

INSPECTION REPORT

Glenburn High School
Skelmersdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119758

Headteacher: Mrs J Pickthall

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton

Dates of inspection: 6th-10th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708175

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Yewdale Southway Skelmersdale Lancs
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J White
Date of previous inspection:	20 – 24 March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr J W Ashton, Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community The efficiency of the school Assessment
Mr B Silvester, Lay Inspector		
Mrs S Nolan Mr I Middlebrough	Mathematics English, drama Equal opportunities Science Information technology Design and technology Modern foreign languages History	
Mr C P Hewson Mr J E Hunt Mr K Boden Mr G Henshall Mr F Earle		Curriculum Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mrs H Boyle Mr M W Pettitt	Geography Art Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	
Mrs S H Jeffray Mrs P M Rourke		

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 (*Years 7 to 9*), whilst being well below the national average in each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, are actually above the national average for similar schools in mathematics and science.
- Overall GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 (*Years 10 and 11*), though well below average compared to all schools nationally in recent years, are improving at a faster rate than the national average, and are actually above average in each of the past two years, compared to results in similar schools.
- GCSE results in physical education are well above average for all schools.
- Pupils make at least satisfactory, often good, progress in most subjects throughout their time in the school.
- The quality of teaching throughout the school is good.
- The work of the teachers is well monitored by senior management.
- Leadership is good at all levels (headteacher, governors, senior management, pastoral and subject)
- Relationships in the school are good.
- Behaviour is well managed.
- Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils are given good support and guidance and their achievements are well monitored.
- Careers provision is very good.
- Links with the community are strong.

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 3 (*Years 7 to 9*) is below average, even when compared to similar schools
- II. Boys achieve less well than girls in most subjects at both key stages.
- III. Attendance levels, although improving, are still well below average.
- IV. Pupils are not receiving their full National Curriculum entitlement in information technology.
- V. Attainment and progress in music is low due to the difficulties of recruiting a music teacher.
- VI. Religious education, when taught by non-specialist teachers, has some weaknesses.

Glenburn High School has many strengths and few weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians at the school.

• **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has developed well in most of the key areas listed at the time of the previous inspection in March 1995. With its effective headteacher and senior management team and well informed and very supportive governing body, it has a good capacity for further improvement.

- VII. The quality of teaching has been improved, including the broadening of the range of activities and techniques of teaching.
- VIII. Work on core and study skills has been strengthened considerably.
- IX. Departments are well monitored, their planning is more rigorous, and this planning is more closely linked to whole school plans.
- X. Efforts to improve expectations, punctuality and attendance have been maintained, with some, but not yet sufficient, success (*especially in the case of attendance*).
- XI. Provision for religious education has increased since last time, but collective worship is still not held for all pupils on every day.
- XII. Learning materials have been and continue to be adapted and modified to better provide stimulus and challenge for all pupils.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			ey
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
Key Stage 3 Tests	E	B	<i>average</i> C
GCSE Examinations	E	B	<i>below average</i> D
			<i>well below average</i> E

At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected level 5 in the National Curriculum tests are well below the national average for *all* schools in each of English, mathematics and science. They remain below the national average in English even when compared to similar schools, but are above the national average for *similar* schools in both mathematics and science. (*Similar school are those whose pupils have similar social circumstances*). The school is adding value to pupils' achievements in all three subjects, but especially in mathematics and science. In all other subjects at the end of this key stage, pupils' achievement is below the national expectation, except in physical education and French where it matches national expectations.

Overall GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are variable in recent years, well below average compared to *all* schools nationally, but improving at a faster rate than the national average, and above average in each of the past two years compared to results in *similar* schools. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results in English language and English Literature were well below average at grades A* to C compared to *all* schools nationally but well above average compared to *similar* schools.

Attainment in mathematics is also well below the national average but well above average for similar schools. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in science is well below average, and just above average for similar schools. In these three, and most other subjects, girls usually outperform boys, and by more than the national difference (*the least difference between the relative performances of boys and girls is in science*).

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics art, design and technology, history, information technology, French, physical education.	
Years 10-11	Good	English, mathematics, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education.	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is improved since the previous inspection, resulting in a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. The consistent, firm and caring approach of teachers, mentioned in the previous inspection report, is still there, but with pupils being allowed to take more responsibility for their own learning. There are fewer completely teacher-centred lessons than there used to be.

Forty seven per cent of the 148 lessons seen were good. A further twenty two per cent were very good (*occasionally outstanding*). Twenty eight per cent were satisfactory and three per cent (*just four lessons*) were unsatisfactory. There were no poor lessons. The small number of unsatisfactory lessons were all at Key Stage 3.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Much more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy than at the time of the previous report.
Attendance	Improved since the last inspection, but still well below the national average.
Ethos*	Very good. A school-wide commitment to improving standards and a well-focussed climate for learning.
Leadership and management	Energetic, positive, innovative from the headteacher. Well informed and very supportive governing body. Experienced and effective senior management team. Strong and caring pastoral leadership.
Curriculum	Well organised and forward thinking subject leadership. Broad and balanced. Very good careers provision. Some good extra curricular provision.
Pupils with special educational needs	Well taught and they consequently make at least satisfactory progress throughout the school, although individual education plans are not detailed enough.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good moral, social and cultural provision. Satisfactory spiritual provision.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Well qualified and hard working staff. Good accommodation.
Value for money	Good learning resources. Satisfactory.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- XIII. Their children like the school
- XIV. It keeps them well informed about their children's progress.
- XV. It enables their children to achieve a good standard of work.
- XVI. They find it easy to approach the school with questions.

What some parents are not happy about

- XVII. There were no negative comments about individual parents, each on a different subject.

Inspectors agreed with all the parents' comments above, particularly that the school enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work, compared to pupils at similar schools.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors, headteacher, the senior management team and staff should now:

XVIII. Improve all pupils' attainment in English at Key Stage 3 (paragraphs 110-120) by:

- concentrating particularly, but not exclusively, upon improving pupils' writing,
- making improving literacy a major task of every teacher in every department in the school,

XIX. Improve boys' attainment in particular (paragraphs 13, 29, 45 and 199-206) by:

- taking steps to improve boys' attendance,
- publicising the undoubted strengths of the school, from a boy's point of view,
 - exploring further ways of modifying teaching and learning approaches or of grouping pupils to ensure that boys are motivated to learn and are not disadvantaged in any way.

XX. Improve the teaching of Religious Education at Key Stage 3 (paragraphs 43, 89, 94 and 207-214) either by:

- prioritising the recruitment of another specialist teacher of RE
- or arranging for all teachers of RE to have sufficient expertise and training

XXI. Improve pupils' attendance levels throughout the school (paragraphs 29-33):

- by intensifying all possible efforts to persuade parents of the importance of pupils regularly attending school
- and continuing to explore possible further incentives for pupils to attend more often.

XXII. Ensure that all pupils receive their full National Curriculum entitlement in music and information technology (paragraphs 181 and 191-198) by:

- recruiting a full time music teacher as soon as possible,
- either teaching IT as a separate subject on the timetable or finding a way of dividing up the various strands of the IT National Curriculum between the schemes of work of relevant subject areas, in order that all pupils are guaranteed to cover the whole course during their time in the school.

Other weaknesses governors will wish to take account of in their development plans:

XXIII. Paragraph 75: Reports on pupil progress not being specific enough.

XXIV.	Improving the quality of individual education plans for pupils with SEN.	Paragraphs 73, 90:
XXV.	disposing of unwanted chemicals.	Paragraphs 71, 143:
XXVI.	worship.	Paragraph 92: collective
XXVII.	technical support.	Paragraph 95: IT
XXVIII.	needs culling.	Paragraph 99: Library
XXIX.	School Development Plan needs to take a longer view.	Paragraph 102: The

· INTRODUCTION

· Characteristics of the school

- 1 Glenburn school is a mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive school, educating some 550 pupils. It is situated in the centre of Skelmersdale which is a new town in West Lancashire, and draws its pupils from some of the least affluent areas of the North West.
- 2 Skelmersdale has a youthful population (*a larger proportion aged 5 to 15 than the national average*). Lone parents are over represented locally, and pensioners under-represented. In July 1998 the unemployment rate in 4 of the 6 Skelmersdale wards was over twice the Great Britain average. In one ward it was more than three times higher. Other relevant factors include higher than average numbers of overcrowded households, lower than average car ownership and lower than average house ownership.
- 3 A range of ability is represented in the school, but with many more 'lower attaining' than 'higher attaining' pupils. The school identifies 155 pupils as having special educational needs. This represents 28 per cent of the pupil population, which is well above average compared with schools nationally.
- 4 The number of pupil with statements of special educational needs (46) represents 8.4 per cent of pupils and is high compared with that for maintained secondary schools. There is a small unit which caters well with two pupils with severe learning difficulties. These pupils are well integrated, with necessary support, into mainstream lessons.
- 5 Entitlement to free school meals, at 52.6 per cent, is well above average for comprehensive schools.
- 6 Glenburn is virtually an all white school and no pupils come from homes where English is an additional language.
- 7 The number of exclusions of pupils (39) is broadly average for similar sized schools, but with a rising trend over the past three years.
- 8 The school views as its most important current aims that of: improving pupils' literacy and numeracy, the proportion of higher grade results at GCSE, the quality of teaching and pupils' attendance.
- 9 Almost half of the 1999 leavers stayed on to further education (mainly Skelmersdale College) on the same campus.
- 10 The school achieved 21 per cent A* to C GCSE grades in 1999. It has set itself the target of achieving over 22 per cent of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C in GCSE examinations by 2000. The average GCSE point score per pupil shows a rising trend over the last five years, at a faster rate than the national trend.

10 **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999(98)	43(46)	42(57)	85(103)

10 National Curriculum Test		English	Mathematics	Science
Results				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	9(11)	17(21)	14(22)
	Girls	22(27)	21(21)	15(17)
	Total	31(38)	36(42)	29(39)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	31 (36)	35 (40)	27 (37)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	6 (6)	12 (13)	10 (8)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

10 Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	16(15)	19(23)	18(24)
	Girls	31(23)	26(22)	20(24)
	Total	47(38)	41(45)	38(48)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	44 (38)	17 (45)	14 (46)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	5 (20)	4 (17)	4 (19)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999(98)	43(49)	62(46)	105(95)
)))

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	5(7)	33(39)	37(44)
	Girls	12(16)	36(41)	39(43)
	Total	17(23)	69(80)	76(87)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	20 (24)	81 (84)	89 (92)
	National	47.8 (44.6)	88.4 (89.8)	95.0(95.2)

.....
3

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

	Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
10	through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	11.7
10		Absence	National comparative data	7.8
10		Unauthorised	School	2.5
		Absence	National comparative data	0.9
	Exclusions			

	Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
		Fixed period	36
		Permanent	3

10 Quality of teaching

	Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
		Very good or better	22
		Satisfactory or better	97
		Less than satisfactory	3

10

10

10 **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

10 **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

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Attainment and progress

- 11 Results in the national tests at the end of primary schools, plus the school's own testing of pupils in the term they arrive at Glenburn, show that: well below average proportions of pupils enter the school each year with the expected levels of attainment for this age group in the core subjects English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve better by the end of their time at Glenburn than they might be expected to achieve. Good teaching, linked to determined leadership, resolved to improve standards by raising expectations of what the pupils are capable of, are the main factors for this better than expected achievement.
- 12 At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected level 5 in the National Curriculum tests, are well below the *national* average for *all* schools in each of English, mathematics and science. They remain below the national average in English even when compared to similar schools, but are above that average for *similar* schools in both mathematics and science. (*Similar school are those whose pupils have similar social circumstances*). The school is adding value to pupils' achievements in all three subjects, but especially in mathematics and science. In all other subjects at the end of this key stage, pupils' achievement is below the national expectation, except in physical education and French where it matches national expectations.
- 13 In lessons seen at Key Stage 3 and from the scrutiny of pupils' work, achievement often exceeds the standards reached in the national tests, except for those pupils who are regularly absent. Improved teaching strategies are one reason for this. Pupils perform well when they are in school, responding to interesting, challenging and well organised teaching. But the continuity of their learning is disrupted by intermittent absences and many pupils perform less well than they might in the end of key stage tests. Evidence from a comparison of the exercise books and records of pupils who attend well with those who have numerous absences, shows distinct and significant differences in the amount and quality and continuity of written work. Glenburn girls outperform the boys at this stage by more than girls outperform boys nationally. This and the other trends above are similar to those from the last three years.
- 14 Overall GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are variable in recent years, well below average compared to *all* schools nationally, but improving at a faster rate than the national average, and above average in each of the past two years compared to results in *similar* schools. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results in English language and English Literature were well below average at grades A* to C compared to *all* schools nationally but well above average compared to *similar* schools. Attainment in mathematics is also well below the national average but well above average for similar schools. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in science is well below average, and just above average for similar schools. In these three core subjects, and in most other subjects, girls at Glenburn usually out-perform boys, and by more than the national differences between girls and boys.

- 15 In all other subjects the proportion of GCSE A* to C grades was either below or well below average, equating to above average when compared to the results of similar schools. There are two significant exceptions to this school trend. The first is physical education, where those pupils taking the core course are actually meeting national expectations for *all* schools and those taking the subject at GCSE level in 1999 achieved well above average results compared to *all* schools nationally, an impressive performance when these pupils' previous attainment is taken into account. Good and very good teaching is the most significant factor in this success in PE, along with exceptionally good subject leadership and good teamwork, in a department that has a well deserved good reputation for giving trainee teachers such a good start to their careers. The other exception is music where the lack of a teacher means that music cannot be offered at Key Stage 4.
- 16 Standards of literacy for a significant number of pupils entering Glenburn are low. In particular, standards in writing are weak. This is very noticeable, for example, in history, design and technology and religious education. For instance in design and technology, pupils' work folders show that their ability to record and express their ideas is limited by poor graphical skills and low levels of literacy. The school is approaching this literacy deficit with determination and is ensuring that it is tackled firmly from the earliest years (*through, for example, a summer school, a literacy hour for the group in Year 7 who are most in need of the support, and a guided study period at the end of every single day*). Additionally, the school's intervention project – to raise boys' achievement – identified a target group of boys to receive further support and to boost their language and learning. The result of the school's efforts is an increasing standard of literacy, but from such a low starting point that the improvements are far from dramatic in most cases. The whole school aim of involving *every* teacher in every department in the joint task of improving standards of reading and writing is beginning to have some effect on standards (*noticeable, for example, in the work of higher attaining sets in geography where pupils are supported by good use of specialist vocabulary, key words, grammatical structure and the use of writing frames.*)
- 17 As yet, too few subjects actively support pupils' development of numeracy skills. An exception is science which both supports and uses number and graph work satisfactorily, but even here weak number skills undermine some activities in science, as when some pupils believed a faulty calculator rather than trust their own judgement. In geography, numeracy is at the forefront of the work on microclimates. For GCSE physical education, pupils interpret graphs well. In modern foreign languages, numerical work includes using height, weight and distance. Pupils with less than average attainment, however find difficulty in transferring mathematical skills to their language learning. The handbook for the design and technology department details opportunities to develop numeracy. These skills are enhanced in their practical work calculating resistors in electronics and in working with data on temperature loss from investigative work on insulation. In the guided study periods, a numeracy booklet is provided to allow pupils extra opportunities to improve their skills.
- 18 During Key Stage 3, pupils' progress overall, compared to their prior attainment, is mostly good and is rarely less than satisfactory on the evidence of either lessons seen or the scrutiny of pupils' work. This reflects the good teaching at this key stage. Progress is good in English, mathematics, science, history, information technology, modern languages and physical education. It is satisfactory in art, design and technology, geography and religious education, but unsatisfactory in music.
- 19 During Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography and modern languages. It is good in history, information technology and

religious education and very good in physical education. Pupils are not receiving an education in music at this key stage, progress in music is therefore poor.

- 20 Pupils with special educational needs make progress which is at least satisfactory and is often good. They are taught by subject specialists, often in small classes, with in-class support from staff who have special needs expertise. In Year 7 they receive effective help with the development of literacy skills. These strategies ensure that pupils receive a good quality of provision and make good progress at Key Stage 3. A significant number of pupils have very low attainment on entry to the school but make sufficient progress to obtain passes in GCSE examinations. The two pupils in the severe learning difficulties unit follow mainstream lessons and are supported well by their fellow pupils. They are making good progress in learning social skills and learning to live independently.

20 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 21 The attitude of the pupils to their work is generally good. They concentrate and apply themselves well to the tasks given. They are enthusiastic learners and enjoy their work. Pupils are keen to respond to questions and to raise points of their own. Attitudes are less good in those few classes where some pupils, mainly boys, take time to settle down, go off task and shout out. This affected the progress of pupils in, for example, a Year 9 mathematics class and in two Year 10 science classes.
- 22 Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided to develop their capacity for personal study. The open learning centre is available before and after school and there is a half-hour guided study session at the end of each school day. Good use is made of the library and computers provided.
- 23 The behaviour of the pupils in class and around the school is generally good, though with some boisterous behaviour at lunchtime and in the school's corridors, between lessons. The pupils are very friendly, talkative and polite. They show respect for the school's property and that of others, but also drop some litter for others to clear up. The good behaviour of the pupils makes a positive contribution to their learning.
- 24 In 1998/99 there were 36 fixed term and three permanent exclusions, mainly boys. This rate of exclusion is higher than in the previous year, the result of a determined drive to improve standards of behaviour as well as attainment.
- 25 Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. Pupils work together well both in pairs and in groups. The new policy, since the previous inspection, of having all the year groups represented in each form tutor group is effective in building up good relationships across the different age groups. Pupils respect the views of others and listen when other pupils are speaking. The criticism in the last report, that a more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy is needed, is no longer the case.
- 26 The personal development of the pupils is good. They are keen to respond to the opportunities provided to take responsibility. All the tutor groups have representatives on the Year Forum and School Forum half-termly meetings, where matters of concern to the pupils, such as uniform, are discussed. All year groups have their own common rooms which the pupils are responsible for. Pupils are also responsible for maintaining their own Record of Achievement files and for pre-ordering their meals in the morning. Older pupils are often good at helping the younger pupils

and those in their tutor groups with special educational needs. Some pupils act as prefects in their House and some have duties in assembly. For instance, a Year 8 pupil read excerpts from the Holy Books in a whole school assembly. The school has a 'Buddy' system where older pupils are trained to counsel pupils who have been bullied.

- 27 Pupils are encouraged to take initiatives. The breakfast bar, before school, was one of their ideas and is operated by them. Pupils organise fund-raising for charities such as "jeans for genes" and they help to organise some of their own social events and trips. Year 9 pupils have written stories for local primary school pupils.

- 28 Pupils contribute well to the life of their community. They play sport against other schools, sing carols and give towards food hampers for the elderly. They helped with the summer scheme held in the school, contributed to a town planning competition and helped to fight against a local landfill scheme.

28 **Attendance**

- 29 The unsatisfactory level of attendance has a detrimental impact on the attainment and progress of the pupils concerned because it disrupts their education.

- 30 The school is making great efforts to improve levels of attendance, which are improving slowly year-on-year, but nevertheless remain low. Poor attendance by a significant minority of pupils has a significant impact on their attainment, and contributes to the school's below average test and examination results.

- 31 The level of attendance over the whole year 1998/99 was 85.6 per cent, which is well below the national average and unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absence was 2.2 per cent, which is well above the national average. Attendance in the Autumn 1999 term up to the date of the inspection, has increased to 89.1 per cent. The level of attendance has improved since the last inspection.

- 32 Amongst the reasons for the unsatisfactory level of attendance are: condoned absences by some parents, holidays taken in term-time and some truancy.

- 33 A prompt start is made to lessons and to the school day. Most pupils are punctual but a substantial minority (*about four per cent*) is late and a few are persistently late.

33 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

33 **Teaching**

- 34 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, resulting in a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. The consistent, firm and caring approach of teachers, mentioned in the previous inspection report, is still there, but with pupils being allowed to take more responsibility for their own learning. There are fewer completely teacher-centred lessons than there used to be.

- 35 Forty seven per cent of the 148 lessons seen were good. A further twenty two per cent were very good (*occasionally outstanding*). Twenty eight per cent were satisfactory and three per cent (*just four lessons*) were unsatisfactory. There were no poor lessons.
- 36 The better teaching at Key Stage 3 was seen in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history, information technology, French, and physical education. Teaching in music is good in terms of pupils' short term progress at present, but the situation is unsatisfactory in the longer term.
- 37 At Key Stage 4 the better teaching was in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education. The small number of unsatisfactory lessons were all at Key Stage 3.
- 38 Noticeable strengths of the teaching include teachers' consistent approach to managing pupils; their high expectations of what Glenburn pupils are capable of; and the patient and respectful approach teachers use with pupils, even when the restless behaviour of some pupils would try the patience of some saints.
- 39 Lessons where teaching was most effective included some in English where teachers used very skilled questioning and pupils were encouraged to 'think around' problems. For example, in a Year 11 class studying advertisements, the task was manageable, responses were brought together at regular intervals and high expectations of the quality of answer expected were maintained. Also in physical education (PE), where pupils are so very effectively involved in their own learning and in developing independent learning skills. For example, in a GCSE theory lesson in PE, pupils, stimulated by an excellent role play from the teacher, demonstrated well the skills of questioning, research, presentation and communication through investigating the Olympic Games. In Religious education (RE) even pupils of low prior attainment responded well to the teaching strategy used by the specialist RE teachers, of leaving pupils to think quietly for a short time before writing answers to a carefully framed question, enabling them to take more responsibility for their own learning than they otherwise would.
- 40 Almost all the teachers demonstrate well a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In art lessons, for example, teachers enthuse pupils with skilful practical demonstrations (*of block printing and ceramics*). Modern language lessons are effectively conducted in the target language across both key stages. The relatively limited knowledge of other faiths demonstrated by some non-specialist teachers of RE, however, is restricting the depth of treatment of some topics at Key Stage 3 (*Islam, for instance*).
- 41 There is a strong and increasingly effective whole school drive to improve pupils' basic skills (*of literacy, numeracy and information technology*). For example, all mathematics teachers show heightened awareness of the importance of language in the development of pupils' mathematical understanding. Teachers of personal and social education make good use of stand-alone computers during group work sessions. (*For example, pupils take turns to access the Internet and download information which they then present in a more organised form to other groups in the class.*)
- 42 Provision for teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. For most subjects they are taught in smaller classes of pupils with similar prior attainment. All staff share the teaching of SEN pupils so they benefit from the same good teaching as their peers. Work in science and modern foreign languages is modified for pupils with SEN, and in art and physical education work is adapted to pupils' individual needs by the quality of work which is expected of

them. However, in some other subject areas, including history, design technology and religious education, the work is not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of all the pupils in a group. In many classes pupils receive effective support from support teachers or learning assistants. The support staff often work in close collaboration with the teacher, are well appraised of pupils' individual needs, and assist all pupils in a class who need help. However, effective Individual Education Plans are not in place to provide teachers with strategies and targets for most closely meeting the differing needs of individual pupils.

- 43 Examples of unsatisfactory teaching were rare. The few (*only three per cent*) of unsatisfactory lessons were all at Key Stage 3, one each in mathematics and geography and two in religious education (RE). They were due in the mathematics lesson to an uncharacteristic lack of challenge and to weaker classroom management than normal. In geography, the problem was one of the teaching method not matching the lesson aims (*too little pupil involvement, too much teacher talk*). The lesson weaknesses in RE were a consequence of insecure subject knowledge on the part of non-specialist teachers.
- 44 Twenty eight per cent of lessons were 'satisfactory'. These include some lessons where teachers of English tended to do too much for pupils, thereby reducing their independence. In some science lessons the learning objectives are not as clear as they should be, and there is some overuse of worksheets. Pupils in art are not always provided with extension work when they complete tasks before the end of a lesson.
- 45 Despite the consistently good quality of most of the teaching, attainment at the end of each of the key stages, as measured by national tests at the end of Year 9 and by GCSE grades at the end of Year 11, is much lower than average (*with the notable exception of attainment in physical education*). The most significant reasons for this are: the low prior attainment levels of the majority of the pupils on entry to the school (*very few boys especially with above average levels*) and much lower than average attendance levels of many pupils. The achievements of individual pupils, on the other hand, show a very different picture, one of substantial added value due to the effect of ambitious and courageous teaching; teaching which assumes that pupils can do better than some of them think they can do; teaching which concentrates on improving pupils' abilities to work things out for themselves and does not "spoon feed" them; teaching which tries to interest the pupils as the best way of controlling them; teaching which uses a whole variety of different strategies to gain and hold pupils' attention, not just the traditional and safe "chalk and talk", or working through exercises from texts or recipe-like practical exercises.
- 45 **The curriculum**
- 46 At Key Stage 3 the curriculum has satisfactory breadth but there are some issues of balance which are less than satisfactory. It meets requirements for the provision of religious education. National Curriculum requirements are well met, apart from the provision per fortnightly cycle of only one period each of art (*in Years 7 and Year 9*) and music (*throughout the key stage*). In addition, pupils follow courses in drama, and personal and social education. All pupils study one modern foreign language.
- 47 At Key Stage 4, pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum and choose additional subjects from a satisfactory range of options. They also follow a more extensive personal and social education course. The "extra" option offers pupils the opportunity to study both history and geography to GCSE, or to take up drama, physical education (*sports science*), business studies or religious education as GCSE subjects. Higher attaining pupils who wish to take up both humanities and an "extra" option can do so in time after school, and in lieu of one physical education, and one personal and social education period per cycle. The curriculum satisfies statutory requirements in most respects, except that music is not currently offered for more than two days each week (*extreme difficulty recruiting a music teacher*), and some pupils have restricted access to some strands of the National Curriculum information technology course. The large majority of pupils study double award science at GCSE, and all departments try to enter their pupils for full GCSE courses. The short course in religious education is offered, as a voluntary opportunity. Overall, pupils are able to follow a curriculum, which has satisfactory breadth and balance and meets their individual needs.

- 48 The school has close working links with the adjacent Further Education College, which over many years has offered vocational courses more suitable to some pupils' needs than the GCSE courses the school can provide. Each Spring term 18 hours of curriculum time is spent developing initiatives linking geography and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) the College being the facilitator.
- 49 Pupils follow an extensive and well-planned programme of personal and social education, aimed at developing personal skills and awareness, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, and informing life choices. A full and satisfactory programme of sex education and health education, including drugs awareness, forms part of the provision.
- 50 The planning of the school's curriculum is sound, and this is reflected in the planning of individual subjects. Assemblies take place daily in registration time, and are set to tight deadlines to ensure that they do not intrude upon the first lesson. The introduction of a half-hour "guided study" period at the end of each day, in addition to formal lessons, enhances the role of the group tutors and their relationships with their pupils. It gives them the opportunity to give individual guidance and attention, as well as reviewing individual pupils' progress.
- 51 Time allocation and the spacing of lessons within the fortnightly timetable structure is generally satisfactory, apart from art in Years 7 and 9, and Key Stage 3 music and personal and social education, with their extended interval of only one period per cycle. Whole-year blocking of design and technology restricts equal access to specialist rooms, and on two occasions physical education groups have two lessons on the same day.
- 52 Arrangements for the delivery of information technology (IT) are not completely effective. IT is not taught as a separate subject, but within subjects across the curriculum. Opportunities for using it are built into departmental schemes of work, many of which have ongoing schemes to extend pupil access further (*most effective in, for example, English, science, and design and technology*). However, not all strands of the National Curriculum are covered by all pupils during their time at the school. Pupils make full use of the facilities in the open learning centre before and after school, and at lunchtimes, and are well supported by the IT staff.
- 53 There are close links between the school and its main feeder primary schools. Pupils are grouped on entry to the school in Year 7 according to their relative achievement. Subject departments are therefore able to provide learning opportunities and materials to support them, which are appropriate and will ensure effective progress. Grouping by ability particularly helps pupils designated as having special educational needs. It enables the lower-attaining pupils to have full access to the curriculum and facilitates efficient use of teaching support staff. It often encourages attainment and progress beyond normal expectations, and thus increases self-confidence, motivation and self-esteem. The more gifted pupils have the benefit of extended materials, but are often in large "top" sets, in which their peers have a wide range of capabilities, even amongst high attainers.
- 54 The provision of extra-curricular activities is particularly strong in sport, with nearly half of the total school population involved in team and individual activities over the course of the school year. In both history and geography there are visits arranged for all years. There are a variety of other activities, with varying degrees of pupil participation. For example, there are trips to London, Le Touquet, a drama club and dramatic productions, art and technology workshops, and some departments offer additional lessons and revision classes. It is a school development aim to increase participation in extra-curricular activities by encouraging pupils to record at least two

extra-curricular or leadership activities over two years, as an important part of their Record of Achievement.

- 55 The provision for careers education is very good. It is fully delivered in the personal and social education "Learning for Life" scheme. Some elements appear in Years 7 and 8, and a fortnightly formal careers lesson starts in Year 9, where pupils are introduced to the well-equipped careers library and shown how to glean information from printed material and from computers. Year 10 students have a careers day, and are given an opportunity to undergo two weeks' work experience. The school has a designated careers officer from the local authority, and is part of the education business partnership link, which supports all careers activities. All Year 11 students have a careers interview, and a scheme to offer mock interviews, and feedback with external interviewers is being organised for next year. Other provisions include "taster" days in local colleges, and a week of sampling life on a university campus. Some students with special educational needs are offered extended work experience and some attend a vocational course at the adjacent college.
- 56 All pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum. The quality of their support is good. They are placed for tutorial work in mixed age house groups and all have opportunities to make the best possible progress. The school uses a variety of strategies to meet the needs of its able pupils: in Year 11 after school lessons are held; Year 10 pupils visit universities to raise their aspirations; a small group of pupils are this year learning Japanese. However, the main provision is in the teaching arrangements. Pupils of high prior attainment are placed in separate teaching groups, although some of these are rather large and include a wide ability range. Teachers are encouraged to set extension tasks for pupils in their high attaining classes and good examples of this were seen in lessons in modern foreign languages, design technology, science and mathematics in Key Stage 3.

56

Assessment

- 57 The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment. It uses well the information obtained through these procedures. Key Stage 3 and 4 co-ordinators are responsible for assessment practice and development across the school. They co-operate fully to ensure the smooth operation of the school's assessment procedures. Legal requirements relating to National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are met. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are well developed. Statutory requirements for their assessments are fully met, with annual reviews of their statements carried out efficiently. While many pupils with special educational needs are identified by the primary schools, with whom the school has good relationships, others are identified by in-school procedures. The school's assertive discipline programme is helpful in identifying pupils with behavioural difficulties and the school is currently in the process of developing particular assistance for these pupils.
- 58 The school has an effective policy for assessment, marking, recording and reporting which provides clear guidelines to assist departments in formulating their own policies. All subject areas have established useful systems to ensure consistency of practice within their curriculum areas. Departmental practice is monitored directly by heads of department, and through the progress review system. Links to National Curriculum criteria are satisfactorily developed in all areas.

- 59 The school has effective systems in place to collect and record end of Key Stage 2 test results and other standardised information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school. This information is used well by departments to assist in grouping pupils and as a baseline for the future tracking of pupils' progress through the school's thorough and regular reviews. Following the reviews, academic and pastoral information is held centrally by key stage co-ordinators and is carefully used to identify both able pupils and those underachieving. Tutors work closely with pupils in the guided learning sessions to review individual progress and to set targets for future development. The school is using the information it collects to encourage all pupils to improve their examination results. Whole-school annual target setting, as well as those for the departments and individual pupils, contribute well to raising expectations throughout the school.
- 60 Within departments there are examples of good practice in assessment. Mathematics has recently introduced a comprehensive system of progress reviews and target setting, following end of module tests. Similarly, in geography and history at Key Stage 4, pupils are now effectively charting their progress and setting themselves targets following assessed pieces of work. In physical education, teachers use assessment well in lessons to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to build remedial action into their future lessons. Marking of pupils' work is regular. Departments follow the school's marking policy but adjust it to the special needs of their subject areas.
- 61 Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in further developing its assessment procedures. Marking and assessment within departments are now more consistent than they used to be. The school has also developed effective procedures for recording pupils' key skills.

61 **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

Spiritual Development

- 62 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in the time allocated to religious education at Key Stage 4, but arrangements for collective worship still do not meet statutory requirements. Collective worship is held on a year and house basis, but not held daily for all pupils. Whole-school collective worship is held once a week. These occasions provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on religious, moral and spiritual issues. The use of symbolism, readings from religious traditions, short prayers and the participation of pupils adds to their quality. Visiting organisations such as the Gideons and Amnesty International also contribute to collective worship from time to time. Opportunities for developing pupils' sensitivity to spiritual issues are taken in English and drama and in religious education; in maths and in geography pupils' attention is drawn through display to scenes of natural wonder and to the harmony of number. In other subjects, however, opportunities to reflect on significant aspects of human experience, or to consider issues of meaning and purpose are undeveloped.

Moral development.

- 63 The provision for pupils' moral development is good. A strong sense of moral purpose imbues the activities of pupils and teachers and is firmly based in the school's code of conduct. The policy of positive behaviour management, to which staff work, ensures that all pupils experience consistency in teachers' expectations of high standards of conduct and behaviour. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. Practical expression of moral concern is evident in the support which is given to a range of charities and aid agencies including Children in Need, Comic Relief, The Macmillan Fund, Unicef and Oxfam. Pupils also play a part in organising Christmas hampers for the elderly. The school recently offered its services as a reception centre for a local community appeal for aid to Kosovan refugees, pupils playing an active part in this initiative. The programme for personal and social education also contributes to pupils' moral development in the areas of sex and drugs education and social and moral issues have been explored with pupils with the help of theatre in education groups. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for others in lessons, and opportunities are taken in many subjects to consider moral issues. In science pupils consider the moral aspects of genetics; in history, aspects of racism. In physical education they are reminded of the importance of fair play and in modern foreign languages they are encouraged to express their views in the target-language on conservation and pollution. The religious education curriculum in both key stages gives wide-ranging opportunities to pupils of all abilities to engage in moral reflection and discussion.

Social development.

- 64 The provision for pupils' social development is good. The school has a strong commitment to raising pupils' self-esteem and to providing a wide range of experiences designed to develop their social skills and confidence. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to participate in the life of the school community through the School Forum, to which representatives from each tutor group are elected, and in the Common Room Forum of each House. Pupils take responsibility for these social areas and for planning events associated with them; they run the Breakfast Bar and all pupils in Year 8 are given responsibilities for school reception duties during the year. The school works closely with other agencies to enrich pupils' social development. Partnership with Hi-Pact enables interested pupils to visit universities in the region and involvement with Leadership Challenge provides pupils with opportunities to develop a range of social skills such as goal-setting, decision-making, leadership and team working and to participate in a residential visit. Social skills are developed across the curriculum and opportunities for independence in learning are numerous. In physical education pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and to develop leadership skills; group work in religious education encourages collaboration. In modern foreign languages pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in preparing themselves for tests and in design-technology pupils help each other and are developing responsible attitudes to their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into a caring and supportive environment. They work alongside their peers and have good social integration through the house system.

- 65 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. A significant feature of this provision is the strong commitment to extra-curricular sport with many pupils taking up opportunities to participate in clubs, individual activities and team games. A range of other cultural activities is also offered to pupils. Visits to places of historical interest and an annual visit to London are arranged through the history department; pupils have worked with visiting artists and story-tellers and are able to participate in visits to the theatre and galleries; art and drama clubs also cater for the interests of pupils. Opportunities to visit France are offered through modern foreign languages and in lessons pupils are helped to learn about the way of life of the people whose language they are studying. Provision is extended through Readathons, Book Weeks, Poetry Days, a Drama Festival and a bi-annual Science Fayre. Pupils have had recent success in a public-speaking contest. Awareness of the local community and encouragement to participate in community life is nurtured in a variety of ways. In art pupils have designed a mural at a local health centre, worked with a local artist on displays in the shopping centre and with pupils in a partner primary school on ceramics. Through geography, pupils have been involved in environmental awareness projects such as Agenda 21 and in local discussions about landfill sites. The programme for personal and social education in Key Stage 4 educates pupils in citizenship issues and draws upon the expertise of local magistrates, community police and politicians. Mock elections and the visit to the school of parliamentary candidates have provided active experience of the working of democratic institutions (*the annual visit to London includes a tour of the Houses of Parliament*). Pupils also experience aspects of the cultural diversity of contemporary society through the study of a variety of religious traditions in religious education, including a visit to a mosque and through the study of oriental and African traditions in art. A Japanese teacher currently working in the school has introduced pupils to aspects of Japanese culture and a Bangladeshi teacher has worked with pupils in geography.

65 **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

- 66 The school gives good support and guidance to its pupils, which is well supported by a range of useful monitoring procedures. Academic progress is monitored by the pupils, their subject teachers, the subject co-ordinators and their form tutors on a regular basis. It is particularly well monitored in mathematics. The results of this monitoring are used to set targets, which are shared with the pupils and parents.
- 67 The personal development of the pupils is monitored by their form tutors and subject teachers and is recorded in the annual pastoral report to parents. The personal and social education provided is well planned and resourced and forms a good framework for choices in subjects in Year 9, continuing education and careers, and in citizenship and sex and drugs education. The school's procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are good.
- 68 The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are good and this has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. The school has an effective assertive discipline policy, which contains a suitable range of rewards and sanctions to maintain good behaviour. The rules and consequences for poor behaviour are prominently displayed around the school and are well understood by the pupils. Parents are issued with a guide to assertive discipline and they are happy with the standard of behaviour achieved in the school. The policy is consistently applied across the school. There is an effective anti-bullying policy and a very good anti-bullying guide, designed by a Year 8 pupil. A half-termly bullying survey is completed by all pupils. This asks pupils to indicate who is being bullied and who are the bullies. The results of this survey are collated and action taken in areas of concern. Incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and in accordance with the policy.

- 69 There is a detailed and effective child protection policy. A designated teacher is responsible for its operation and has received the necessary training. All members of staff are made aware of the procedures to adopt if they have any concerns.

- 70 The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good and are contributing to the gradual improvement in attendance year-on-year. Attendance is monitored by form tutors, the subject teachers, the heads of houses and a very efficient school attendance officer. Registers are taken properly at the beginning and end of the day and at the start of each lesson. Periodic spot checks are made to ensure that pupils don't leave the site during the school day. If there are any concerns about attendance or punctuality they are pursued with the parents. The attendance officer makes a 'first-day call' if a pupil is absent without giving a prior reason. Two Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) visit weekly to review the attendance of the pupils and make home visits when it is necessary. A small number of parents are taken to court because of the non-attendance of their child. The school has a wide range of individual, form and house incentives to encourage good attendance, including a £1,000 prize for any House that achieves 90 per cent attendance over the year. Attendance figures for each pupil are prominently displayed in each form room and the pupils' attendance and punctuality records are recorded on their annual reports.
- 71 In the last inspection report it was stated that the school gives a high priority to ensuring pupils' well-being and this is still the case. The school's procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being, health and safety are good and have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and progress. The school successfully promotes the health, safety and general well-being of its pupils. The Local Education Authority (LEA) completes periodic health and safety audits and the school carries out quarterly health and safety inspections which are recorded. No health and safety concerns were observed during the inspection week, except for the surface of the tennis courts, which is beginning to break up due to the effects of moss, and the need in science to dispose of some unwanted chemicals. Fire drills are held termly and equipment is checked annually. Risk assessments are completed in subjects like science and physical education. The school nurse comes in regularly, takes some personal and social education lessons on subjects like sex education, and holds a confidential drop-in session for the pupils. There are six qualified first aiders on the staff.
- 72 The provision for careers education is very good. Years 7 and 8 are taught some elements of careers education in personal and social education or Learning for Life lessons. In Year 9, pupils have a careers lesson fortnightly as part of their personal and social education programme of study and good advisory booklets are provided. A theatre group gives a performance about choices at 14 and 16 years of age and Year 10 pupils are given an opportunity to have two weeks work experience. The school is part of the Education Business Partnership Link, which assists with the organisation of the work experience. All Year 11 pupils have a careers interview and next year they will be offered mock interviews with feedback from external interviewers. Year 10 and 11 pupils spend 'taster' days in local colleges and 30 Year 10 pupils spent a week living on a university campus and sampling university life. Some pupils with special educational needs are offered extended work experience and some attend vocational courses at the adjacent college. The school has a good careers library and Year 9 pupils are given an introductory lesson on how to gain access to the information, both in a hard copy form and from the computers. All tutors are encouraged to act as mentors to their pupils, especially at Key Stage 4. Some pupils have considerable mentoring opportunities provided by members of local employers and members of the wider community

- 73 Substantial support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is provided within the classroom, in the course of which their progress, personal development and behaviour are carefully monitored. They are supported further by external agencies such as the educational psychological service and the careers service. Arrangements for the review of pupils on the special needs register and of pupils with statements are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) have been written for all pupils at stages two to five on the special needs register as required by the Code of Practice. Those for pupils at stages two to four are very brief, very generalised, are not subject specific and do not contain targets and strategies to assist teachers in meeting their daily responsibilities towards these pupils. IEPs for pupils with a statement of special educational needs contain more detail, but they are still too modest in their content and do not relate specifically enough to the requirements of provision as detailed in the pupils' statements.
- 73 **Partnership with parents and the community**
- 74 The school's partnership with parents and the community is good overall.
- 75 The information supplied to parents is good. Fortnightly newsletters are sent out and parents feel that they are kept well informed. Guides to issues like shared reading and assertive discipline are supplied and parents find these useful. In addition to the one formal opportunity parents have to discuss their child's progress, teachers are always willing to discuss concerns with parents at other times. Three reports a year are provided for parents, two are interim and the third is the full pupils' annual report at the end of the year. This report tells parents in general terms what progress has been made, their son or daughter's attitude to work and targets for improvement in all subjects studied. It does not, however, tell the parent anything *specific* about what their *particular* child knows, understands and can do in each subject (it lists instead what the *whole class* has studied).
- 76 Parental involvement in their child's work and the life of the school is satisfactory. There is an effective homework policy which sets maximum times for homework, and a homework timetable is supplied to parents. The pupils record the homework provided in their school planner and parents and tutors sign them weekly. The planners also act as a line of communication between school and home. The provision of homework is particularly good in English, geography and history in Years 10 and 11 and its completion is well monitored by the teachers.
- 77 Parents and others are encouraged to come into school to help and a small number take the opportunity. Parents are invited to special events like reward presentations, sports days and production and support the school's fund raising activities.
- 78 The school's links with the community are very good and are a strength of the school. They make a very positive contribution to the pupils' social, personal, sporting, spiritual and moral development. The school's Community Development Officer is very active in her promotion of community links. Pupils visit the local church for a carol concert and clergy visit to speak to the pupils. Visits into the local community are arranged to extend the curriculum. Places visited include the theatre, museums, university, art gallery, a brick works and a local newspaper. Pupils play a wide range of sports against other schools and Liverpool FC give football training annually. The school is the venue for a large number of events, including a summer play scheme, a festival of learning, summer school, arts festival, a science and technology week and the Skelmersdale Show. A three-day Asian Arts Festival for Year 7 pupils is organised annually as part of the school week.

- 79 The local secondary schools work together well and there are good links with the local feeder primary schools and colleges. Year 6 pupils visit, for a variety of events, prior to their entry. Links with teacher training colleges are strong and mutually productive, especially in physical education.
- 80 The school encourages its pupils to participate in the community by giving annual 'Service in the Community Awards'.
- 81 Parents are well informed and involved from the outset in any specific arrangements to meet their children's special educational needs (SEN). They are very supportive of the school's efforts to meet those needs. The majority of parents attend the annual reviews of statements.

81 **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

81 **Leadership and management**

- 82 The leadership, management and day to day organisation of the school are all good.
- 83 The school's aims are concerned with building a learning community in which pupils and staff can develop to their full potential, with a particular stress on improving key skills. The aims are a good mixture of the academic, personal and social. They have both rigour and warmth about them.
- 84 The headteacher, in her fourth year as head at the school, following five years as deputy head, leads the school effectively from the front, with energy and determination, constantly striving to get the best out of all her staff and from every pupil. Her restless drive to push everyone to achieve the highest standards is a crucial factor in the school's continuing improvement.
- 85 She is helped in this task by a very experienced and well-established team of deputy head and senior members of staff who pull together well to the benefit of the school. Their combined strength, plus that of key middle managers, is a powerful factor in the school's very positive, welcoming yet hard-working ethos. One of the most significant actions of this group (*the responsibility of one member in particular*) is the positive, supportive and on-going monitoring of the work of all teachers in the school, including their classroom performance.
- 86 The governing body acts well as the school's critical friend, holding the school to account in a positive and supportive way, including through the detailed work in its committees. It benefits from long serving and influential leadership and from a good mixture of talents which complements the expertise in the school with a wide range of expertise of its own, including from local commerce and local colleges. The governors have helped the school to make good progress in tackling the key issues and other weaknesses diagnosed in the last report.
- 87 Pastoral care is a considerable strength of the school. The present house system, at the core of which are the mixed age, vertically grouped tutor groups, is seen to be working well, not least during the half hour guided study periods at the end of each school day. The school's ethos is strong in the traditional sense of a warm, caring, friendly and safe school. These guided study periods play a crucial role in the maintenance of this ethos. They signal something else too. The

determination of the teaching staff at Glenburn to work longer than average hours to ensure that pupils are given every opportunity to improve themselves academically. In that sense the ethos is also an academic and challenging one. Not all tutors are making the best use of that daily half hour and, in any case, it serves different purposes at different times of the year. At its best, however, it is seen to be an excellent idea that deserves to succeed.

- 88 School development planning is concentrating on the right issues for this school: student achievement and progress via improved teaching and learning, with management arrangements aimed at facilitating all of this. Departmental plans, criticised in the last report, are now of good quality and are firmly linked to whole school issues. Time scales, costings and responsibilities are included. The result is a concise and coherent drive to improve standards and quality in the school.
- 89 Leadership at departmental level is consistently good and in some cases it is very good. Religious education is well led within the constraints of managing a changing team of teachers from other subject departments who are not in any sense specialists in teaching religious education. There is a long-standing and recurring vacancy as teacher in charge of music, with the consequent lack of progress in this subject.
- 90 Day-to-day management of special educational needs provision is delegated to the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who leads and manages a complex department well. There are formal links with other departments and members meet regularly with the SENCO. The quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is monitored formally by the SENCO and informally by her staff. However, she has a considerable teaching load and substantial senior responsibilities in other areas of school life, in addition to the very considerable responsibilities of SENCO. She has, therefore, more limited opportunities than the SENCO responsibility needs, for oversight of SEN teaching across the curriculum and ensuring that all the requirements of the Code of Practice are properly met. There is a named SEN governor who is active in monitoring and evaluating the work of the department and keeping fellow governors well informed. The requirement for the governors to report annually on the SEN arrangements and provision are met.
- 91 There are no issues concerning the provision of equal opportunities or equal access to the curriculum.
- 92 The governors fulfil their statutory obligations, except that the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. The acts of collective worship it does provide are efficient weekly gatherings of never less than one quarter of the school, and once each week the *whole* school. These are effective in engendering a whole school feeling, which is often spiritual, more often moral.
- 93 The school's capacity for improving further is good. Effective monitoring systems are in place. The quality of leadership, teamwork and community are all good, the vision is an ambitious and determined one.

93

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

- 94 The match of number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is good except in music and religious education (RE), where there is an effect upon

attainment. In music this is due to the difficulty in recruiting and holding on to a suitable music specialist. In RE there are some constraints on the curriculum when non-specialist RE teachers are teaching classes in Key Stage 3.

- 95 Efficient and helpful clerical staff help considerably in the smooth running of the day-to-day life of the school. Science is well supported with qualified technical help. Two technicians give good support to design and technology and art. There is a need to ensure that appropriate technical support is provided in IT, particularly as the amount of hardware and software increases. The special educational needs (SEN) department enjoys the services of an exceptionally well-qualified and experienced staff, both teaching and support, with a range of complementary experiences and specialisms in SEN. They continue to develop their expertise through in-service training. Additionally, some 28 periods per week of in-class support is made available from mainstream teaching staff.
- 96 Staff development is a considerable strength of the school. It is very effectively managed and reflects well the priorities arising from the school's development plan. The school has just been awarded 'Investors in People' status. Newly qualified teachers, and experienced teachers new to the school, are properly supported through a well-structured programme of induction, and their progress is closely monitored. Teaching loads and class sizes are generous compared to other comprehensive schools, in recognition of the large proportion of pupils on roll with low levels of attainment and with special educational needs. Staff appraisal is taking place. All staff have been appraised in the last two years. In-service training needs are now identified more clearly in departments (*a criticism at the last inspection*). The school benefits a great deal from its heavy involvement in initial teacher training, not least by employing five of its own teacher trainees after completion of their training.
- 97 The state of the buildings is sound, helped considerably by a very effective site management staff. Provision for PE is excellent. The recently extended learning centre is well used before and after and during the school day. The school's surplus accommodation (*it was built for larger numbers*) is well used. Each year group has its own common room. Teaching areas are well grouped together and teachers mainly have their own regular teaching bases, which helps enormously with continuity of learning and effective preparation for lessons. Whole school health and safety policies are well monitored by governors and senior staff. Security has been improved even further with extra fencing which makes it more difficult for intruders after hours. The site is very exposed to wind which causes some external door and roof damage. Sharing the site with Skelmersdale College of FE causes some congestion and car parking problems but has compensating advantages, for example, the use of the swimming pool and some courses taught by staff from the College.
- 98 The specialist accommodation required for the teaching of small withdrawal groups of pupils with special educational needs is good. Access for disabled persons in wheelchairs is still only possible on the ground floor where ramps have been installed.
- 99 The provision of resources for learning is at least adequate in every subject area except music, where provision is unsatisfactory (*shortage of electronic keyboards and a modern computer*). The overall pupils to computer ratio is good, and many of the machines are completely up to date and are used well. Book provision in the learning centre needs further drastic pruning since many of the books are out-of-date and never used. In English there is a need to extend the range of readers and non-literary texts in Key Stage 3. Resource provision is good in art and physical education. There is a shortage of software packages to make the best use of the computers in mathematics education, and mathematics also needs more books to aid pupils' independent study and research.
- 100 Resources for special educational needs are good. They are sufficient to give the special educational needs co-ordinator the capacity to support departments, on request, with additional

funding for alternative work for SEN pupils. Pupils with SEN benefit, as do mainstream pupils from the integrated learning system (*Success Maker*) used in English, mathematics and science.

100 **The efficiency of the school**

- 101 Educational developments are appropriately supported through satisfactory financial planning.
- 102 The School Development Plan (SDP) is comprehensive, costed, linked to training needs, responsibility for action is identified and targets are set. It covers mainly one year ahead and needs to be extended to take a more strategic view over a longer period. More evaluation of the success of the expenditure made is required.
- 103 Expenditure per pupil in 1998/99, at £3257 is high. This is attributable to the extra funding received for the large number of pupils with special educational needs, income from lettings, the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and from the extensive teacher training provided in the school.
- 104 At the end of 1999/2000 it is forecast that the school will have a financial balance of £90,922 which is reasonable as a proportion of the overall budget.
- 105 The use of teaching and support staff is satisfactory overall. The pupil/teacher ratio is generous. The staff work well together as a team and are committed to the pupils in the school. Satisfactory use is made of the school's accommodation. Some of the spare classrooms are now used as common rooms for the various house groups and two others are currently 'mothballed', awaiting being brought back into regular use.
- 106 Use of the school's learning resources is satisfactory. The recent extension of the Open Learning Centre, consisting of the library and a computer suite, make these resources even more accessible in a pleasant atmosphere.
- 107 The efficiency of financial control and school administration is good. Clear and effective financial arrangements are in place for authorising expenditure. The procedures adopted for ordering ensure that value for money is obtained. The Finance and General Purposes Committee and the full Governing Body receive regular monitoring reports on the progress of the budget, so that they can make any necessary adjustments. A recent local authority audit found that the school's financial procedures were secure.
- 108 The school receives a substantial additional sum of money from the Local Education Authority in recognition of its large numbers of pupils with special educational needs. This is well used to provide staffing and learning resources at appropriate levels.
- 109 When the relatively high expenditure per pupils is set against: the disadvantaged social 'context' in which the school works; the standards of attainment achieved (*compared to schools in similar social circumstances*); the quality of education provided (*particularly the good quality of the teaching*); and the positive attitudes and good behaviour of the pupils, the school is judged to provide *satisfactory* value for the money it receives.

109 **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

109 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

109 **English**

110 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests in English held at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' performance was below the national average at level 5 and above and at level 6 and above. The average levels obtained by pupils have, in recent years, been well below average. Boys have performed less well than girls, in line with the national trend. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests were a little lower than those obtained in the previous year and were below average even when compared with those obtained by similar schools.

111 In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results in English language and English Literature were below average at grades A* to C. Overall, they were lower than in the previous year although not appreciably so. Boys' performance fell sharply in English Literature although the school's value added tables indicated that boys' performance would be lower in this subject. Fluctuations in end-of-key-stage results are also more pronounced because the school is small and because attendance is well below average. These factors are also reflected in the pass rates at grades A* to G which are well below average in both subjects.

112 When pupils enter Glenburn, standards in English are well below average. Their verbal scores have been consistently lower on entry than their non-verbal performance. Boys' performance has also been lower than that of the girls. In particular, scrutiny of pupils' work reveals that standards in writing are appreciably lower on entry than in reading or speaking and listening. Many have a poor level of technical competence in writing. Their handwriting, punctuation and spelling are weak. Standards in reading are rather better, although the proportion of pupils with low reading ages is much higher than average. The English department has done a great deal to address these difficulties. A literacy summer school enables many pupils to build on key skills before taking up their places at Glenburn. In Year 7, one English class is designated as a literacy group. A proportion of this group's English time is dedicated to literacy each week; this is a deliberate and well-focused strategy introduced to build on, and extend, the work covered in the primary literacy hour. The department also employs an intervention strategy both to raise the language attainment and to boost the confidence of a target-group of boys. These initiatives are helping to raise standards. In the literacy group in Year 7, pupils receive a good level of individual help. They are becoming more confident and fluent in reading. Their writing lacks fluency and most find it difficult to sustain accurate written responses. However, in the short time that they have been at school they have made good progress and spelling and punctuation have improved. Teachers use clever strategies to strengthen pupils' confidence and to provide some real purpose to skill-based activities. For example, pupils in the literacy class enjoyed being asked to devise their own rules to help a novice cope with direct speech.

113 By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are below average but not as far below as they were on entry to the school. However, pupils have made good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' performances in lessons and the scrutiny of work of the better attenders provides evidence of standards which are higher than those reflected in recent National Curriculum tests. The school's attendance rate is a good way below average, a factor which has a direct bearing on maintaining long-term progress of significant numbers of pupils and subsequently, on end-of-key-stage levels of attainment. The school's re-test results in reading also indicate that pupils have made good progress during Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are below average but progress is satisfactory with pupils maintaining the gains made in Key Stage 3. Recent statistical tables show that in the 1999 GCSE examinations in English

the school added value to pupils' prior attainment. Girls achieve more highly than boys but the department is working hard to address this imbalance. Key Stage 3 schemes of work contain a good balance of activities calculated to appeal equally to girls and boys. In lessons, tasks are frequently presented in short, manageable segments with regular synthesis and feedback to help keep motivation high. However, the content within the schemes is not matched closely to the learning needs of pupils within the middle band of attainment (sets 2 and 3). Pupils' books in each year group are not monitored closely enough to check on uniformity and balance in provision. Currently, pupils' English books are used for class work, homework and drafting. The frequency with which drafting is carried out varies from class to class. In some classes it is not used sufficiently as a device to help pupils organise and refine their writing. In some middle and lower attaining sets the distinction between drafted work and rough work is unclear. Where this happens, handwriting and presentation suffer and pupils receive the wrong messages about the need for well-presented work. At Key Stage 4 pupils' books and files provide evidence of well-written responses to the study of challenging texts, including Shakespeare. In both key stages, pupils are making good progress in their use of information technology (IT). In a Year 9 class, pupils used the computer to produce stories for pupils in one of the feeder primary schools. Pupils also used IT confidently to produce manuals of guidance for 'trainee vampires!' Pupils showed confidence in their ability to re-shape text and in their use of appropriate software, including 'Clipart'. The department makes good use of the independent learning software, Success Maker, to improve the language skills of the lowest attainers.

- 114 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' individual learning needs are also included on the agenda of each departmental meeting. The setting system works efficiently and the fact that the lowest sets contain only a small number of pupils enables teachers to provide a good level of individual support. Where support assistants were seen working with pupils in lessons the support provided was judged to be of good quality. Extension material is also available for higher attainers and for pupils who complete work early.
- 115 Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes toward the subject are good. Pupils work collaboratively when required to do so. They respect one another's views and listen carefully when others are speaking. The climate for learning is good. Teachers work extremely hard to provide very strong reinforcement for boys' achievement and are good role-models, enabling boys to respond sensitively in lessons and to embrace a culture of achievement. Concentration is well sustained in the majority of lessons. The early emphasis on literacy skills is helping to boost pupils' confidence and lift their self-esteem.
- 116 The quality of teaching is good. In both key stages, it is good in half the lessons seen, very good in a third and satisfactory in just under a fifth. Lessons are well-prepared. Classroom management and organisation are effective and the fact that teachers have good knowledge of pupils enables them to respond quickly to their needs. In those lessons where teaching is most effective teachers use very skilled questioning; tasks are manageable; pupils' responses are synthesised regularly and high expectations are maintained. In a middle set Year 11 lesson on de-constructing advertisements, the teacher's gentle but rigorous questioning challenged the pupils to 'think around' problems. In one low ability set Year 8 class the teacher used very clearly directed activities to help pupils understand the differences between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Pupils came to the front of the class confidently to identify topic sentences, mastheads and headlines. She kept the lesson moving at a brisk pace. She pushed pupils to refine their use of vocabulary and created a buzz of excitement as they experienced success in their correct use of such words as "timidly" and "severed". Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in the use of IT to support English. Writing-frames and study skills – such as spider diagrams – are used frequently to help pupils organise their work more proficiently and write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences. Homework is set regularly and homework tasks are of good quality. In a small proportion of lessons, teachers tend to do too much for pupils and over-direct the

teaching. This reduces independence in learning, leads to some passive behaviour and reduces the range of responses made by pupils. Oral work is generally good, with pupils enjoying many opportunities to work in pairs and groups to solve problems. However, in some lessons – particularly in Key Stage 4 – pupils needed longer to talk through issues and to respond personally to literature. In a small proportion of lessons, teachers are too eager to rush to judgement or annotation when pupils are studying set texts. The range of activities for speaking and listening is not wide enough to make full use of pupils’ oral responses.

- 117 Curricular provision meets statutory requirements and all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, have full access to all parts of the English curriculum. At Key Stage 3, schemes of work are linked to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and all attainment targets receive balanced coverage. The GCSE courses in English Language and Literature are well taught. Arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting of achievement follow the school policy and meet statutory requirements. Pupils’ work is standardised in both key stages and there is a good balance of on-going and final assessment. Day-to-day assessment is good overall though there is some unevenness in marking practices; some teachers make greater use of constructive and encouraging comments than others. Greater use should be made of assessment to carry out curricular modification. Through the provision made in its schemes, English makes a good contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Year 11 pupils have, for example, produced some trenchant written responses after considering the implications of racism in such works as “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”. Pupils have also produced some fine original writing and moving autobiography.
- 118 There is clear vision for the development of the subject and development planning is thorough. The issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed. The ethos for the subject is good and reflects the whole-school ethos. There are sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced teachers to deliver the curriculum. All teachers are equitably deployed. The level of professional development is good. The accommodation provides pleasant conditions for learning and the fact that English classrooms are grouped together helps to create a sense of cohesion and unity. Classrooms are enlivened by attractive displays of pupils’ work. Resources for learning are satisfactory although there is a too narrow a range of readers and non-literary texts in Key Stage 3. The department is well led. It makes efficient use of its resources, is committed to raising standards and is well placed to make improvements.

Literacy

- 119 Standards of literacy for a significant number of pupils entering Glenburn are low. In particular, standards in writing are weak (*very noticeable, for example in history, design and technology and religious education*). The school is approaching this literacy deficit with determination and is ensuring that it is tackled firmly from the earliest years (*through, for example, a summer school, a literacy hour for the group in Year 7 who are most in need of the support, and a guided study period at the end of every single day*). Additionally, the school’s intervention project – to raise boys’ achievement – identified a target group of boys to receive further support and to boost their language and learning. The school has a literacy policy and is fully committed to raising literacy standards across the whole school and in all subjects and areas of the curriculum. The policy contains a wide range of strategies to improve reading and writing, including methods to help pupils to engage more fully with writing and with understanding what they read: (*for example, DARTS – Directed Activities Related to Texts; SQ3R: ‘Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review; writing frames and study skills.*) Each department also has a link teacher for literacy development.

120 Literacy activities are firmly embedded within English provision. Elsewhere, they are still in a relatively early stage of development. However, the guided study period at the end of each day provides time for extra literacy activities and book-boxes are available to extend access to wider reading. In many departments, 'keywords' are displayed. In addition to literacy activities carried out in English, written work is drafted in physical education (PE), design and technology, science and modern languages. Drafting is particularly effective in PE. Across the curriculum, teachers are making increased use of study skills; spider diagrams are used to organise work in PSE, geography, history and religious education. In geography, teachers employ a range of strategies to promote "quick thinking". Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to ensure that reading materials are matched closely to pupils' reading capacity.

121 Talk is used effectively to promote language in mathematics where open questioning encourages pupils to think around problems before giving their answers. This facet of spoken language development is also strong in design and technology. The quality of discussion is good in science and group work is used effectively to open out spoken responses in PSE.

121 **Drama**

122 In the 1999 examination in drama, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was below the national average. Results were lower than in the previous year, although fluctuations in the pattern of results are ascribed largely to changes in the attainment profile of different year groups. At Key Stage 4, drama appears in the same option block as PE which may account for the relatively low number of boys opting for the subject in some years.

123 Overall, standards in drama are below average at the end of both key stages. However, standards on entry are well below average and many pupils come to drama at Key Stage 3 with poorly developed language skills. During the key stage, pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The use of productive circle-work at Key Stage 3 enables younger pupils to become increasingly proficient in their use of basic drama skills. By the end of the first term in Year 7, pupils are able to work more collaboratively and with a greater degree of co-operation. They can engage in simple improvisation and mime, and create and act-out a variety of situations with increasing confidence. Pupils continue to make good progress in the acquisition of skills as they advance through the key stage.

124 At Key Stage 3 the development of drama skills is not linked clearly enough to stated learning objectives in the activities described in the schemes of work. Without this linkage it is difficult to (a) compare the progress of different classes and (b) monitor progress across the key stage. At Key Stage 4, pupils are engaging energetically with the GCSE syllabus in Theatre Arts. They are making good progress although the range of attainment in the Year 11 class is very wide. One small group of pupils presented an improvisation on drug abuse. This had been devised for the Year 7 pupils' personal and social education programme and was extremely well-crafted. The improvisation was well-sustained, communicated its message powerfully and used a full range of drama skills extremely effectively. It also made a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 125 In both key stages, pupils' responses to drama are good. They maintain concentration well in most lessons although there is a need to push listening skills for some pupils in Year 10. Group work is effective and characterised by lots of pupil participation. Attitudes to drama and behaviour in lessons are good. Pupils nearing the end of Key Stage 4 display a particularly mature style of working. When they prepare their improvisations they are appropriately critical of content and delivery. These pupils are very willing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses in their work with a visitor. In the Year 11 lesson seen, pupils were very attentive and there was a real 'buzz' of appreciation when others performed.
- 126 Teaching in drama is good. At Key Stage 3 all of the teaching seen was good. At Key Stage 4, half of the teaching was very good and the other half satisfactory. Lessons are well-prepared, they start briskly and offer a good level of challenge. Circle-work in Key Stage 3 is good and the language games used help to boost confidence and make a good contribution to English. Occasionally, circle-work is a little too protracted and pupils need to move into group work more quickly. There is a good use of evaluation in most lessons with pupils helped to understand what they need to do to improve their work. Group work is effective with appropriate use of teacher-intervention. At Key Stage 4 there was a very good level of challenge and a high level of expectation in the Year 11 class.
- 127 Drama is located within the English department. The schemes of work make for balanced provision and ensure that there are productive links between English and drama. Time for drama is satisfactory at both key stages. Assessment is satisfactory, although the Key Stage 3 assessment sheets would benefit from being opened out to include more explicit coverage of skills acquisition. Take-up for drama at Key Stage 4 is good. Good use is made of the available accommodation and resources, but there is no video-camera to help with coverage of the new GCSE syllabus. The teacher with responsibility for drama provides good subject leadership and provides teachers with a clear sense of direction for the development of the subject.

127 **Mathematics**

- 128 Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average when compared to the national average. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has been consistently well below the national average for several years with 35 per cent of pupils gaining level 5 and above in 1999. Results at Level 6 and above are also well below those expected nationally. However, when compared to similar schools, Key Stage 3 results in mathematics fluctuate. In 1998, results were well above average at level 5, while in 1999, results are above that of similar schools. Although boys' results at Key Stage 3 have been consistently lower than that of girls, in 1999, the percentage of boys obtaining level 5 and above was slightly higher than that of the girls. Mathematics results are similar to those of science and English.
- 129 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics is also below the national average but well above expectations for similar schools. In 1999, 21.9 per cent of pupils gained a GCSE grade of A* to C in mathematics, a fall of 9 per cent from the 1998 results of 31 per cent. Pupils with special educational needs also attained an A* to G grade, contributing to the school's results, which were close to the national average. Boys' results are significantly lower than that of girls for both 1998 and 1999. The department has no clear explanation for this pattern.

- 130 Attainment as observed in lessons and work seen is above that of test and examination results at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is partly explained by the improvement in teaching as a result of whole school in-service training on learning styles. However, it also reflects the irregular attendance of a considerable number of the pupils at both key stages and their consequent lower progress. Boys' and girls' attendance does not differ significantly. Across all attainment and age groups, oral skills are strong, with pupils able to explain their methods and answers coherently. At both key stages, numerical skills and data handling skills are strongest. Pupils at Key Stage 3 find the probability of events happening with the highest attaining Year 9 group using tree diagrams to solve more complex problems. A group of Year 8 pupils with special educational needs work confidently on positive and negative numbers. They find differences between negative numbers, using practical equipment to help them. At Key Stage 4 pupils with special educational needs cope well with interpreting and drawing pictograms in preparation for modular exams. Other groups of Year 11 pupils are competent in drawing and interpreting cumulative frequency curves. More able pupils use their graphs to find medians and interquartile ranges. Year 10 pupils draw and interpret scatter graphs and discuss different types of correlation. Written work and language development affect pupils' attainment in shape and space in Year 7. Although many pupils name and identify solids some still have difficulty in using the common vocabulary related to three dimensional shapes and angles. For many pupils at Key Stage 4 their limited writing skills negatively affect the quality of their GCSE coursework. Algebraic skills vary across different groups of pupils at both key stages. Pupils of average attainment at Key Stage 4 find common factors, spot patterns and generalise simple relationships. At Key Stage 3, pupils recognise that letters represent numbers and solve simple equations using balances.
- 131 On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in mathematics is well below average as measured by nationally recognised tests. Across Key Stage 3, all pupils make at least satisfactory progress but those of above average attainment and those with special educational needs make the best progress. Teachers focus on raising pupils' expectations and this contributes well to progress for all pupils. The smaller group sizes and the targeting of extra support especially benefits those with special educational needs as does teachers' concentration on language in mathematics, varied learning activities and very good management of pupils' behaviour. In such a Year 8 group working on directed numbers, pupils made very good progress as a result of the good use of information technology and practical equipment which enabled the pupils to concentrate well on their tasks. For Year 9 pupils in a higher attaining set, carefully structured lessons on probability increase their confidence and enable them to work well above national expectations. At Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory for all groups, although progress in some lessons seen was faster than indicated by examination results. Careful planning of links with previous lessons, explanations well related to everyday experiences and the good use of homework to further understanding, all contribute to such good progress, as in the Year 10 lesson on bearings.
- 132 At each key stage, pupils' attitudes to learning within the mathematics classes are good. Behaviour is rarely less than good. Pupils work co-operatively with their teachers in all lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are very good. These good relationships positively affect the pupils' ability to listen well to each others' answers, questions and explanations and to work sensibly with equipment. As a result of the good use teachers make of the hour long lessons, pupils sustain their concentration for extended periods. The pleasing environment of the mathematics area is respected and appreciated by all pupils. They take pride in seeing their work displayed and show real interest in the 'student of the week' awards.

- 133 Teaching in mathematics is good at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In 20 per cent of lessons it is very good. All specialist mathematics teachers are appropriately qualified and show very good understanding of how pupils learn. Not only is the content of lessons well planned but activities for pupils are also carefully considered. In some lessons the assessment of what individual pupils have actually learned is not focused clearly enough but teachers mostly use starter and end activities well to show what pupils understand and can do, as in the Year 8 lesson on polygons. Here the starter activity is well used to clarify pupils' earlier misunderstandings. All mathematics teachers show heightened awareness of the importance of language in the development of pupils' mathematical understanding. Frequent and good opportunities are offered for oral work. Pupils' work is regularly marked. There is written feedback to help pupils make progress but this is well supplemented by good and immediate oral feedback. Teachers involve pupils well in recording and assessing their own progress. Pupils' self-assessments and the half-termly tests lead to negotiated target setting for all pupils. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. This is a strength of the department and allows teachers to offer pupils a wide range of experiences in their mathematics. Well thought out homework is set and marked regularly.
- 134 The department has made good progress since the last inspection. At that time, the results of GCSE examinations were below national expectations. Although the present GCSE results are still below national averages, the department has made good progress in raising the percentage of pupils gaining at least grade G and in increasing the number entered for the examination. The department now has strategies in place through a modular examination to increase results at grades A* to C. Teaching has much improved at both key stages. Lessons are now well matched to pupils' needs and prior attainment. Other significant factors positively affecting the work of the department include the present very good leadership, the recent procedures to track pupils' progress in mathematics and the new scheme of work. The imaginative display and good accommodation assist the department well in raising the pupils' self esteem. The department is now in a strong position to raise attainment by consolidating recent innovations such as the monitoring of pupils' progress and by maintaining the good teaching through regular monitoring by the head of department. Other issues to be addressed include the building up of good information technology resources and mathematics books to aid independent study and research and the development of planned cultural and historical perspectives in the new scheme of work.

134

Numeracy across the curriculum

- 135 Too few subjects actively support pupils' development of numeracy skills. An exception is science which both supports and uses number and graph work satisfactorily, but even here weak number skills undermine some activities in science, as when some pupils believed a faulty calculator rather than trust their own judgement. In geography, numeracy is at the forefront of the work on microclimates. For GCSE physical education, pupils interpret graphs well. In modern foreign languages, numerical work includes using height, weight and distance. Pupils with less than average attainment, however find difficulty in transferring mathematical skills to their language learning. The handbook for the design and technology department details opportunities to develop numeracy. These skills are enhanced in their practical work calculating resistors in electronics and in working with data on temperature loss from investigative work on insulation. In the guided study periods, a numeracy booklet is provided to allow pupils extra opportunities to improve their skills.
- 136 The school has not yet developed a policy for numeracy across the curriculum. Nor has an audit of numeracy skills taken place across all departments. However, this is now included in departmental development plans. The poor attendance of some pupils remains the main stumbling block to the improvement of overall numeracy standards.

- 137 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. In the 1999 national tests 27 per cent of pupils gained the expected level 5 and above, compared with the national average of 55 per cent. These results were well below the national average for all schools but well above the average for schools with pupils from similar social backgrounds. The findings of the inspection show that the present pupils at Key Stage 3 are just below the national average owing to the reduced numbers of high attaining pupils. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of basic scientific ideas. Over the last three years there has been a gradual improvement in overall performance of boys and girls and their performance is similar to each other.
- 138 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. In the GCSE examinations in 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well below the national average, although the proportion gaining grades A* to G was slightly above. Again, when results are compared with those from similar schools, they are well above average. Pupils do not express concepts in science clearly and are often confused by the terminology. In particular, average pupils do not attain national expectations in the subject. In general, girls perform slightly better than boys in class although in the examinations little difference can be detected. In recent years there has been no obvious trend in performance.
- 139 Over Key Stage 3, both boys and girls make good progress. The small number of high attaining pupils learn new ideas readily and show interest in topics such as biological classification, energy and chemical reactions. Average and below average pupils make steady progress in consolidating their earlier knowledge of the main aspects of science and learn, at appropriate levels, concepts such as the measurement of speed and the effect of microbes on human beings. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the sensitive support given by teachers and assistants from the learning support department, with which there is close co-operation. They learn about joints and reflexes in the human body. Although girls progress better than boys across Key Stage 4, the progress of both is only just satisfactory. It depends very much on their attitude to more challenging work and in some cases the boys fail to respond. Those who do concentrate make satisfactory progress in learning new ideas in biology and chemistry. They refine their skills in carrying out investigations which they write up conscientiously. With the aid of the Internet pupils with special needs are involved in their study of the solar system.
- 140 In general pupils at Key Stage 3 show interest in the subject although those who find concentration difficult to sustain quickly become disengaged. Behaviour is in the main satisfactory, although that of the boys is often immature. Pupils work well in practical sessions and discuss what they are doing enthusiastically. When given the opportunity, they are keen to answer questions. At Key Stage 4, in two lessons, some boys were not sufficiently involved, despite sound and interesting teaching, and failed to make the effort to understand more difficult ideas. In investigations, many lack the confidence to work on their own and need constant reassurance from the teacher. With firm discipline they work well together, without it many do not settle down to serious study.

- 141 The quality of teaching is satisfactory at each key stage. It is never less than satisfactory and is good and very good in 40 per cent of lessons seen. There has been a large turnover in teaching staff as well-established and successful teachers obtained promotion or moved elsewhere for other reasons, and some of their permanent replacements have yet to take up their posts. At Key Stage 3, teachers generally have a sound knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons satisfactorily. They are often complimentary about the achievements of pupils and build up a close supportive relationship with them. Although in some lessons the learning objectives are shared with the pupils, in others the objectives are not clear. In some lessons, with well-arranged activities, pupils learn ideas about aspects of natural life readily, while in others the over-use of worksheets does not enhance the learning. Time is occasionally wasted when pupils do not behave appropriately, so that the pace of the lessons slackens. At Key Stage 4, lessons are planned well, including a good measure of investigative work. In both key stages, homework is set regularly, but is insufficiently used as the basis for new learning. Books are conscientiously marked with helpful comments in accordance with the department's policy.
- 142 Schemes of work are well presented and reflect the National Curriculum requirements closely. They contain clear objectives to be attained at each section and link with work undertaken earlier. They indicate how topics can be extended for more able pupils, as well as providing a basis for the learning of pupils with special needs. The assessment of pupils' performance is thorough; results are stored centrally and are soon to be used for tracking pupils' progress. The department is well managed. In the short time since the present head of department has been appointed it has produced clear policies, supportive relationships and set an ethos for higher achievement. The development plan is clear, with attainable targets for the improvement of standards by the monitoring of teaching and pupil performance. The well qualified staff are competently supported by reliable technicians who are fully integrated into the running of the department. Resources are sufficient for the courses mounted and are used effectively. There is a need to dispose safely of some old chemicals for which the department has no further use. There are computers in the laboratories which, with their Internet link to the learning centre, play an important part in pupils' education. Since the last inspection the department has improved its ranking against all other Lancashire schools in terms of relative GCSE performance (*it no longer has the lowest raw results in the County*), and the use of information technology is now included as an integral component of schemes of work..

142 OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

142 Art

- 143 The standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 on the evidence of both teacher assessments and at inspection are below the national expectation.
- 144 The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 1998 GCSE examination was below the national average for similar schools, but the proportion gaining A* to G was above average. The 1999 examination results indicate a decline in attainment, but over a longer time scale results follow no consistent trend. The standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 on the evidence at inspection are below the national expectation. At GCSE girls perform better than boys but in the work seen in lessons there are no significant differences in attainment according to genders.

- 145 By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils demonstrate satisfactory drawing skills in a topic on shoes but some are less secure in their use of line and shade. In a cartoon topic based on an Inca myth a few pupils draw their ideas with confidence but many lack imagination in arranging them on the page. A topic based on a millennium room reveals weak colour mixing in the painted background from most pupils. The majority of pupils have secure making skills in both ceramics and printing work but their ideas are rarely developed beyond the teachers' initial brief. Sketch-books are rarely used beyond homework requirements. Few pupils can discuss their ideas or comment on the work of artists studied during the course.
- 146 By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils are beginning to modify and develop ideas and use them to create finished pieces. A project derived from drawings of local streets was transferred to clay relief with some confidence, but sketch-books reveal limited skills in the refining of initial ideas. Observational drawing is wide-ranging in quality. A few pupils have good drawing skills but most lack precision and often leave work incomplete. In a still-life project on umbrellas most pupils demonstrate poor colour mixing skills. Work produced on a Japanese topic is well presented but relies too heavily on copying from originals. In discussion, few pupils can recall the work of other artists studied during the course or are able to evaluate or explain their work with any degree of confidence.
- 147 Pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages in the practical areas of the curriculum. In Year 7 pupils' progress in making ceramic pots is good. In Year 8 drawing skills in a portrait project based on Archimboldo show satisfactory progress. In Year 10 most pupils make satisfactory progress in the use of IT in a topic on landscape and building development. Over time, pupils' progress in their understanding of art processes, but progress in evaluative skills and the knowledge of other artists is weak. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress in practical work but demonstrate slower progress in their knowledge and understanding of artists and processes.
- 148 Pupils' attitudes to art are good. They arrive to lessons promptly, are keen to work hard and once engaged on practical tasks the majority work with good levels of concentration. Behaviour is good and pupils demonstrate friendly relationships with teachers and each other. They are respectful of art resources and provide efficient assistance in the clearing away of materials at the end of lessons. A few pupils are over-reliant on teachers for motivation.
- 149 The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. In many lessons teachers enthuse pupils with skilful practical demonstrations (*for example, lessons on block printing and ceramics*) which set high expectations. The curriculum covers a wide range of stimulating topics from both European and world art and often includes reference to aspects of the pupils' own experience of popular culture (for example, the use of modern day artefacts and cult figures in a project to design a millennium room). Teachers know pupils well and provide them with a most supportive, friendly, well-disciplined and consistent environment in which they develop good working practices. Art rooms are attractively decorated and materials are meticulously arranged to ensure no time is wasted during practical sessions. In all lessons pupils are encouraged to work to the best of their abilities by individual advice which is sensitive and caring. In one Year 10 lesson the pace was rather slow. Most lessons are well planned to ensure maximum time is allotted to practical work, but in some lessons insufficient time is given to evaluation of work achieved. Pupils are not always provided with extension work when they complete tasks before the end of a lesson. Assessment is efficiently managed but some pupils are unclear about the level at which they are achieving. Homework is closely aligned to work covered in lessons but in Key Stage 4 it often lacks detailed comment for improvement.

150 The art department is well managed. The curriculum is broad and imaginative and work is often enhanced by projects in the local community. Schemes of work are well conceived but the Key Stage 3 curriculum lacks a clear sense of progression in its development of key art-specific skills. There is a good range of practical materials but the opportunities for the use of IT to generate artwork are restricted. The reduced timetable allocation for Year 9 significantly impacts on pupils' opportunity to develop their practical skills.

151 Since the last inspection the good standard of teaching has been maintained and there has been some development in the use of IT, but standards of attainment remain uneven across both key stages.

151 **Design and technology**

152 GCSE results in 1999, taken together, are well below the national average for all schools and are lower than in 1998. Resistant materials and graphics results show a small increase in 1999 with a success rate of 38 per cent and 20 per cent A* to C grades respectively. Food and textiles results dropped to 22 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. Textiles results, with a success rate of 42 per cent A* to C grades, came closest to the national average figure of 50 per cent for technology subjects taken as a whole.

153 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the level expected nationally for pupils aged 14. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Teacher assessments at the end of the key stage indicate that 50 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or above in 1999 against a national figure of 63 per cent. This is an improvement on previous figures. Inspection evidence suggests that changes to schemes of work and methods of working should help this to continue. Pupils often express verbally what they find difficult to set down on paper. For example, pupils in a Year 8 resistant materials class explain the function of the cam and follower mechanism they were incorporating into their mechanical toys. One pupil with special educational needs was delighted when, with help from the teacher, he successfully fitted the axle to his mechanism. Structured project booklets guide pupils through the process of designing and making but also allow scope for them to make a unique contribution to their work. These responses are often imaginative but not well recorded. Key Stage 3 design and technology experiences give pupils appropriate opportunities to develop the skills of self-organisation and independent working. Electronics projects are valuable in stimulating imagination and enthusiasm in pupils but opportunities do not exist for this work to continue at Key Stage 4.

154 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the level expected nationally for pupils aged 16. Pupils' work folders show that they follow a structured design methodology but that, in general, their ability to record and express their ideas is limited by poor graphical skills and low levels of literacy. Some higher attaining pupils use a variety of techniques to enhance their design folders and clarify their design thinking. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to use computers to word process text, generate graphic images and manipulate images from the digital camera. This greatly improves pupils' ability to present ideas in an attractive and useful way but is not matched by sufficiently high standards of hand drawn graphics and text. For example, pupils in a Year 11 resistant materials group were successfully making ambitious GCSE projects based on the theme of children's play equipment. The development of their making skills is helped by having access to staff and facilities provided through the school's valuable co-operation with Skelmersdale College. The quality of work in their supporting design folios, although showing appropriate procedures are followed, does not match the quality of practical work. Pupils' attainment is generally in line with their ability. For example, a pupil with special educational needs in a Year 11 textiles lesson follows the same design methodology as other pupils, speaks

about her work enthusiastically and uses basic drawing and writing skills to record it in her folder.

- 155 Progress at both key stages is satisfactory. Pupils make gains in acquiring the practical skills, knowledge and personal organisation they need for good design work. Progress is better where pupils are aware of the lesson objectives and where learning activities engage their interest and imagination. For example, in a Year 11 textiles lesson, pupils work from clear task sheets to conduct tests on fabrics. All pupils develop an understanding of the properties of materials, say why such tests are important and how the work is relevant to their own GCSE project. Where progress is less evident it is usually because the lesson structure does not allow pupils to build on experience as in, for example, a Year 10 graphics lesson requiring pupils to practise basic hand tool skills they are already familiar with. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at each key stage. For example, four pupils in a Year 7 food technology lesson were given good support by a learning support assistant. They completed the task of making a cake by the 'rubbed in' method, calculated the time needed to cook it and began to evaluate the process. In a Year 11 resistant materials group, a lower attaining pupil benefited from help given by a member of staff and successfully transferred his pattern from paper to wood using a squared grid.
- 156 Pupils enjoy technology lessons and this is reflected in their generally positive attitudes to the subject. They are generally keen to respond to questions and co-operate well with each other when undertaking group work. For example, pupils in a Year 11 food technology lesson willingly helped each other to prepare a pastry product even though some of them were not scheduled to perform the same task until later. Pupils generally work in a safe and sensible way in practical areas and behaviour is usually good.
- 157 Teaching at both key stages is good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and work hard to establish good relationships with pupils. Lesson planning is detailed and targets clearly explained to pupils. Teachers use appropriate strategies to maintain pace and interest. For example, the teacher of a Year 8 resistant materials group involved a wide range of pupils in his introduction to the lesson, required pupils to extend and clarify answers, gave good individual help and advice during practical work and made useful whole group interventions where necessary. Pupils are encouraged to develop thinking skills and teachers often ask pupils to suggest solutions to problems, rather than give them answers.
- 158 The leadership of the department is sound. Work is continuing, and has been for the last five years on revising schemes of work and developing a common approach to teaching design skills. Assessment procedures reflect some good practice. Pupils are involved in their own assessment. National Curriculum levels are established for each project and are clearly discussed with pupils. Work is marked regularly and with helpful and constructive comments. These good practices have yet to be drawn together and fully articulated in a detailed departmental policy. The department has not fully investigated the reasons for the low performance of boys or formulated any strategies for improving it. Two part-time technicians give good support with routine maintenance tasks but time available to the department is shared with art. Accommodation is well appointed and enhanced by good displays of pupils' work but timetabling arrangements mean that some food technology groups have limited access to a specialist area and some lessons are taught in non-specialist areas.
- 159 Since the last inspection the school has made progress in improving achievement at Key Stage 3 and establishing a more effective assessment system.

- 160 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, is well below the national expectation, in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving at least level 5 in the national tests (34 per cent compared with the national figure of 61 per cent). However, in lessons and work observed, evidence points to an improvement in standards of attainment since the last inspection. Pupils have a good understanding and knowledge of people, places and environments. They are able to use extended geographical vocabulary and undertake geographical enquiry with confidence. The majority of pupils can select and use secondary sources of evidence and draw maps and plans at a variety of scales. Higher attaining pupils use sophisticated geographical terminology, have good concentration skills and a capacity for independent study.
- 161 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, in 1999, is below the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade C or at least grade G. Results are favourable when compared to similar comprehensive schools and in comparison with other subjects in school. Girls significantly outperform boys in GCSE performance. The work of some pupils, particularly girls in some classes, is above average, although this is not always converted to GCSE examination success, due largely to intermittent pupil absence which hinders the progress of these pupils. Pupils have a working knowledge plus an understanding of environmental and urban issues. A large proportion of pupils have good graphical skills. Numeracy skills are in evidence in the work on microclimates. Pupils have a good understanding of environmental change and sustainable development and are able to apply study skills within the classroom.
- 162 Most pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Progress is made through steady reinforcement of key skills, geographical skills and fieldwork techniques, both within the classroom and on field trips. Further progress is made towards a sound knowledge base, supported by good use of specialist vocabulary, key words, grammatical structures and the use of writing frames. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory to good progress but have limited access to extension exercises and choice of tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress overall but are often limited by the absence of relevant support material or sufficient variety of learning opportunities.
- 163 Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and better than expected given the wide ability range of the pupils. Progress is made through, for example, opportunities for independent study (*coursework and fieldwork enquiry*), and through the further development of communication skills. Again at this key stage, there is limited choice of tasks, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Lower attainers have poor organisational skills and do not cope well with the demands of homework. The department makes significant efforts to overcome this.
- 164 Pupils generally show a positive attitude towards learning. Their behaviour is good in class and they are willing and co-operative. Pupil-teacher relationships are excellent and promote a secure and harmonious working environment effecting good progress. Take up rates for GCSE geography are good. Pupils enjoy geography and show initiative and self-discipline in their approach to learning. They are appreciative of teachers' continued efforts to support and advise them.

165 The quality of teaching is almost always satisfactory and half of it is good at both key stages. The good teaching promotes high standards of learning and sound progress. Expectations are high and effective discipline enables close monitoring and support of individual pupils and groups within the classroom. Planning and organisation are generally good. However, in a minority of lessons at Key Stage 3, this was not strong enough to secure sound standards or progress. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly and constructively and assessment procedures inform future teaching well. Classwork assessment is meticulous. Teaching is good when pupils are encouraged to evaluate and take control of their learning. In an unsatisfactory lesson at Key Stage 3 the teaching method and organisation were not suited to the needs and abilities of all pupils, particularly lower attaining groups.

166 The geography curriculum is well planned and meets statutory requirements. Although it is broad and balanced there is little opportunity for lower attaining groups (in particular, pupils with special educational needs) to revisit and reinforce geography skills through modified programmes of work. Literacy and numeracy are successfully reinforced but could be further developed with additional strategies for higher attaining pupils. The geography department is well managed with a clear vision and effective style. Geography contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development through strong community links and cross-cultural programmes of study.

166 History

167 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 5, at 29 per cent, is well below the national expectation for this age group. Girls outperformed the boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of grades A* to C gained in the 1999 GCSE examination is below the national average, but is above the average for similar schools. The proportion of grades A* to G has been close to the national average in recent years. The proportion of pupils taking the examination is much higher than the national figure. Local Authority calculations show that, in the light of their attainment on entry, pupils do significantly better in history than in most other subjects in the school. Able pupils can do well in history as results in the 1998 examination show, the percentage of girls gaining A grades being close to the national average. Girls have performed better than boys in the most recent examinations. Evidence from lesson observation and pupils' written work shows that higher attaining pupils have a sound knowledge of the themes and topics studied and can explain the significance of important personalities and their influence on past events. The attainment of these pupils in their course-work matches the national average. Lower-attaining pupils have a basic knowledge of the themes studied, but attainment is below average because of poor writing skills, lack of clarity in presenting their ideas in a logical sequence and poor analytical skills in using historical sources to explain their views and offer reasons to support their judgements.

168 The attainment of pupils on entry is below average. The progress of the majority of pupils in both key stages is good. At Key Stage 3 pupils are making good progress in extending their knowledge of the past and in presenting their work in a variety of written forms, sometimes with the use of word-processors. On occasion the progress of pupils with special educational needs is hindered by the difficulty of some of the materials used in lessons, which require reading skills beyond the ability of some of them. Many lower-attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson were making very good progress in extending their knowledge of the theme studied (*evacuation during world war two*) and, using carefully structured learning-aids, in presenting their views in writing. The evident interest and involvement of these pupils was a significant factor in the very good progress observed in this lesson. The progress of the majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 is good. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 10 lesson observed were making good progress in their capacity to use source materials to support explanations about past events and in judging the value of primary and secondary sources of evidence for the suffragette movement. Most pupils in this key stage are making good progress in reinforcing previous learning; developing organisational skills; and

presenting their work, especially course-work, in a variety of ways, including the use of statistics and graphs to supplement written information.

- 169 Most pupils have a positive attitude to the subject, which is evident in lessons and in the take-up of the subject at GCSE (*well-above the national average*). The response of pupils at Key Stage 3 is good. They are well-behaved in class, settle to the work set and most work with concentration. The response of pupils in a Year 9 lesson observed was excellent (*several enthusiastically explained how they had interviewed relatives about their war-time experiences*) and the extent and quality of subsequent written work of many pupils on this theme indicated real interest and enjoyment in their studies. The response of pupils in Key Stage 4 is good. Most settle quickly to the tasks set and apply themselves well both to class work and to working on their course assignments. The good response of pupils in a Year 11 class, revising work on the development of railways, was marked by good collaboration in group-work, attentive listening to each other and clear expression of their findings. The oral contributions of many pupils in this key stage are, however, undeveloped and are often only one-word answers to teachers' questions. On occasion, a few over-dominant pupils restrict opportunities for others to participate fully in the lesson.
- 170 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. Lessons are well-planned and purposeful. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the aims of lessons are clear. Very good teaching was observed in a Year 9 lesson on evacuation in the second world war. Pupils were effectively guided through the topic with the use of good support-materials, active learning was encouraged through written and oral exercises and the lesson was concluded with very good re-inforcement of the points covered. Teachers have produced a wide range of materials to supplement learning, especially for pupils with weak writing and study skills. Some of this material, however, is not well-matched to the learning needs of the lowest attaining pupils, especially in the reading level required, and, whilst this carefully-structured approach is clearly helpful to the majority of lower-attaining pupils, it also provides insufficient opportunity for more-able pupils to develop higher level skills of enquiry and independent research. The department are well aware of this and have made strenuous efforts both to simplify the material for the lower attainers and to obtain more challenging texts for the higher attainers.
- 171 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are carefully planned and purposeful. Pupils are being thoroughly prepared for the GCSE examination and good study-guide and revision-aid materials have been produced to support and extend learning in class. Relations between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers are keen to encourage pupils' participation in lessons, but are sometimes too ready to accept short, one-word, answers to their questions from pupils whose vocabulary, and ability to express their ideas orally, requires more development. Good teaching observed in a Year 11 lesson on changes in agriculture had a prompt and positive start to the lesson, clear explanations, the active involvement of pupils and good guidance on how to revise the topic
- 172 The curriculum is well-planned at Key Stage 3 to provide pupils with opportunities to develop knowledge of the past and a range of skills in historical enquiry. Careful thought has been given to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and an imaginative programme has been developed by staff to capitalise on pupils' interests, to extend their knowledge of local history and to develop enquiry and study skills. Continuity and progression across the key stages are ensured by this planning. Visits to places of historical interest in the region and an annual visit to London enhance pupils' experience and understanding of history.
- 173 The assessment of pupils' work is conscientious, often with encouraging comment, but there is little indication of how pupils can improve in the skills and knowledge specific to history. Pupils are encouraged to set targets for themselves at Key Stage 4. Targets for pupils at Key Stage 3 are

set at a general level across a number of subjects and are not sufficiently specific in relation to the key elements of the National Curriculum for history.

- 174 An experienced and committed teacher provides positive leadership for the subject by setting clear targets for development which are focused on raising pupils' attainment. Both teachers of history are well qualified and their enthusiasm for the subject creates a positive ethos for learning. Accommodation is good and displays of pupils' work in history classrooms help to create a stimulating learning environment. Resources are adequate and the stock of history books in the open learning centre has been improved since the last inspection, but the rate of borrowing is low. Pupils are encouraged to use information technology in presenting their work.
- 175 Improvements now should be made in: overall presentation and reading level of materials used with lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 to ensure that these are suitably matched to the reading ability of pupils; the opportunities provided to more-able pupils at Key Stage 3 for independent study; the level of oral response expected of pupils at Key Stage 4; the borrowing-rate of books from the history section in the open learning centre; the assessment of pupils work at Key Stage 3, relating it to the key elements of the national curriculum for history; and target-setting by pupils at Key Stage 3.
- 176 This is a good department, making a significant contribution to the intellectual and social development of pupils, who respond positively to the commitment and enthusiasm of their teachers.

176 **Information technology**

- 177 Attainment levels of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are below those normally expected. Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999 indicated that only 18 per cent of the pupils reached level 5 or above compared to a national average of 59 per cent. Over the last three years the school has not entered any pupils for GCSE in information technology (IT). Of the six classes seen at Key Stage 3, one was operating at the nationally expected level, one below this level and the remaining four well below this level. For the three classes seen at Key Stage 4, two were operating at the nationally expected level and the remaining one below this level. The two classes judged to be operating at the nationally expected level were both GCSE business studies classes. Pupils' skills in the use of IT in communicating information in a variety of forms are much better developed than many of the other aspects. Most pupils are also able to use the Internet well for research purposes.
- 178 The progress of pupils in IT at both key stages is good. For the classes seen, progress was always at least satisfactory, frequently good and sometimes excellent. Progress was judged to be good or very good in two-thirds of the classes seen at both key stages. Some of the pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, required significant teacher support in order to make further progress. Examination of students' work shows that the majority of pupils are making good progress over time.
- 179 Responses of the majority of pupils are satisfactory and sometimes good. In one class seen at Key Stage 3, the responses of pupils were good and in the remaining five classes they were satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 the responses of the majority of the pupils were very good in one class, good in another and satisfactory in the remaining class. Pupils are well motivated and show an interest in their work. This is particularly true when they are undertaking practical work. Pupils frequently remain after school in order to undertake further practical work on the computers. In some classes it is apparent that some of the pupils have relatively short

concentration spans and are easily distracted from the task being undertaken. Behaviour in classes seen was good, with just a few minor exceptions. There are a number of examples of pupils who are disaffected in other lessons but who take a particular interest in their IT work.

180 Teaching is good at both key stages. For the classes seen, teaching was very good in three lessons, good in five lessons and satisfactory in the remaining lesson. All lessons are well prepared and many contain an appropriate range of activities. Some of the work undertaken in groups is presented by the teacher in a lively and interesting way. The pupils are encouraged and make significant contributions to the development of topics within several of the lessons. Pupils are provided with significant support when undertaking practical computer work. In some classes this is provided by several members of staff. There is a need to ensure that the level of support that is available and provided for pupils does not impede their progress toward becoming autonomous computer users.

181 The school has made progress towards satisfying all the requirements of the National Curriculum whilst ensuring that pupils' IT skills are developed systematically. However, the statutory requirements for IT will not be met for all the pupils currently in the school. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 will not have opportunities to undertake sufficient data logging and control work to satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is currently no discrete provision made for IT in the school. Pupils' IT skills are developed, practised and consolidated mainly through the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in technology. The level of IT activity across a number of subjects is clearly increasing at both key stages. Significant use is made of IT in a number of subjects relating to communicating information in a variety of forms. More limited use is made of aspects such as spreadsheets and databases. The aim is for all pupils at Key Stage 4 to achieve the CLAIT (*Computer Literacy and Information Technology*) certificate.

182 IT is being effectively managed. Targets have been agreed with the headteacher. Materials are in the process of being developed so that both pupils and teaching staff are supported. A team teaching approach is being used to support the non-specialist staff and to allow them to include appropriate IT in their teaching. Pupils have good access to mainly good quality IT hardware and software. The overall ratio of pupils to computers is six to one, although some out-of-date computers are still in use. There is a need to ensure that appropriate technical support is provided.

182 **Modern foreign languages**

183 All pupils study French at both key stages, and are entered for the full GCSE course. National Curriculum requirements are met.

184 In 1999, teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show 60 per cent of pupils at or above the level of attainment expected at this stage. This compares well with the national expectations in the core subjects and represents good progress at this key stage.

185 Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4, by the end of which the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C at GCSE in 1999 is below the national average whilst the proportions achieving grades A* to G have been broadly in line with national averages over the last three years. Girls outperformed boys in 1999 but not in 1997.

- 186 The standards of achievement in lessons by the end of Key Stage 3 are generally higher in the skills of speaking and listening than in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 7, for example, are involved immediately at the start of a lesson in dialogue, recalling previously learned material. They produce full sentences at a level well above expectations at this early stage. Exercise books and displays of pupils' work, however, show evidence of satisfactory standards in writing. By the end of Key Stage 4 a wide range of achievement reflects pupils' capabilities. The quality of GCSE coursework reflects improving proficiency in writing skills. A low-attaining Year 11 group produce sentences, oral and written, giving information about the location of shops in relation to each other. This work is at least one level below expectations nationally at this stage, but commensurate with the capabilities of the group. The majority of the pupils in the group are designated as having special educational needs, and are achieving well compared with their prior attainment.
- 187 Pupils show evidence of progress by achieving the targets set within each topic according to National Curriculum levels. At Key Stage 3 the detailed departmental scheme of work plots the route through each topic area, involving the use of all four skills at different levels. After recalling previous knowledge at the start of the lesson, that knowledge may be extended or new knowledge introduced. This is practised, reinforced and consolidated in a variety of activities, each clearly defined in levels of attainment. Grouping pupils into ability sets enables pupils to make progress at an appropriate pace. It facilitates the use of materials adapted to the capabilities of each group, and is particularly helpful to pupils with special educational needs. One Year 8 group, consisting of eighty per cent pupils with special educational needs, used a previously-learned construction expressing pain and illness, to express feelings. They assimilated new vocabulary very quickly, and spoke confidently, whilst correctly using a construction, which requires retention of changing grammatical items. This represents progress above expectations. Where support teachers are present, they are integrated into classroom activities and used effectively. At Key Stage 4 recurring topics build on prior knowledge and extend vocabulary, constructions and grammatical awareness. The department uses home-produced materials and those provided with course books, aimed at different levels of attainment, so that pupils can attain standards in line with their capabilities. Higher attainers have materials designed to stretch and challenge them. Overall the standards of provision and of teaching ensure good progress.
- 188 At Key Stage 3, pupils are well motivated, and maintain interest and concentration throughout the lesson. They are eager to contribute to the various activities, and readily accept the discipline of listening to the contributions of others. The "fun" element of some of the early activities encourages a determined and positive approach to the later, more challenging tasks. They apply themselves diligently to individual work, and co-operate well in pairs and groups. They respond readily to the use of the target language by the teacher, but do not use it themselves outside set tasks. Pupils at Key Stage 4 respond particularly well to challenging work, especially that requiring collaboration. At both key stages relationships with teacher and peers are good.

189 The quality of teaching is good, occasionally very good, at each key stage. Staff are well-qualified, have a secure knowledge of their subject, and are efficiently and equitably deployed. Lessons are effectively conducted in the target language across both key stages. A positive, working atmosphere is established straightaway in the lesson, simple games with a “fun” element being particularly effective. Discipline is calm, but firm; pronunciation and accuracy are corrected sympathetically; reading aloud is promoted, and pupils are encouraged to use complete sentences to answer oral questions. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of activities, requiring use of all four skills, and well directed. Pace is brisk initially, which enables pupils to adapt quickly to the deadlines set for follow-up work, and lesson objectives are for the most part achieved. Good use is made of physical resources. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils: a high-attaining Year 10 set completed a very challenging group task requiring them to present a weather bulletin for the different regions of France, using either past, present or future tense. This demanded sophisticated use of complex grammatical items and constructions, well above the level of attainment expected at the beginning of Key Stage 4. Homework is regularly set and is appropriate, aimed at consolidating class work at a higher level or learning key words and phrases for retention and testing. Marking is frequent and consistent, using National Curriculum attainment levels and GCSE grades where appropriate to enable tracking of pupil progress.

190 The department is well managed and works closely and effectively as a team. There is a firm sense of commitment from the teaching staff. The department’s clearly-defined policies are applied consistently, with effective teaching and recording strategies. Departmental monitoring takes place informally but regularly through visits and class exchanges, supported by effective monitoring by the line manager. Accommodation is fairly spacious, conveniently grouped, and enhanced with high quality displays of pupils’ work. Provision of text-books, readers and teaching materials is adequate, as is that of audio and video equipment. Storage is within the department, and there is little supportive material in the open learning centre, apart from a series of nationally published modern language magazines for schools. Pupils have ready access to computers, and IT is incorporated into the course across both key stages. Recent acquisition of CD-ROM materials and an interactive whiteboard will further enhance provision once networked.

190 **Music**

191 There is no GCSE provision in music.

192 At the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of attainment is below the national expectation. There is insufficient data to provide comment on trends in attainment over time.

193 By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils listen attentively and identify different rhythmic patterns. Pupils manipulate electronic keyboards but when required to perform simple blues patterns the majority display limited co-ordinating skills. The quality of singing in lessons is poor. In a composition task using clapping and words, few pupils demonstrated any understanding of musical structure. Most pupils could copy musical notation but few understood its conventions. Pupils’ general musical knowledge linked to the lessons inspected was generally insecure. There was no significant difference in attainment between girls and boys.

194 Progress in music is unsatisfactory. Whilst there was clear progress made in the lessons inspected, most pupils had made too little progress in performing and composing over time. Listening skills demonstrate satisfactory progress. The majority of pupils make limited progress

in their understanding of musical terminology. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with that of other pupils.

- 195 Pupils' attitude to music is good. In all the lessons inspected pupils demonstrated a keen interest and enthusiasm for music. They concentrate well during periods of listening and appraising and apply themselves seriously to keyboard work. Behaviour is good and relationships with the teacher and each other are friendly. Pupils treat equipment sensibly. Only a few pupils need frequent assistance from the teacher.
- 196 The quality of teaching is good, from a recently appointed part time teacher who has had insufficient time to make a long-term impact upon levels of attainment in the subject. High expectations are set in all lessons through a well-planned range of briskly paced activities effectively covering National Curriculum requirements. The teacher makes good use of questioning to ensure pupils fully understood their work, and explanations are clear and enriched by skilful use of the singing voice and piano. Discipline and class control are very good and pupils are strongly encouraged to work hard. The fullest use is made of the time available to ensure all pupils experience a range of listening, performing and composing tasks.
- 197 The school has been without a full-time Head of Music for several years. The current supply teaching is of good quality but pupils' musical education is currently inadequate. Pupils lack weekly lessons at Key Stage 3, an up-to-date curriculum, a regular extra-curricular programme, opportunity for instrumental teaching and appropriate concert work.
- 198 Since the last inspection the quality of musical provision has declined.

198 **Physical education**

- 199 The proportion of pupils who gained grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average, and all pupils gained at least grade G. This was a marked improvement on the 1998 results. GCSE results have shown an improvement since the previous inspection. Girls out perform boys in this examination. Pupils' results in physical education are significantly above those they have gained in their other subjects.
- 200 In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the ends of the key stages, when pupils are 14 and 16 respectively, are in line with the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. These standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection. By the age of 14, standards in swimming are satisfactory. Most pupils can swim at least 25 metres and the majority has a sound understanding of safety skills. In gymnastics, standards are sound and often good. Most pupils use the technical language of the subject accurately, in discussion of their work. They show good control and body tension in work on balance, demonstrating their understanding of "counter balance" with a partner on large apparatus. Standards of attainment in games are generally above average. Most pupils are competent in a range of skills, and decision making skills develop well, as pupils plan for performance and refine their skills in the context of tactical play. Good work is seen in netball, where boys and girls of all levels of attainment combine dodging and footwork skills to perform effective attacking play in the game. Independent learning skills develop well through Key Stage 3, as pupils engage in planning and performing in a range of activities, but their capacities for observation, analysis and comment on performance are generally under-developed. By the age of 16, pupils in the core programme attain expected standards in the health and fitness aspects of their course. Most pupils have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body; this was well illustrated by girls who

showed sound co-ordination, and extended their muscular endurance and aerobic capacity in an aerobics lesson, and by boys who demonstrated safe, responsible use of weight training equipment, as they undertook a personal fitness training programme.

- 201 Although no games were observed in the inspection, the GCSE practical results and the extra curricular attainment in games for this age group indicate that the above average standards observed at Key Stage 3 are maintained in games at Key Stage 4. GCSE practical work is of a high standard. In badminton, boys and girls show a mastery of the game, as they work in groups to refine their skills in practice and outwit their opponents by applying these tactically in the game. Boys and girls attain equally good standards of attainment in practical work, but the higher attainment of girls in the 1999 GCSE examinations may be attributed to their supportive and cohesive group work in preparation for the examination. GCSE written coursework indicates a range of attainment, but overall, standards are sound, and pupils show at least a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects, such as the systems of the body.
- 202 High standards are attained in extra-curricular sport, and many pupils gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes regional and national level. The school currently has 31 pupils who represent West Lancashire in netball, girls' and boys' football, badminton, cross country running and athletics. Three girls play in the under 15 Lancashire Schools' Cricket Squad, and ten boys and girls from different age groups are West Lancashire Schools' Badminton Champions. The under 16 girls' football team won the Lancashire Shield, and represented Lancashire in the National Schools' Girls' Football Championships. The under 15 girls' cricket team were runners up in the North West Regional Schools' Championships at Old Trafford. The Year 11 and Year 9 boys' six-a-side football teams won the West Lancashire Schools' Championships.
- 203 Pupils' progress is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4, particularly in the GCSE examination classes. Progress is good in lessons, because most pupils are well motivated with positive attitudes to learning, and they respond well to good teaching. Boys and girls are taught in mixed ability and gender classes, and they make equally good progress. Discernible progress is evident when pupils of all levels of attainment improve their skills through practice. This is well illustrated in badminton, where high attaining GCSE pupils improve the consistency of their play by repetition of a sequence of shots, and in gymnastics, where low attaining pupils consolidate their partner balance skills and adapt them to large apparatus, effectively. In most lessons, low attaining pupils make good progress, because they are interested, concentrate well and the teaching is designed to allow a careful development of skills at an appropriate pace. Pupils make clear gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in the majority of lessons, such as in games, where they refine their skills, develop more complex tactical awareness and adopt previously learned skills in the context of a game. Effective use of a range of teaching strategies by most teachers encourages pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning and to become independent learners. These competencies make a significant contribution to pupils' progress in Key Stage 4. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and make progress at the same rate as their peers, such as in swimming, where a pupil with disabilities successfully learned new skills alongside her friends. Good opportunities are provided for pupils of all ages and abilities to participate in extra-curricular sport. These are well supported, and many pupils make very good progress in their chosen activities.
- 204 Pupils have good attitudes to learning at Key Stage 3 and very good attitudes at Key Stage 4. They are well motivated, prompt to lessons and hard working. Most pupils enjoy physical education, and GCSE is a popular option at Key Stage 4. Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in very good standards of behaviour, dress and participation in lessons. They respond well to the high expectations of the teachers. Relationships between pupils are good. In lessons, they co-

operate well in partner and group work and they are generally supportive of each other. Most pupils take their work seriously, showing a real sense of commitment to the subject, and they accept responsibility readily, for example in leading their peers in warm up activities. Many pupils appreciate the open access to the classroom resource base in the physical education area. They make good use of the many resources available, and interact informally with staff and trainee teachers outside lessons.

- 205 The quality of teaching is consistently good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. This represents an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. The strong teaching in Key Stage 4 is a significant factor in pupils' very good progress in the GCSE course. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and the department has developed an excellent ethos, in which high standards are expected and attained in every respect. The teachers build up pupils' confidence using praise and encouragement, and insist that they take their work seriously; second best is not good enough. The management and organisation of pupils are outstanding, leading to the very good use of time. Lesson planning is a strength, reflecting secure knowledge of the subject and clear objectives, which are matched to different levels of pupils' attainment. However, there is insufficient emphasis on pupils' evaluation skills involving observation, analysis and comment on performance against specified criteria. An example of good planning was seen in a netball lesson, where pupils including some identified as having special educational needs, made very good progress through the teacher's careful organisation of progressively more difficult tasks, which provided continuity and focus from the warm up to the final game. Teaching strengths include high expectations of all pupils by providing challenges appropriate to their abilities, a demanding pace of learning and perceptive, observation, assessment and feedback which helps pupils improve their work. Lively, enthusiastic teaching which motivates pupils and stimulates learning, is a consistent feature of lessons. Another example of good practice supported the school's literacy policy by enabling pupils to identify key words to describe what they had been learning in gymnastics. Pupils used the technical language of the subject well and their words were recorded and used as a resource throughout the lesson. The strongest teaching is always well focused, and targets are set and achieved. A range of teaching strategies is used effectively to involve pupils in their own learning and to develop independent learning skills, such as in a GCSE theory lesson when pupils were highly motivated by an initial role play by the teacher, which subsequently involved them in investigating the modern Olympic Games, and demonstrating the skills of questioning, research, presentation and communication effectively.
- 206 There is strong leadership in the department and a commitment to the subject and to the pupils. Physical education is well managed with a clear vision and sense of direction, based on raising standards of attainment. The accommodation, with its excellent display, provides a very good learning environment, enhanced by the central classroom resource base. This facility is a focus for both the formal and informal life of the department, and contributes significantly to the stimulating buzz of activity which is characteristic of the area from early morning and throughout the day. Planning of most aspects of the department's work is good, particularly schemes of work, and this is supported by sound documentation. The department has good links with John Moores University, and is actively involved in the initial teacher training programme. Teachers value this aspect of their work, as having a beneficial effect on standards of attainment, in particular, the help trainees give to the extra-curricular programme. The subject is currently taught by seven teachers, although only two are full time specialists. Progress since the last inspection has been good, particularly in terms of the improvement in pupils' standards of attainment in GCSE, the development of pupils' literacy skills through the subject, and the quality of teaching. The only weakness identified in the last report, which has not been fully addressed, is the extent to which pupils are involved in evaluating their own and others' work, which would benefit from more structured planning. Extra-curricular sport is a strength of the department, and staff give generously of their own time to provide a successful programme open to all pupils.
- 206 **Religious education**
- 207 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations although at the end of Key Stage 4 it is close to national expectations. Pupils have not been entered for GCSE

examinations in recent years.

- 208 The progress of most pupils is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and where specialist teaching is provided, is often very good. Year 9 pupils have a good vocabulary of religious terms which they use accurately. They recognise that they share life experiences with others. They write with empathy and understanding of the difficulties faced by a young person from one religious tradition – Islam – living within the very different religious culture of Britain today. They understand the impact of religious beliefs and values on everyday life. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) have a good understanding of Islamic dietary laws. Their capacity to write about the laws is limited but they are able to discuss them intelligently and to ask thoughtful and perceptive questions. The progress of pupils in Year 8 and of some in Year 7 is limited by the lack of subject knowledge of their non-specialist teachers. This is particularly so in the case of pupils studying Islam in Year 8 whose progress is unsatisfactory. They do not acquire a coherent understanding of Islam and demonstrate some disdain for the concept of religious belief. In other Year 8 classes, in spite of some very good teaching strategies, pupils do not make as much progress as they should because the religious education content of the lesson is limited.
- 209 Progress at Key Stage 4 is always at least satisfactory and in Year 11 it is very good. Pupils continue to acquire a thorough understanding of religious terms and concepts. They use the terms accurately, although their description of the meaning of the terms is sometimes weakened by their use of very colloquial English. Throughout the Key Stage they deepen their knowledge of basic beliefs and practices in the major world religions. They apply this knowledge to the study of significant moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia and to significant questions about existence such as whether there is life after death. They are able to argue a position in these areas of study from two points of view. They are aware that different religious traditions have different, and valid, teachings on these major concerns of life. They perceive the relationship between religious belief and morals. The course challenges appropriately pupils of all levels of attainment, and although those with SEN have some difficulty in writing in depth, they make good progress in knowledge and understanding and contribute well orally to lessons.
- 210 Most pupils show much interest in their work and involve themselves well in class discussion and in shared learning when they work co-operatively in groups. They set to work immediately, concentrate well and stay on task, rarely wasting time. The common teaching strategy of leaving pupils to think quietly for a short time before writing answers to a carefully framed question, enables them to take responsibility for their own learning. Even pupils of low prior attainment respond well to this and work independently. Pupils' behaviour in class is good, often very good, as is the quality of their relationships with each other and with their teacher. When pupils are taught by a subject specialist, they show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. In some other classes this respect is not apparent nor are they so attentive to the lesson.
- 211 At Key Stage 3, three-quarters of the teaching seen was satisfactory or better and half of that was very good; one quarter of the teaching was unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 all teaching was at least satisfactory and half was very good. The better teaching was marked by very good knowledge of the subject. This ensured clarity and accuracy of the content of the lessons as well as providing a context in which the contribution of religious education to pupils' development was made clear. There are high expectations of pupils who are expected to think hard and to question their own beliefs and opinions. Lessons are confidently planned and organised to use methods which engage pupils' interest and involve them in a variety of activities. Pupils enjoy these lessons and work hard to complete their work. Unsatisfactory elements of teaching are related mainly to lack of subject knowledge, particularly in the teaching of non-Christian faiths. In lessons on Islam, confusing and irrelevant information emerged, so it is difficult for pupils to gain an understanding of Islam as a coherent and valid belief system. Pupils are aware of some non-specialist teachers' unfamiliarity with the subject. Some of them respond by inattention or

talking instead of completing tasks, so the overall pace of progress in the lesson is reduced.

- 212 The department is well led and managed within the constraints of managing a number of teachers from other subject departments who are not in any sense specialists in teaching religious education. This team of teachers changes from year to year, so although they take their responsibilities seriously, they have no incentive to undertake any training to improve their capacity to teach religious education. The Authority's Agreed Syllabus demands a detailed knowledge of a number of world faiths which the non-subject specialists do not possess. The impact of this non-specialist teaching on the attainment of pupils is marked, particularly by Year 8 who are experiencing their second year of non specialist teaching.
- 213 There is a comprehensive departmental handbook, incorporating a realistic departmental development plan. The detailed scheme of work follows the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The department is well resourced and specialist teaching takes place in a room enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work and other subject related material.
- 214 Since the last inspection, all pupils now have access to religious education and the time allocation at Key Stage 4 has increased. It meets the statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 are much improved. However, the school has not attended to the comment that it should examine the implication for specialist staffing that the increase in time will involve.

214 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

214 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 215 The inspection team consisted of 13 inspectors, including a lay inspector. It inspected the school for 44 inspector days. The team inspected 148 lessons or aspects of lessons covering all age groups and totalling 120 hours. Additionally, registrations and assemblies were also inspected and some of the extra-curricular activities were observed. All teachers in the school were seen teaching at least once and some on a number of occasions. Inspectors looked at the written work of a sample of pupils and that of others during lessons. Formal meetings were held with groups of pupils and many informal discussions took place in and outside lessons.
- 216 Planned discussions were held on 23 occasions, with staff, governors and parents. Much helpful documentation provided by the school was analysed. The Registered Inspector held a meeting for parents, which was attended by 40 of them.

216 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

216 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	554	46	155	290

216 **Teachers and classes**

216 **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	36.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	15.15

216 **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	264.2

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	74.7
Average teaching group size:	KS2 N/A
	KS3 22
	KS4 19

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	1 586 665
Total Expenditure	1 615 632
Expenditure per pupil	3257
Balance brought forward from previous year	242 510
Balance carried forward to next year	213 543

Number of questionnaires sent out: 554
 Number of questionnaires returned: 235

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	24	64	5	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38	54	2	4	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	60	12	6	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	23	62	9	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	38	50	4	6	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	37	58	2	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	33	56	5	4	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32	59	3	4	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	29	55	9	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	26	56	10	5	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	49	7	6	2