which has contributed to the well above average performances by pupils at GCSE. Fieldwork, which contributes much to effective learning is well managed and safe. There are good geography displays in classrooms which brighten the environment and show what students can achieve. There has been very good improvement in provision since the previous inspection.

## History

106. Provision in history is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons have clear aims and purposes so pupils learn efficiently.
- Teachers encourage pupils to make good use of a wide range of resources.
- Good use is made of ICT to enrich teaching and for presentation and research.
- Disruptive behaviour of a minority inhibits learning.
- A few pupils are too dependent on their teachers.

107. Results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 matched the national average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher A\*-C grades was below the national average. However, results at grades A\*-G were above average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results over the previous four years have been consistently above average. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average in Year 7. Average standards of work were evident in the work of pupils in Years 8 to 11.

108. Achievement is good overall. When pupils enter the school standards are below average. In Year 7 pupils achievement is limited and they continue to demonstrate below average standards in history. Pupils' achievements in Years 8 and 9 are good and pupils throughout the ability range make good progress. These improvements occur because the teachers use their good subject knowledge to challenge pupils and raise their expectations. Many pupils write well with increasing confidence. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. The majority of the pupils demonstrate positive attitudes, they clearly enjoy their lessons, develop an enthusiasm for the subject and make gains in their understanding. Pupils develop clear understanding that the quality of their evidence is vital. They are encouraged to acquire the knowledge from an increasing range of sources and to understand how historians make use of such sources of evidence to make conclusions. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to encourage pupils to search for evidence sources and to present their findings. Pupils are able to identify those historical sources which are most appropriate and develop effective strategies for analysing them.

109. Teaching is good and often very good. Lessons start well with concise introductions to major issues in British, European and world history. The teachers use interesting resources to help pupils understand that people interpret history differently, including the latest historical interpretations of historical themes and issues. Teachers make good use of questioning to engage pupils' interest and also to check and reinforce their understanding. Teaching methods are chosen well to suit the topic or subject. Teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave challenge both the least and most able pupils. The constant supervision by teachers raises the standard of their work as they become involved in discussing people and events. Teachers support pupils with special educational needs effectively and appropriate changes are made to the lesson or resources to improve the match to pupils' special needs and abilities.

110. Learning is good. Teachers emphasise appropriately the importance of reading, speaking, writing and listening. Pupils have well developed speaking skills and can confidently contribute their own views to discussions. There are, however, problems in reading and writing for a significant minority of pupils which. This is limiting pupils' grasp of history as it causes difficulties when pupils have to look for patterns and deeper understanding. Under-performing pupils being targeted and aspects of literacy are being incorporated across the curriculum to help prepare pupils for future demands. Higher attaining pupils are able to support their choices with reasoned explanations that drew on all the resources that they had looked at. Relationships are good in most classrooms. There is an inclusive ethos in history lessons in which all pupils work together. The majority of pupils behave well in class. However, instances were observed of mildly disruptive behaviour which inhibited learning.

111. Leadership and management are very good. Guidance to teachers is clear and beneficial. The teachers are engaged in creative thinking and planning to increase pupils' motivation and to raise standards. There is constant review of practice and a close analysis of the main difficulties in increasing the quality of provision. Accommodation is good. Resources are good and pupils have

good opportunities to learn from historical sites. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

## Religious Education

112. Provision in Religious Education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some of the teaching is excellent.
- Staff have very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- The teaching makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual development and multi-cultural awareness.
- There is insufficient time to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils not in the GCSE option group.
- The scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 does not reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

113. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of many world religions including Christianity and Judaism. Pupils understand the significance and importance of many religious concepts such as symbols and festivals. They can often intelligently relate their learning to their own lives and experiences. Writing skills are good, and pupils can express their viewpoints in a fluent way and they work well together.

114. Attainment in the 2003 GCSE examination was slightly below the national average. Nearly half of the pupils in this Year 11 option group gained A\* to C grades. Almost all pupils gained grades A\* to G. Above average standards were seen in the GCSE option group's work during the inspection. The pupils have good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of Christianity and Buddhism and they can talk meaningfully about customs and beliefs. Written work is good and pupils both discuss and express their opinions in a confident way. The standard of attainment of the majority of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils is well below the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. This is due to insufficient time and the lack of an appropriate curriculum for pupils who are not in the GCSE option group. Consequently very little written work has been completed and the religious content is minimal.

115. The achievement of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE option group is good. Girls' attainment is generally better than that of boys, particularly in examinations. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, due to the effective support given to them in the classroom. Teachers are inconsistent in their provision of different levels of work in the classroom, but both the more and the less able pupils make good progress.

116. Teaching is good and includes some very good and excellent teaching. All lessons are well planned and include a wide range of activities. Where teaching is good or better, the pace is brisk and stimulating content is drawn from world religions. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are high and there is strong classroom management. Where the teaching is satisfactory, the religious content and management of pupils is weaker. The learning includes learning from religions as well as learning about them. The department makes a good contribution to the broader aspect of spiritual and multi-cultural development through the study of world religions and reflection on various philosophical issues.

117. The leadership of the department is good as is the management. The staffing is very good. Accommodation and resources are both very good. Statutory requirements are being met in Years 7, 8 and 9. Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11 for the pupils who are not on the GCSE option course due to insufficient time and an inappropriate scheme of work. The department makes a good contribution to the broader aspect of pupils' spiritual and multi-cultural development in the study of world religions and through reflection on various philosophical issues.

118. Whilst the quality in many aspects of the departments work has been sustained at levels

similar to those in the last inspection the failure to ensure that the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their statutory entitlement means that overall provision is unsatisfactory.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Art**

119. Provision in art is **good**

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

- Pupils achieve well so results in national tests and examinations are well above average.
- Good teaching engages pupils well and they make good progress.
- The art curriculum is enriched by extra curricular provision.
- Good practice evident in the department is not spread widely across the school.
- The use of ICT is insufficiently developed.
- Professional development does not include training for leadership or team building training.

#### **Commentary**

120. Pupils come to the school with standards similar to the national average and most of them make good progress. Standards in Year 9, evaluated by teacher assessments, are above average and pupils achieve well. However, some pupils, particularly less well motivated boys who find it hard to sustain their concentration, do not achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from the school's special needs unit achieve well and make good progress. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations were also well above average, sustaining the high levels attained in previous years. In current GCSE groups standards are above average and pupils are clearly making good progress. The department's collective commitment to improving the quality of pupils' sketchbooks is enabling them to develop comprehensive, detailed and informative records of the development of their examination projects. Some pupils are producing very high quality, imaginative work which demonstrates very high standards. Pupils' work demonstrates confidence in the use of varied media, including three dimensional work. Pupils develop high level skills of enquiry and critical evaluation. Boys generally work hard in lessons but are less well organised in managing their homework.

121. Teaching and learning are good both in Years 7-9 and in Years 10 and 11. The more effective teaching is characterised by the teachers' good knowledge of their different dimensions of provision. Teachers have a very good understanding of the GCSE course, how it is assessed and what pupils must do to achieve their target grades. This influences their planning and provides the basis for good quality guidance on how to improve. In Years 7-9 the pupils are encouraged to assess their own work but actual practice is inconsistent. Demonstrations and examples of pupils' own work serve the groups well. Although there has been some increase in the use of ICT since the last inspection there is still potential for developing the use of this important tool with all year groups. Teachers' organisation for the majority of lessons is good and they generally manage behaviour effectively. A number of pupils benefit from additional enrichment activities outside the normal lessons. They work with artists who visit the school to lead imaginative projects and contribute to set design and the production of scenery for school productions.

122. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Documentation is of a very high quality and sets high expectations which have led to improved examination results. Specialist accommodation is somewhat cramped but the department is well resourced, although access to computers is too limited. The department has a high profile in the local and regional networks but misses opportunities for sharing the good practice evident in the department within the school. For example, staff fail to develop stronger links with the technology department and with textiles teachers in particular. The department benefits from well qualified staff with a range of expertise to bring to its work. Professional development is strong in terms of subject development but there has been

insufficient development of those leadership skills that ensure maximum benefit from effective team working.

## **Design and Technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are insufficient resources.
- The provision and use of ICT to support teaching is inadequate.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Very effective assessment helps pupils to evaluate their own progress.
- Revised schemes of work provide clear guidance for teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

124. Standards in Years 7-9 are average. Pupils respond positively to well-focused tasks and design projects. Work is effectively structured and pupils build up a sound bank of key skills in designing and making. Standards of practical work vary and teachers do not ensure that qualities of style and finish are appropriate in material areas. The quality of textile products is especially good.

125. Overall GCSE design and technology results equate to the national average, whilst results in some individual disciplines are well above. In the 2003 examinations A\* to C grades were gained by almost two-fifths in food and by almost two thirds in both resistant materials and graphics. Standards in textiles were particularly good with nearly three-quarters achieving the higher GCSE grades. Standards in pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 were above average and there was evidence of well-designed project work which was both innovative and which reflected high standards of manufacture. Pupils are beginning to develop a personal style but they pay insufficient attention to presentational quality. Inadequate graphical techniques limit the range the range of presentational skills for the majority of pupils.

126. Evidence from pupils' folders indicates that their achievements are satisfactory through Years 7-9. Pupils respond enthusiastically to tasks and assignments. They use machines and equipment competently. Pupils work safely, observing the clear health and hygiene guidance. They also follow codes of conduct well. Pupils' behaviour is generally good and attitudes are positive, although there are a number of disruptive pupils in Year 9 whose behaviour affects the work of others. Project work reflects developing study skills and pupils are made aware of the deadlines and examination requirements in a way which often improves the quality of their work.

127. The teaching team includes experienced and knowledgeable teachers. They manage lessons well and have high expectations. The quality of teaching overall is good and there are examples of very good teaching. Relationships with pupils are good and staff provide a range of stimulating assignments in a range of specialist fields, although recent changes in the staff team have resulted in some non-specialist teaching. Use of ICT is underdeveloped. In particular the lack of computer aided design [CAD] and computer added manufacture [CAM] is limiting pupils' progress. Staff are well supported by two experienced, competent technicians.

128. A new and comprehensive assessment scheme, which records progress and attainment in each module of work, enables pupils to create their own targets for achievement. A useful module project booklet ensures that pupils follow an appropriate procedure and are more aware of the assessment criteria. As pupils are clearer about their targets they can track their own progress more effectively. This effective system is becoming integral to the pupils' learning and helps them make sound progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of support from learning support staff, which ensures that they reach appropriate targets.

129. Good leadership, by a relatively new subject leader, has enabled the department to initiate considerable changes which have improved the overall provision since the last inspection. Important changes have included the introduction of new schemes of work and project outlines. Staff have used the new assessment scheme to re-focus key areas of work. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The department has been starved of resources in some areas, which has led to an uneven pattern of provision. Good use is made of exemplar materials in stimulating pupils' response and setting standards of quality and there is a good range of innovative and attractive work on display. Good practice is not disseminated widely enough.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Drama**

130. Provision in drama is **good**.

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

- Good teaching results in pupils making significant gains in their learning.
- The imaginative, challenging curriculum provides a range of drama skills and techniques.
- A number of pupils are insecure in evaluating their own practical activities.

### **Commentary**

131. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with a limited knowledge of educational drama and role-play. Pupils go on to make good progress in their knowledge and application of a satisfactory range of drama techniques and strategies. Consequently standards reached by the end of Year 9 equate to the national expectations. Good progress is sustained in Year 10 since pupils use and extend their drama skills in increasingly demanding drama activities. Consequently, standards are above average by the time they are 16. This is reflected in the above average grades achieved by pupils in the most recent GCSE drama examinations.

132. The good progress made in lessons is enhanced by pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and their good self-discipline. Pupils in Year 7 displayed satisfactory drama skills as they improvised a market scene linked to a scripted play they had read. Pupils worked well together, listening to and valuing each other's ideas and opinions before arriving at a final framework for their work. Good drama skills were observed in a Year 9 class as pupils explored 'still images' and 'thought tracking' in order to develop a clear understanding of characters in William Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night'. Year 11 pupils developed good improvisational skills as they focussed on the creation of believable characters in John Godber's 'Teechers'. Pupils carefully considered the use of language, the physical nature of characters, their motivation and their relationships with others. Year 10 and 11 pupils too rarely consider the ideas and rehearsal techniques of respected and influential directors and drama practitioners, which restricts their use of such knowledge to improve their own practical work.

133. Teaching is good with some very good teaching evident. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect in the support and advice they give to pupils. Pupils frequently evaluate both their own other's work with the intention of improving it. The conclusions of lessons are used well to review lesson objectives or to share and celebrate pupils' achievements. Whilst a number of more able pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to write in an informed manner about the practical activities they have been involved in, some pupils tend to focus on what they did rather than evaluating the success or failure of the drama skills and strategies they had used.

134. Leadership and management are good. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities with chances to join a drama club, perform examination work to an audience of friends and family, and to take part in annual school productions. Drama was not reported on as a

discrete subject in the last inspection, though standards in the subject, including GCSE results, have improved since then.

## Music

135. Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, energetic leadership and management provide a clear vision for music education.
- Good quality teaching and learning is rewarded with comparable achievement.
- The music curriculum throughout the school is broad, balanced and very well delivered.
- Extra curricular provision is outstanding.
- Shortage of curriculum time constrains further Improvements to standards in Years 7-9.
- Shortcomings in resources for music, especially in ICT, are limiting future development.

### Commentary

136. On entry to the school the standards of attainment in music of many pupils' are well below national expectations. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show standards to be above average. Work in class confirms this and augurs very well for continuing rising standards in the future. This represents very good achievement in Years 7-9, although a few pupils still have difficulty with some important musical concepts. The majority have greater confidence in singing and playing both as individuals and in larger groups. The focus of pupils' attention, especially when listening to music, is improving significantly and provides a secure foundation for those who elect to follow GCSE courses.

137. By the end of Year 11, pupils' musical skills are further improved and standards are above average. In the recent past small numbers of pupils studying GCSE music have achieved outstanding examination results. During the inspection, when the department was catering for rapidly increasing numbers of pupils of all abilities, above average standards were evident. Given some pupils' prior levels of attainment, these achievements represent very good progress. Several pupils take graded examinations in music which are not currently recorded or reported in the governors' annual report to parents.

138. Teaching and learning in music throughout the school are good with some outstanding features. In all year groups, the impact of very well qualified teachers and expert musicians is clearly seen in very detailed planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. Teachers' very high expectations of pupils' and their engagement with music in performing, composing and critical listening are often characterised by unusual levels of energy and dynamism coupled with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. This engenders very positive attitudes, good behaviour and attention to the task in hand by pupils who clearly value their music lessons highly. Lapses in such very high standards are rare and very well managed by the teachers. Consequently, almost every lesson observed had positive outcomes, especially in the very high levels of achievement seen. In only one Year 9 lesson, where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, did pupils with insufficient ICT skills to cope with the tasks disrupt the learning of others.

139. The music staff and pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of music making and their commitment to the life of the whole school by their involvement in a wide range of instrumental and vocal ensembles, performing in school concerts and productions and further afield in the local community. Such beneficial activities include a significant contribution to the planning and presentation of a local carnival.

## Physical Education

140. Provision in physical education is **very good**

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Standards at GCSE are well above national averages.
- All teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and very good subject knowledge.
- Progress is good in both Years 7-9 and Years 10-11.
- There is extensive and very popular extra-curricular provision.

## **Commentary**

141. Standards in Years 7-11 are in line with expectations. Many pupils reach above average levels of attainment, and some, especially those that attend extra-curricular activities, perform at very high levels. All pupils have sound basic skills, evaluate well in all activities and show good understanding of team tactics in games. GCSE results are well above average and have been sustained at high levels for several years. Since, however, the pupils' written work does not reflect this, there is a wide range of standards in their assignments.

142. Achievement is good at both key stages. Pupils demonstrated above average progression through good understanding of the techniques, rules and tactics of the activities seen. Pupils in Years 7-9 make progress quickly over a short period of time. Many show good attitudes and effort in lessons and extra-curricular activities, which have a big impact on their progress. Year 10 and 11 pupils generally make satisfactory progress, with many progressing well, as there is a wide range of activities offered. GCSE pupils progress steadily at first then improve in Year 11, as there is a push for good exam results by pupils and staff. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and are indiscernible in practical activities. Pupils from the autistic centre progress well both in separate and integrated lessons run by the physical education department.

143. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory with the majority good to very good. Teachers plan well, have very good subject knowledge and are extremely dedicated. Pupils are highly motivated through a variety of strategies including regular verbal praise, credits, teachers' own enthusiasm and in particular their caring relationships with their classes. However this is not reflected in the marking and target setting of GCSE work, which show an inconsistent approach, with some very good practice and some unsatisfactory. Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to use and improve their literacy and numeracy skills in Years 7-11, and GCSE pupils also develop appropriate information communication technology skills. Pupils learn very well in lessons. They follow instructions quickly because of good attitudes, effort and discipline, and so spend the maximum amount of time mastering new skills and tactics.

144. The department is very well led and managed, as is demonstrated by its excellent documentation and displays. Teaching, learning and standards are regularly monitored by the subject leader, results are analysed and very good support is given to colleagues. The excellent team spirit within the department is one of its key strengths. The department lacks a book monitoring policy and procedure, and does not include spiritual and cultural development in its curriculum. The time allocation for Year 10 and 11 lessons is too short.

145. The department runs an extremely wide-ranging extra-curricular programme at lunchtimes, after school and during twilight sessions, which involve a very large percentage of pupils, both boys and girls. This is a real strength of the department, as is the pupils' attitudes and participation in lessons. There are very few non-participants in lessons in all year groups, and these are generally kept involved in lessons in an evaluative or officiating capacity.

146. Since the last inspection the department has improved its high GCSE results. Equality of opportunities is being improved with the gradual matching of boys' and girls' activities and kit. Girls now do football in all years and for next September the kit is planned to be the same for both genders in Year 7. All National Curriculum requirements and health and safety procedures are met.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

147. Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

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

- Very good teaching by experienced teachers.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- Improvement is needed in the assessment of the subject.

#### **Commentary**

148. Personal, social and health education is taught in all years, covering sex education, education on drug abuse, and many units of work on relationships. Other units of work include topics on bullying, friendships, adolescence and emotional development. The teaching is now done by a small group of experienced, committed teachers so the teaching is of a consistently high quality and very good overall. The standards reached by the pupils are in line with what would be expected at this stage and are often higher. The pupils respond positively to the teaching and they are well behaved and attentive. They show an active interest in their work.

149. The subject is well led and managed. The department has a well-developed set of documentation. Other specialists who frequently visit the school and address the pupils supplement the expertise of the teaching team. These include the police, the prison service, the fire service, youth workers and workers on HIV and AIDS. At present there is still no formal assessment or marking, although this was one of the issues brought up at the last inspection. The subject leader has, however, already initiated the preliminary steps for assessment, so this is now under way. Evidence of the impact of this action is limited at this early stage of its implementation.

### **Citizenship**

150. The provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory.

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

- The subject does not meet statutory National Curriculum requirements.
- There is no discrete whole school curriculum planning for the subject.
- Insufficient time is devoted to the monitoring and management of the subject which has led to a serious lack of rigour and emphasis in teaching the subject.
- There are a wide range of community linked activities that have potential for making a good contribution to a planned and well organised citizenship curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

151. The school's approach to the creation of 'good citizens' has resulted in a range of activities which actively promote 'citizenship in action' through a range of practical applications. These include celebrations of citizenship in assemblies and a Citizenship Day in Year 9. The school encourages pupils to raise funds for a variety of charitable causes. There are active year councils supporting the school council and this participation is a useful introduction to considering the wider electoral processes. Pupils gain citizenship awards for work both in school and in the local community.

152. No discrete teaching and learning of citizenship was observed during the inspection. Currently some elements of citizenship are delivered through the personal, social and health education programme where pupils considered drug abuse and its legal implications. There is some

evidence of citizenship activities in most years, as for example in Year 10 where occasional citizenship lessons consider such issues as trades unions, employment issues and money matters. However the lack of coherence makes it difficult to judge standards in these years. No lessons were seen during the inspection and no written work was available for scrutiny. As the majority of pupils are not currently following a recognisable or substantial citizenship curriculum, their achievement is unsatisfactory. There are no assessment procedures in place for the subject and the school has not yet incorporated citizenship into its annual reports to parents.

153. The school has not carried out a full audit of current provision, nor considered how the subject is to be delivered in all years and areas of the curriculum. The member of staff responsible for the subject has carried out a useful audit of how the subject is to be delivered in Years 7-9. The mapping of citizenship opportunities in individual areas of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 still has to be carried out. Individual subject handbooks refer to the teaching of citizenship within the subject, though many of the strategies and activities are more closely related to PHSE and social and moral development, rather than to developing discrete citizenship skills.

154. The subject manager has very little time allocated for planning and monitoring the subject. Nevertheless, since the school does not yet have a specific scheme of work for citizenship and the expectations within the National Curriculum are not fully secure, leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The school still has much to do to translate initial planning into an effective, statutory citizenship programme.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>4</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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