

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Rhyddings High School**  
Oswaldtwistle

LEA area : Lancashire

Unique Reference Number : 119721

Headteacher : Mr Barry Burke

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward  
11049

Dates of inspection : 13 – 17 September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708171

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 students :	11 to 16 years
Gender of students :	Mixed
School address :	Haworth Street Oswaldtwistle Lancashire BB5 3EA
Telephone number :	01254 231051
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Appropriate authority :	The governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr Derek Partlin
Date of previous inspection :	May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mark Woodward, RgI		Attainment and Progress
		Teaching
		Leadership & Management
Daljit Singh, Lay Inspector		Equal opportunities (S), English as an additional language
		Attitudes, behaviour & personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and students' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Kenneth Thomas	Physical education	Special educational needs
		KS4 (Dance, Business Studies)
James Berry	Science	Efficiency
Valerie Bridges	History	Equal opportunities
Derek Ebbage	Mathematics/Numeracy	Curriculum & Assessment
Charles Edmondson	Music	Accommodation
Janet Flisher	English/Literacy	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		KS4 (Drama)
Michael Gallagher	Geography	KS4 (Media Studies)
Jeffery Hardman	Information technology	KS4 (Youth Award, Vocational courses)
	Design and technology	
Graham Laws	Modern Foreign Languages/Urdu	
Eileen Metcalfe	Art	Learning resources
Robert Tweed	Religious education	Staffing

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

Students make good progress in English, mathematics, design and technology, German, Urdu, history, religious education, physical education, media studies, drama and business education.

- .The quality of teaching is good particularly at Key Stage 4.
- .The ethos of the school is good.
- .Management has effectively encouraged a positive culture in which all staff contribute to decision making.
- .Community links are strong.
- .There are good procedures for monitoring students' progress.
- .The attitudes of the students are positive.
- .Financial control and school administration are very good.
- .Assessment procedures are effective and they motivate the students.
- .The careers provision is good.

### Where the school has weaknesses

Attainment in relation to national standards is low and the literacy skills of many of the students do not enable them to maximise their academic potential.

I.The attainment of the students in the basic skills course, science, modern foreign languages and information and communications technology is unsatisfactory.

II.There are weaknesses in the teaching of the basic skills course, modern foreign languages and information technology.

III.The basic skills course is not fulfilling its aim of improving the literacy skills of the students.

IV.There are weaknesses in management planning procedures.

V.The information and communications technology curriculum does not fulfill statutory requirements.

VI.Levels of attendance are below national averages.

VII.Some parents do not involve themselves sufficiently in helping their children to make progress at school.

**Rhyddings High School has more strengths than weaknesses. The quality of teaching is generally good and the school is moving forward.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have been maintained, although they remain below national average levels. The key issues from the last inspection have largely been addressed. Some good efforts have been made to raise the aspirations of the students, improve the provision for students with special educational needs and give development planning a longer focus. The learning centre has been improved considerably as have the procedures for monitoring students' progress. The school has recently worked hard to improve the provision for information and communications technology. The weaknesses identified in the report are the result of the unsatisfactory arrangements for the subject that applied in previous years. The basic skills course is an unsatisfactory development. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are still not met.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and it is sufficiently well led to continue its improvement.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 Year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

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

The 1999 GCSE examination results were similar to those achieved by the students at the time of the last inspection. They were also similar to the results achieved in 1998, although the proportion of students gaining 1A\*-G and 5A\*-G grades fell. However, over the past four years, there has been a significant improvement in both girls' and boys' average points scores, which indicates higher grades being achieved across the GCSE scale. Overall, the 1998 GCSE examination results were below national average levels but in line with results of students in similar schools and in line with the results that the same students achieved when they took the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. The proportion of students gaining 1A\*-G and 5A\*-G grades was above national average levels and well above average in comparison with students in similar schools.

The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics were similar to the results in 1998. There were, however, fewer students gaining higher levels in English and the science results were substantially lower. The science results were also substantially lower than the mathematics results. Based on average levels, the results of the National Curriculum tests between 1996 and 1998 show that students' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science were all well below national averages, but average when compared with students in similar schools. The gap between the school's results and national averages was similar by gender and by subject.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Physical education, drama, mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, art, religious education.	Basic skills course, modern foreign languages, information technology.
Years 10-11	Good	Physical education, drama, English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology, history, art, music, religious education, business education and media studies.	Information technology.
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

In the 146 lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in 87 per cent of them, good or better in 57 per cent and very good or excellent in 21 per cent. The proportion of satisfactory lessons would have been higher but for the unrepresentative impact of the unsatisfactory teaching in the basic skills lessons.

*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	Students' behaviour is satisfactory both inside the classroom and around the school.
Attendance	Attendance is below national average levels and therefore unsatisfactory. The procedures for monitoring and raising attendance are satisfactory.
Ethos*	The ethos of the school is good, which is reflected in the staff's commitment to raising standards and in the positive attitudes of the students.
Leadership and management	The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. Management and staff work together effectively and the school is moving forward. There are some weaknesses in planning.
Curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The basic skills course does not enhance the literacy skills of the students as intended and statutory requirements for the teaching of information and communications technology are not met.
Students with special educational needs	An effective programme of support in previous years enabled students to make progress in line with other students in the school. The basic skills course does not use the capabilities of the support staff effectively and as a result, students at Key Stage 3 are currently making unsatisfactory progress. The school is in the process of restructuring this course.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The provision for students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Teachers are currently under-prepared for teaching the basic skills course and information and communications technology. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
Value for money	The school gives satisfactory value for money.

\* *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	What some parents are not happy about
VIII. The standards achieved by the school IX. The positive ethos X. The strength of community links XI. The good range of extra-curricular opportunities XII. The care shown by teachers for the students	XIII. The inconsistency of homework setting

The inspection team agreed with parents about the features of the school that they like, although there is still potential for standards of attainment to rise. The parents at the inspection meeting clearly felt that the school was improving and the responses on the questionnaires were very positive. There was little evidence of inconsistency of homework setting during the inspection week and generally it was seen to play a positive role in helping the students to make progress.



## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

XIV. To improve standards of attainment across the school and in particular in literacy by:

XV. Urgently replacing the basic skills course with an appropriate literacy strategy targeted at the individual needs and capabilities of the students.

XVI. Developing a training programme to enable staff to support students in developing their literacy skills.

XVII. Giving the co-ordinator for special educational needs sufficient time to oversee the work of the department.

*(Paragraphs 5-27, 49-54, 95-97, 99-101, 113-232)*

XVIII. To improve standards of attainment in science, information and communications technology and modern foreign languages by:

XIX. Improving the quality of some of the teaching.

XX. Sharing good practice within and between departments.

XXI. Providing teachers with appropriate training opportunities.

XXII. Ensuring that the curricula are appropriately matched to the needs and capabilities of the students.

*(Paragraphs 5-27, 36-48, 49-57, 95-97, 99-101, 133-145, 200, 213)*

XXIII. To improve management planning by:

XXIV. Ensuring that major developments have a secure strategy in place prior to implementation.

XXV. Ensuring that the planning process is overseen appropriately by senior managers.

XXVI. Building monitoring and evaluation processes into the planning and implementation of developments.

XXVII. Giving staff appropriate training prior to the implementation of developments.

*(Paragraphs 81-94, 95-97, 99-101, 109)*

XXVIII. To develop an information and communications technology curriculum that meets statutory requirements at both key stages and enables students to use the technology to enhance their learning in all subjects.

*(Paragraphs 24, 50-51, 53, 97, 99-101, 131, 143-144, 182-193, 198, 211, 226)*

XXIX. To raise attendance in line with national averages.

*(Paragraphs 34-35, 70)*

XXX. To continue the work aimed at bringing parents into a more active partnership with the school in order to raise the aspirations of students and enhance their learning opportunities.

*(Paragraphs 22, 56, 65-66, 68-70, 75-80)*

The inspection team identified no other significant weaknesses.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. The characteristics of the school are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are unfavourable. Around 31 per cent of the students are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. There are 1029 students on the roll, evenly balanced between girls and boys. There has recently been a substantial rise in the numbers of students choosing the school. Around 30 per cent of the students are from a Asian heritage background, the majority of whom speak English as an additional language. This is very high.
2. Students arrive at the school with very low levels of attainment. Asian heritage students have lower attainment on

entry than white students, particularly the girls. Around 30 per cent of the students are identified as having special educational needs. This is above the national average, as is the proportion of students with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

3. A small proportion of students are disapplied from the technology aspects of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 in order to pursue National Vocational Qualifications at a local college.
4. The school's aims, as expressed by the three strategic intents, are reflected in its work. Rhyddings High School is a learning organisation which encourages success and it is becoming more attractive to parents. Whole-school targets have been set for GCSE performance and attendance in line with government policy.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered students in final Year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting Year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	98	101	199

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	46	48	34
	Girls	55	40	28
	Total	101	88	62
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	51 (52)	45 (47)	31 (45)
	National	(65)	(60)	(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	15 (23)	25 (25)	9 (18)
	National	(35)	(36)	(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	45	43	41
	Girls	57	42	35
	Total	102	85	76
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	52 (52)	43 (48)	38 (47)
	National	(62)	(64)	(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	19 (23)	25 (25)	9 (18)
	National	(31)	(37)	(31)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 Year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting Year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	102	99	201

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 students achieving standard specified	Boys	33	80	90
	Girls	25	86	90
	Total	58	166	180
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	29 (27)	83 (94)	90 (96)
	National	(44)	(90)	(95)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such students* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	29	69%
National		

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting Year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	10.7
	National comparative data	9
Unauthorised	School	0.2

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the Year before the latest reporting Year

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the Year before the latest reporting Year

Absence	National comparative data	1.1
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## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age) during the previous Year :

	Number
Fixed period	31
Permanent	1

## 4. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	21
Satisfactory or better	87
Less than satisfactory	13

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

### **4. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

1. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have been maintained. Students make satisfactory progress and parents generally feel that their children achieve a good standard of work.
2. The 1999 GCSE examination results were similar to those achieved by the students at the time of the last inspection. They were also similar to the results achieved in 1998, although the proportion of students gaining 1A\*-G and 5A\*-G grades fell. This was largely because, for a variety of reasons, a larger proportion of students than normal had poor attendance records. The proportion of students gaining 5A\*-C grades has been losing ground against the national average over the past six years, whilst the average points score of the students shows no trend over the past six years whilst the national trend has been rising. However, over the past four years, there has been a significant improvement in both girls' and boys' average points scores, which indicates higher grades being achieved across the GCSE scale.
3. Overall, the 1998 GCSE examination results were below national average levels but in line with results of students in similar schools and in line with the results that the same students achieved when they took the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. The proportion of students gaining 1A\*-G and 5A\*-G grades was above national average levels and well above average in comparison with students in similar schools. Girls have achieved higher average points score results than boys over the past four years and generally, a higher proportion of them have achieved 5A\*-C grades. In 1999, however, substantially more boys gained 5A\*-C grades. Boys' and girls' results are similarly below boys' and girls' results nationally. A strength of the school is the GCSE results of boys in design and technology; here, they achieve GCSE results which are above national average levels.
4. A breakdown of the 1999 GCSE results by ethnicity shows that this year the proportions of Asian heritage and white students gaining 5A\*-C grades was similar. However, very few Asian heritage students achieved this level. Asian heritage students, girls in particular, are less likely to gain 5A\*-C grades because their attainment levels on entry to the school are lower than those of white students. Fewer Asian heritage girls gained 5A\*-G grades than white girls.
5. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, students did particularly well in design and technology, German, Urdu, history, music, physical education, business studies, drama and media studies. A very high proportion of students gained A\* or A grades in design and technology, history, music, media studies and drama. In the 1998 GCSE examination, students gained well above average results in English, above average results in mathematics, and well below average results in science based upon the same students' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of their Year 9.
6. Based on the Local Educational Authority's value-added analysis of the 1998 GCSE results, students did relatively well in English, design technology systems and control, resistant materials and textiles, Urdu and music, and less well in science, French, art, physical education and history compared with their own performance in other subjects. In 1999, the results in art, physical education and history improved substantially.
7. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is high in relation to national standards in design and technology, music and physical education. It is average in history, low in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, art and religious education, and very low in science and information technology.
8. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics were similar to the results in 1998. There were, however, fewer students gaining higher levels in English and the science results were substantially lower. The science results were also substantially lower than the mathematics results.
9. Based on average levels, the results of the National Curriculum tests between 1996 and 1998 show that students' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science were all well below national averages, but average when compared with students in similar schools. The gap between the school's results and national averages was similar by gender and by subject. Results improved between 1996 and 1998 in English and science.
10. Teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in design and technology were around national average levels, whilst in French they were very low compared with national average levels. Assessments in other foundation subjects indicated that students were working at below average levels. These confirm the judgements made by the inspection team.

11. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is average in relation to national standards in design and technology, history, music and physical education. It is low in English, modern foreign languages, geography, art and religious education, and very low in mathematics, science and information technology.
12. Students' literacy skills are sufficient to enable most to engage with the curriculum but not to access it fully. This is the case across all levels of attainment; even higher attaining students find it difficult to use with confidence more sophisticated skills, such as reading, for inference and deduction. Most students write with reasonable accuracy and many can write at length about topics that are familiar to them. All students listen attentively to their teachers and to other students but their speaking skills are limited because they are offered insufficient opportunities to practise these in structured situations in lessons. The school has developed a cross-curricular language policy but this has yet to be implemented in full across all departments. The basis skills course is not effective in developing the students' literacy skills.
- 16.
13. Levels of competence in number work are below average. The use of number is considered in the mathematics planning documents and specific practice in number work is seen in a few lessons. It is not a requirement of the mathematics faculty that each lesson should begin with practice involving numbers. A new policy on numeracy has just been completed which appropriately identifies the skills that numerate students should display and also gives good guidance on the uses of information and communications technology and calculators. In-service training has already taken place, and a whole-school working group has been established. Rhyddings School is committed to promoting numeracy across the curriculum and has made a start in implementing its policy.
14. The students display a good range of numeracy skills in science, where considerable use is made of graphs, including line, bar and scatter. Tables are also used in the presentation and interpretation of experimental results. Calculations involving number take place in solving physics problems, mass calculations and acceleration. In modern foreign languages, addition is used in the target language in a module on food and drink. Bar charts are also used in French; for example, in projects on speaking areas and rainfall patterns. In art, students are able to demonstrate spatial awareness in using single and two-point perspective.
15. Students' information technology skills are very low in relation to national standards at the end of both key stages. Students are not able to perform basic tasks and are unable to solve problems without teacher support. A small minority of students who have access to computers at home demonstrate higher levels of skill. Also, there are small numbers of students following a course of study in GCSE business studies who successfully gain recognised certification in word processing and the use of spreadsheets.
16. The school achieves high standards in team and individual competitive sports.
17. The Local Education Authority's value-added analysis suggests that the school's performance has declined since the last inspection. However, the Local Education Authority also sets targets for the school based on the students' results in tests given to them on entry and these have been exceeded in the past two years. Based on the value-added information, the school appears to add least value for the more able students, which is in line with other attainment evidence that suggests that the school's 5A\*-C results are weaker than its 5A\*-G and 1A\*-G results.
18. At Key Stage 3, students make good progress in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, religious education and physical education. They make satisfactory progress in English, science, art, and music, unsatisfactory progress in modern foreign languages and poor progress in information technology and in the basic skills course. At Key Stage 4, students make very good progress in design and technology, German and physical education. They make good progress in English, mathematics, history, art, music and religious education, satisfactory progress in science, modern foreign languages (overall) and geography, and poor progress in information technology. Some parents are not sufficiently involved in helping their children to make best use of their time in school. This affects the motivation of the students and adversely affects their opportunities to make progress.
19. The very good progress seen in design and technology is linked to good teaching and very good monitoring and target-setting practices, whilst in physical education it is due to very good teaching, which makes increasing demands upon the students as they progress through the school.
20. The poor progress made by students in information technology is a result of inadequate curriculum provision over a number of years. Core skills have not been taught in a programmed way and, across the curriculum, students have been given insufficient opportunities to use information and communications technology to enhance the quality of their work.

21. Of the Year 11 students who took GCSE in 1999, the lowest-attaining Asian heritage students on entry to the school made less progress than the lowest-attaining white students, whilst the highest-attaining girls made less progress than the highest-attaining boys.
22. The progress of students with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 is currently unsatisfactory. Over time, students have benefited from a well-structured programme of support, which has enabled them to make satisfactory or better progress in most subjects. They have been able to make progress in line with the progress made by other students in the school. Their progress is currently being adversely affected by the curriculum structure and teaching of the basic skills course. In most of these lessons progress is poor as a consequence of low expectations and lesson activities that are not related to students' needs. Some students with special educational needs are removed from other areas of the curriculum to receive more basic skills lessons. This adversely affects their progress in these subjects. Following the judgements of the inspection team, and its own evaluation, the senior management team has made some immediate plans to re-structure the curriculum appropriately to try and address this weakness.
23. Overall progress of students with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Students are making good progress in English, mathematics, music and physical education as a consequence of lesson activities that are well planned to take account of students' needs. Students with English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress at both key stages, although their current progress at Key Stage 3, in some subjects such as history, is again adversely affected by the nature of the basic skills course.
27. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
24. Overall, the majority of students in most lessons and across both key stages display a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour, particularly in the classroom, and relationships between students and teachers are both satisfactory.
25. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good. In the great majority of lessons they sustain good levels of concentration and show interest in their work. In English, for example, they enjoy their lessons and recognise that their teachers work hard for them. Students of Asian heritage are less forthcoming than white students in whole-class situations, but when they are given good opportunities to express themselves through group work, such as in drama, they make as full a contribution as white students. Generally, there are insufficient opportunities for students to use their initiative in lessons and develop personal study skills.
26. Student behaviour, both inside and outside of the classroom, is generally satisfactory. Students are usually polite and respectful to staff, particularly to student co-ordinators, and observe the code of conduct. Around the school, and particularly in corridors, most students are orderly and generally disciplined. A small minority of students display boisterous and occasionally anti-social behaviour. On most occasions the playground provides an opportunity for positive social interaction between students, although they mostly stay in their respective race and gender groups. There are no visible signs of bullying, but students, some parents and teachers have reported incidents of bullying and anti-social behaviour. However, most students and parents are adamant that teachers, particularly student co-ordinators, deal with bullying efficiently and effectively.
27. The attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are positive in most subjects. When the teaching strategies and learning activities are matched to their needs they sustain concentration and behave well. When the lesson activities are not well-suited to their needs, behaviour tends to deteriorate. This is particularly apparent in a number of the basic skills lessons. Students lose interest in tasks that are undemanding and offer little challenge. As a consequence, they become restless and disruptive. The level of fixed-term exclusions is average in relation to schools of a similar size. Permanent exclusions are below national average levels.
28. Relationships between students are satisfactory. Most students prefer to form friendships in their respective race and gender groups and stay in these groups when working collaboratively in the classroom. Most students respect their school and property. Students' attitudes towards one another are broadly satisfactory, although a small but significant minority of students display attitudes which are based on racial and sexist stereotypes.
29. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to serve their school and community. Those students who undertake responsibilities as peer counsellors, members of the School Council and work experience display maturity, and the experience enhances their social and personal development.

33. **Attendance**

30. The attendance of students in the school is unsatisfactory as it falls below national the national average. However, it has steadily improved since the last inspection report. The improvement is due primarily to the commitment and diligence of staff in the school and the Education Welfare Officer. Registers are taken systematically at prescribed times and all absences are fully investigated. Appropriate levels of time-keeping are encouraged and sustained.
31. The majority of the school community arrives on time for school and most lessons. However, there is a small but significant number of parents which condones absence and fails to support the schools' efforts in raising existing levels of attendance. Those students who take family holidays during term time make the problem of absence worse. At present, the rate of authorised absence in the school is above the national level for similar schools. These causes of absence adversely affect the learning, attainment and progress of students, particularly those in Year 11 and those with learning difficulties, often in lower sets.

35. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

35. **Teaching**

32. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. This is reflected in the satisfactory progress that the students make whilst at the school. In the 146 lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better in 87 per cent, good or better in 57 per cent and very good or excellent in 21 per cent. The very good or excellent teaching was mainly seen in physical education, drama, mathematics and German. The unsatisfactory teaching was concentrated at Key Stage 3 in the basic skills course, modern foreign languages, and a minority of science lessons. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching is similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection.
33. The quality of teaching of students with special needs across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is an increased awareness of special educational needs issues since the previous inspection and subject teachers contribute to the construction of students' Individual Education Plans. Care is taken to ensure that lesson activities are suited to the needs of students and expectations are appropriate. Lesson support is used effectively. However, the overall quality of teaching of the basic skills course is unsatisfactory. Although there are examples of some very good teaching, it is characterised by a lack of experience in whole-class teaching strategies, low expectations, poor planning and inappropriate methods, and work that is unsuited to students' needs at all levels of ability. This has an adverse impact on standards of attainment, behaviour and students' progress.
34. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good in physical education and good in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, art and religious education. It is satisfactory in English, science and music, and unsatisfactory in modern languages, information and communications technology and special educational needs.
35. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good in physical education and good in English, mathematics, design and technology, German, history, art, music, religious education, business education and media studies. It is satisfactory in science, modern foreign languages (overall), special educational needs and geography, and unsatisfactory in information technology.
36. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects at both key stages. Physical education teachers understand the Programmes of Study thoroughly and are able to explain and demonstrate skills effectively. This has a direct impact on the progress made by the students. Mathematics teachers also have particularly good subject knowledge. Teachers involved in the basic skills course and in information and communications technology have unsatisfactory subject knowledge, which means that they are unable to help students make progress at a rate that is appropriate for their abilities. A small minority of the teachers in science have unsatisfactory subject knowledge.
37. Expectations of the students are satisfactory. They are very high in physical education and high in a number of other subjects; for example, design and technology, where an effective monitoring system ensures that students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. The result of this attention to detail can be seen in the good GCSE results achieved by the department. Expectations are unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3, the basic skills course, information technology and geography at Key Stage 4. In modern foreign languages, activities are not always at an appropriate level for the students; for example, in a top set lesson students were asked to draw and colour pictures. In geography, the level of challenge, particularly for more able students, is too low.



38. Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall at both key stages. In the majority of subjects it is good; for example, history, where teachers prepare good quality resources to enhance students' understanding of the work. Planning is generally good in history, which means that teachers, particularly newly-qualified teachers, are well supported by the schemes of work. Planning is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, the basic skills course and information technology. Teachers have been poorly prepared for the basic skills course. Committed teachers and support staff are failing in the classroom as a result of poor planning. This results in the students making unsatisfactory progress and the staff feeling demoralised.
39. All faculties are represented on the equal opportunities working party, which is currently developing modules of work on the questions of racism and prejudice. Linked to this, the humanities faculty recently organised a day seminar for students in Year 10 on the Holocaust. This is a very positive aspect of planning which recognises the particular issues that confront the students in their local community.
40. The methods and organisation used by the teachers are generally satisfactory, but there are particular strengths in design and technology, art and physical education. In art, teachers make good use of demonstrations and illustrations to explain the aims and objectives of lessons. This gives the students a clear focus for their work, which enhances their motivation and progress. In physical education, activities are organised effectively to ensure that students are working on tasks that stretch their individual capabilities. Unsatisfactory methods and organisation were seen in information technology, modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3, and in the basic skills course. The information technology course is inappropriate for the majority of students in Years 7 to 10. It is centred around word processing and fails to recognise the needs of more able students.
41. Teachers manage the students well throughout the school. The techniques used are particularly effective in mathematics, physical education, design and technology and art. In mathematics, teachers are firm, fair, friendly and helpful. The outcome of this is a well-disciplined working environment in which the students can concentrate and make progress. The only area in which students are not managed effectively is in the basic skills course, where some staff are unused to teaching whole classes and have been poorly prepared for the task.
42. Time and resources are used satisfactorily in both key stages. In design and technology, students have been trained to take responsibility for their learning through target-setting practices. They are therefore well-focused on their work and productive during lessons. Time is not well used in the basic skills course and in information technology. Neither of these areas is giving value for the curriculum time they are taking.
43. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment is generally good. This is an area where the school has made significant progress since the last inspection. Whole-school planning has resulted in a more consistent approach by staff, who have built assessment appropriately into their schemes of work. In English, assessment is used effectively alongside guidance on drafting and editing to encourage students to submit polished course work. This is a significant factor in helping students to make good progress at Key Stage 4 and to achieve good examination results. There is currently no assessment structure in information and communications technology.
44. The use of homework is good. Most subjects plan homework carefully as an integral part of their schemes of work. In religious education, for example, it is used effectively to extend work begun in class or to prepare students for starting new topics. In mathematics, it is routinely set following the school timetable and well planned to support students' learning. Parents expressed concerns about the inconsistency of homework setting, but this was not found to be an issue by the inspection team.

48. **The curriculum and assessment**

48. *Curriculum*

45. At the present time, the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Following discussions at curriculum development meetings, a management decision was made to introduce a basic skills course from September 1999. This course was perceived to meet the needs of students with low literacy skills; it was thought that these low levels of literacy skills were holding back students' progress across the whole curriculum. However, the planning for this course has been weak and the objectives of the course are unclear to staff. Teachers are not clear what the aims of the basic skills' course are and adequate preparation time has not been provided. They have not been trained to teach the course and have not been provided with schemes of work. Many of the students who are receiving a number of basic skills lessons each week are students with English as a second language. Their needs are not addressed appropriately by this course. The provision of the course is affecting students' equality of access and opportunity to other subjects of the curriculum. The

management of the school is currently making arrangements to replace the basic skills course.

46. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory in English and science, and good in mathematics and design technology. The provision in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory, with the top set having six periods of French, middle sets four periods with two periods of basic skills, and lower sets two period with three periods of basic skills. This denies equality of opportunity to lower and middle-attaining students. The curricular provision is also good in geography and history, and satisfactory in religious education. The curriculum is broad, balanced and demanding in art, with the exception of an absence of work in clay and ceramics. In physical education, the curriculum is good and is broken down into units of work with objectives linked to end of Key Stage statements. The music curriculum is satisfactory, enabling students to develop their listening, performing and composing skills. The curriculum in information technology is poor and fails to meet the needs of the majority of students.
47. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory because it does not fulfil statutory requirements with regard to the teaching of information and communications technology. There is no scheme of work in place to teach the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in the core lessons and limited use is made of information and communications technology in the other areas of the curriculum. The curriculum is good in mathematics, design technology, geography, history, music and physical education. Very few students study two modern foreign languages, but there has been a good development of the languages curriculum this year, enabling students to choose Urdu as one of the options for taking a single modern foreign language.
48. The curricular provision for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, but satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The introduction of the basic skills course has adversely affected the curriculum entitlements of students with special educational needs, and some with English as an additional language in geography, history and modern foreign languages. Annual reviews of students' statements are carried out as required, as are the reviews of students at different Code of Practice stages.
49. Within individual subjects, the curricular provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory in English and science, and good in mathematics, design technology, art and physical education. In several subjects, students follow the same curriculum as all other students and use appropriate texts and activities. Much of the differentiation of work is achieved by setting. Students in modern foreign languages receive only one hour per week of French; there is thus little depth and insufficient challenge. Similarly, loss of time to the basic skills course affects the amount of time given to some students with special educational needs in history and geography, which affects their progress. Their entitlement is significantly reduced compared with national average provision. There is insufficient differentiation in religious education. The physical education department makes significant efforts to ensure that all students have full access to the curriculum. The nature of activities in music means that all students become fully involved. The use of 'Successmaker' in information technology makes a satisfactory contribution to the curriculum.
50. The 25 hours of teaching in both key stages meets the recommended time of the Department for Education and Employment. This allows time for the coverage of all subjects, but provision in some subjects is distorted by the additional time given to the basic skills' course. Careers education is good. It is supported effectively by the local careers service.
51. The personal and social education programme is well-organised and covers appropriately a range of issues aimed at helping students to make informed personal decisions and to become responsible members of society. Health and sex education are taught within a moral context and there is a good emphasis on developing respect for the views and beliefs of others. The richness of culture is explored; for example, a Year 7 lesson was based on raising students' awareness of the number of languages spoken across the world.
52. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which extend and support students' learning and personal development. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work in this area. The provision in music is very strong, with £9000 allocated by the school for instrumental provision. There are five steel pan groups, and any student may join the list to become a member. All groups perform in school concerts and the more experienced perform at outside venues. The rock band meets regularly and singing groups are active. The steel bands reach high standards and make an impact on the ethos of the school and on the local community. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in physical education. There are high participation rates overall, but a low take-up among Asian heritage students. Students enjoy an active after-school club in information technology. The art rooms are open at lunchtimes. Visits to local art galleries, and also visits to Liverpool and Scotland, as well as links to expressive arts, enhance students' knowledge in art. Religious education makes good use of visits and visitors; especially good work on the Holocaust was observed. There are established links with a college near Lyon, and a three-day visit to France takes place for Year 7 students. Drama provides opportunities for acting and dance. There is also an enrichment week,

which offers many varied opportunities for students to develop skills outside the formal curriculum.

53. The school gained its second Schools Curriculum Award in 1997. This represented an honour reflecting the school at the heart of the community, which is a part of the school's mission statement.

57. **Assessment**

54. The school has made good progress in improving systems for assessing students' attainment since the last inspection. Assessment is a strength of the school. The assessment team, composed of a representative from each faculty, meets regularly. Assessment is a planned part of the curriculum, and the team is now in its third cycle of in-house quality assurance. All representatives report on the developments within their faculty and show evidence of the faculty's procedures. This leads to consistency and shared good practice. Reports on the procedures for assessment are made regularly to governors, and the headteacher attends the assessment group meetings. The head of assessment also attends faculty meetings and takes part in discussions on the faculty's procedures and developments in assessment. End-of-term assessments are made by faculties and this is becoming more standardised. Faculties have provided clear evidence of attainment and progress through the use of students' graded work and termly assessments.
55. Assessment is good in all core subjects, and satisfactory or good in most other subject. It is satisfactory in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. It is very good in history, where all students are involved in self-evaluation and target-setting. In religious education, assessment is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In information technology, there is currently no model for the tracking of student progress within or between key stages. There is a failure to comply with National Curriculum requirements and the assessment procedures are very poor. In art, collections of students' work are made to illustrate standards and for use in moderation procedures. A software monitoring scheme is well advanced.
56. Arrangements for monitoring attainment throughout the school are thorough and effective. Information on what students achieved in primary school in the standard assessment tests at age eleven is combined with cognitive ability tests to give teachers a helpful guide to new students' attainment levels. Further internal testing, and the use of standard assessment information at fourteen, gives a valuable indicator of progress. This allows the school to identify a target minimum grade for each student, which provides a focus for teachers of basic expectation. It is an indicator for teachers to move the grade higher. The school is moving towards an analysis making a clearer correlation between CAT scores and GCSE grades.
57. Mentoring of students takes place. On the present analysis for 1999, 65 per cent of students involved in the mentoring scheme to raise attainment showed an improvement. The scheme is to be extended, and 112 students in the present Year 11 have been identified for extra support.
58. The school's use of information to inform curriculum planning is satisfactory. The use made of assessment data for planning purposes is stronger at Key Stage 4. It is unsatisfactory in religious education and poor in information technology.
59. The school has adopted the Lancashire software package. It is to be used to enter termly assessments and provide faculties with feedback data on individual students, on teaching sets, on each faculty, and on a whole-school basis. Trials have started in Year 7 and Year 10.

63. **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 63.
64. The school makes good provision for students' moral and social development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual and cultural development. The school's policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a clear commitment to the personal development of all members of the school community and recognises the importance of the quality of relationships and the example provided by adults. These two aspects of the school's ethos clearly underpin all other aspects of the school's work.
60. The school's programme for collective worship is carefully planned to cover all four aspects. The assembly planning group ensures that important dates in the religious calendar of the faiths represented within the school community, and several that are not, are built into the programme and celebrated accordingly. Many students are involved in planning and delivering assemblies. However, the school's provision for collective worship still fails to meet statutory requirements, as it did at the previous inspection, because each year group has only one assembly each week. Tutors are requested to provide opportunities for further consideration and reflection on the week's topic, but in practice few

tutors actually do this. The Christian Union offers support and instruction to those students who attend, and special facilities are made available to Muslim students during the period of Ramadan.

61. The range of opportunities offered to students for their spiritual development through subjects across the curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and there are many good examples, particularly in the expressive arts subjects. In art, students learn about the importance of spirituality to the artist's motivation and output; in music, they are able to appreciate the intricacies of music heard; and in drama they are inspired by the quality of performance and absorption that they achieve. There are also many opportunities for spiritual awareness through learning about the importance of prayer and meditation in world religions during the religious education programme.
62. Provision for students' moral development is good and is supported by the very positive ethos of the school. Teachers and other adults set high standards through their own example, and students demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong. All subjects in the curriculum promote this good moral understanding and some subjects, such as English, science, religious education, personal and social education and physical education, encourage students to reflect on moral principles in a wider context.
63. The provision for the social education of students is good, and students take their lead from their teachers, who treat them with proper respect. There is a good sense of community within the school. Students contribute to the school's decision-making processes through the School Council and feel that their views are respected. A number of Year 11 students take responsibility within the school by providing support and mentoring for Year 7 students. In Year 10, students take responsibility for organising and running the Thursday afternoon drop-in club for senior citizens. Many students are involved in fund-raising for their chosen charities. Year 10s charity this year is the local children's hospice and, in addition to raising funds, students are also organising visits by the hospice staff to school assemblies and visits to the hospice by some students. The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available, including sporting activities, theatre visits, performances and trips abroad, makes an effective contribution to students' social development. The school makes strenuous efforts to promote the acceptance of students with special educational needs.
64. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Students undertake a range of visits and trips to places of cultural interest, such as the Bronte museum at Haworth. They study a range of literature from and about other cultures in English, listen to music from Africa, Indonesia and India, and study a range of artistic traditions from their own and other cultures. The cultures in Islam and China are studied in history, and the religious education department has recently changed to a syllabus that offers enhanced opportunities to appreciate Islam. The school makes every effort to celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds represented in the school community.
69. **Support, guidance and students' welfare**
65. The pastoral provision in the school is of a satisfactory standard. It has some good features. For example, the procedures for monitoring students' individual progress and personal development are implemented to a good standard. Teaching staff at all levels ensure good exchange of information, individual support and guidance for all students, regardless of race, gender and class. This is very much appreciated by the parents. Registration periods are used effectively to build relationships between students and their form tutors, as well as to raise students self-esteem and confidence. Assemblies complement the support, information and guidance provided through formal and informal interaction and are used to reinforce the school's code of conduct. Good behaviour and attendance is encouraged through a system of rewards. This is largely successful because attendance rates have improved and the behaviour of students inside and outside the classroom is satisfactory. All reported incidents of inappropriate behaviour are recorded and acted upon. The anti-bullying policy is carried out well; students report that staff take effective and appropriate action to deal with incidents.
66. Academic progress is monitored well. Consistent assessment practices and the use of test and examination results enable staff to help students understand the progress they are making. Particularly valuable is the setting of GCSE minimum target grades for every student in each subject. This has a positive impact on the motivation of the students. Procedures for the identification of students with special educational needs are satisfactory. Good use is made of external agencies to support the learning of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.
67. The careers education programme is comprehensive and provides good quality support, guidance and informed choice about the world of work.

68. There are satisfactory procedures for child protection, which provide a foundation for good practice. Staff at all levels are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection, and the designated teacher ensures that relevant training, information, support and guidance is provided for all staff. The existing provision ensures a safe and secure learning environment. The health and safety policy is reinforced through a comprehensive personal and social education programme, which encompasses good information, support and guidance about safe sex, informed choices about health and drugs education. However, the school needs to review its policy for ensuring the safety and well-being of students travelling between the main building and the annex.
69. The school has sustained good progress since the last report.
74. **Partnership with parents and the community**
70. The school sustains a satisfactory relationship and level of communication with its parents. The school makes satisfactory use of the school prospectus, annual report from governors, correspondence and the student's homework diary, to ensure that parents are informed satisfactorily about events and the progress of their child. Many of these documents are written in a user friendly style, which assists effective communication; but few opportunities are taken to translate school documentation to enhance communication further between parents from Asian heritage community and the school. However, the school has recently employed a home-school liaison officer with multi-lingual skills and a thorough understanding of the languages and cultures represented in the school. The school believes that this strategy will improve communication between Asian heritage parents and the school.
71. The students' annual report provides information about their attitudes to work but is less specific about their individual progress. Despite frequent encouragement from the school, a significant proportion of parents, particularly from the Asian heritage community, does not attend parents' evenings. This is a lost opportunity for parents to support their child's learning following discussions with the form and subject staff. However, less formal events, for example, school concerts, are well-attended by parents. Parents of students with special educational needs are provided with appropriate information through the annual reviews and students' Individual Education Plans.
72. The school has encouraged involvement of parents through the Parent-Teacher Association and through formal and informal communication. However, the school's PTA lacks effective parental support and direction, but manages to sustain the active involvement of a very few committed and dedicated parents. Some parents support extra curricula activity and classroom learning, but a significant proportion, many of whom are from the Asian heritage, are insufficiently involved in supporting the learning of their children. Overall, the level of participation of parents in the school is unsatisfactory.
73. Since the last report, the school has sustained good effective links with its community. Parents were quick to recognise this at the pre-inspection meeting and through responses on the questionnaires. Many departments continue to develop and sustain links, which support students' learning and support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, the English and drama department encourages visits to the theatre, and this learning is complemented by performances in the school. The art department encourages the active participation of resident artists, visits to the museum, and this learning is complemented by the work of the music department, which encourages appreciation of music from both classical and modern traditions. Close working links between the music and drama department support students' cultural heritage very effectively.
74. The school recognises the culture and language of those from Asian heritage backgrounds represented in the school and provides opportunities for learning in Urdu and the opportunity for all students to learn French. These opportunities further support the cultural heritage of indigenous and Asian heritage students. Visits are organised by the religious education department to the mosque, church and the Jewish museum. These visits complement and support learning in history and geography. Constructive links have been made with the local special school to enable some students from the school to have access to the school's computer-based learning resources and for others to be able to follow GCSE courses.
75. There are good opportunities for work experience, which are extended to Year 11 students. This enables students to develop and enhance their personal and social skills and provides them with valuable work and community interaction experience. Some students undertake work experience with the local feeder schools, and this further strengthens the satisfactory links between primary and secondary school and supports the smooth transition from primary to secondary education for new students.

## THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### 80. Leadership and management

76. Overall, the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. Examination results have been maintained since the last inspection, the culture of the school is positive and forward-looking, and many recent developments are having a beneficial impact on the quality of education offered to the students. Some recent initiatives, such as the development of the basic skills course, reveal weaknesses in strategic planning.
77. The leadership of the school is satisfactory. The governing body has a good range of expertise on which to draw, members bringing education, community and business experience to the school. The headteacher has encouraged the governors appropriately to take an active role in overseeing the school's work, as recent presentations by subject departments, such as science, indicate. The chair of governors has a good grasp of educational issues and offers effective leadership. Some governors do not yet have a sufficiently detailed understanding of available attainment information and are not therefore fully prepared to make judgements on the progress made by the students. Financial planning procedures have been improved, and are now satisfactory, following a period when planning errors resulted in a deficit budget after the building of the dance studio.
78. The headteacher has had a positive impact on the school. He leads the staff well, allowing senior and middle managers to take responsibility for initiatives. As a result, they are motivated and keen to see the school move forward. The enthusiasm of the great majority of the management team and teaching staff for their work was very apparent during the inspection, which reflects well on the tone that the headteacher has encouraged. Positive steps have been taken to reduce the deficit budget and to make better use of support available through the Local Education Authority. Weaknesses in leadership are reflected by the inadequate planning and development monitoring of the basic skills course.
79. The three deputy headteachers are mostly very effective in managing and organising their individual responsibilities. Strengths include the development of effective progress systems and the pastoral organisation. The management of curriculum developments has been unsatisfactory. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to planning through a variety of well-focused committees, such as the one focusing on assessment, which includes representatives from each faculty. Meetings are well-organised and concentrate on appropriate issues.
80. Departmental leadership is generally good. It is very good in physical education and mathematics, good in design and technology, history, art and music, satisfactory in English, science, modern foreign languages, geography and religious education, and poor in information technology. The physical education department operates as a cohesive unit, carefully and accurately monitoring students' progress. The handbook is clear and detailed and outlines the department's direction and priorities effectively. The management of information and communications technology has been poor over recent years but a new head of department has just started work at the school.
81. The leadership offered by the head of the special educational needs faculty is very good. The work of the many support teachers, support assistants and staff from the local authority is co-ordinated effectively. There is a strong feeling of teamwork within the faculty. Documentation is detailed and Individual Education Plans contain the necessary information for teachers in a clear and constructive way. All of the work of the faculty is guided by appropriate policies and the special needs handbook serves as an informative working document. Roles and responsibilities have been allocated to make effective use of the available staffing. All statutory requirements are met.
82. Despite the best efforts of the head of the special educational needs faculty, there are weaknesses in the monitoring and support of teaching. Every member of the faculty has a substantial teaching commitment in another faculty. As a consequence there is no member of staff whose time is totally dedicated to the faculty. This is unsatisfactory. The head of faculty has a major teaching commitment in modern foreign languages, the demands of which absorb much of her non-teaching time. As a result, she is unable to provide monitoring and support for teaching. This is seriously affecting special educational needs provision within the school.
83. The support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development is unsatisfactory overall. However, this judgement does not tell the full story because there are some very good practices in the school. Heads of department are regularly mentored by senior managers. This process enables senior managers to keep track of subject developments and creates opportunities for support strategies to be developed. Good evidence of action following the middle management mentoring process was seen; for example, the support offered to some teachers whose performance was causing concern. The factors that have triggered the unsatisfactory judgement are the inadequate preparation of staff to teach the basic skills and information and communications technology courses.

84. The ethos of the school is good. There is a sense of the school moving forward through the improvement of the learning opportunities open to the students. Initiatives such as the development of the assessment committee reveal the school's commitment to raising standards. Relationships between staff and between staff and students are good. Students are treated with respect, and they respond well to this both in class and around the school. The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good.
85. Development planning is unsatisfactory. This largely reflects the unsatisfactory planning and implementation of the basic skills and information and communications technology courses. Whilst there are weaknesses in the development planning process, its structure is good. The three key aims of the school form the basis on which all development ideas are centred, and all staff contributed to their generation. The school community, therefore, has a clear sense of direction. Although the overall planning structure is strong, some of the detail lacks precision, such as the action points and success criteria. The devolvement of responsibility for implementing developments has had a positive impact on improving the motivation of both managers and staff.
86. Departments make a full contribution to the development planning process, their objectives dovetailing with whole-school priorities. The action plans are being implemented effectively in most areas. Plans are generally good, though there are weaknesses in English and information and communications technology. In English, success criteria are imprecise and not measurable, whilst monitoring methods and evaluations are not fully understood.
87. The aims of the school, as expressed by the three strategic intents, are clear and appropriate. They form the basis of the school's planning and guide the formation of policy and public documents. They can be clearly seen in the work of the school. All statutory policies are in place, the equal opportunities policy having been strengthened recently.
88. Statutory requirements are met, except with regard to the curriculum provision for information and communications technology and a daily act of collective worship.
89. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress and is capable of sustaining this in the future. So many positive developments are evident in the school's work. Strategic planning now needs to be improved to avoid repeating the errors made in this year's curriculum planning and implementation.

94. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

94. *Staffing*

90. In most subjects, the school enjoys a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Weaknesses in some key areas, such as the basic skills course, however, make the overall judgement unsatisfactory. Geography and physical education are particularly well staffed. Teachers are supported by an appropriate level of suitably experienced non-teaching staff, and the high quality of site management is borne out by the excellent cleanliness and state of repair of the premises.
91. The curriculum arrangement for the teaching of the basic skills course does not make the best use of the available expertise. As a consequence, there is a significant mismatch between teachers' qualifications and experience and the demands of the curriculum. Teachers in this area of the curriculum lack the expertise to undertake their teaching responsibilities effectively and have been inadequately prepared for their new role. As a result, students' educational experiences on the basic skills course are poor.
92. Teachers of information and communication technology are non-specialists. Whilst they have information and communication technology skills, they are not currently equipped to teach the full National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The course is at an early stage of development, following an appropriate decision to teach the subject in a specialist lesson as well as through the other subjects of the curriculum. Training has been undertaken by the staff, but there remain weaknesses in the skills of teachers throughout the school in their ability to use information and communication technology to support the learning of the students.
93. Arrangements for the induction of newly-appointed staff are satisfactory over all, but vary from department to department. They are good in English, science and physical education but weak in modern foreign languages. The senior management team recognise the need to develop their arrangements for appraisal, and to provide better management training for staff below head of faculty level.

94. The school's current arrangements for professional development are generally satisfactory and have many good features, though there are some serious concerns regarding the preparation of teachers for the introduction of the basic skills and information technology courses. The concerns in this area largely stem from weaknesses in staff deployment and curriculum planning, which is why staff development remains satisfactory overall.
95. Good training records are kept, and there has been an appropriate refocusing of staff development to reflect school, departmental and individual priorities more closely. Every member of staff has an annual meeting with a line manager to determine training needs, and some good support has been given to teachers who have been under-performing in the classroom. The mentoring programme for middle managers has been successful in promoting a culture of improvement across the school. All staff development activities are carefully evaluated. The school has recently had its re-recognition for "Investors in People" status deferred whilst specified improvements in practice are made.
96. The present senior management team has been highly successful in restoring a sense of cohesion and teamwork amongst the staff, following a period of very strained relationships. Staff speak highly of the support they receive from their senior colleagues. This is matched by a strength of commitment amongst the non-teaching staff, which is enhanced by improved training opportunities.

101. ***Accommodation***

97. The school is based on two sites. All teaching takes place on the main site with the exception of information and communication technology and design and technology, which is taught in the annex. This is some distance from the main building and results in students losing teaching time when walking to and from the annex for information and communication technology lessons. The main building has been extended over the years and has had an attractive dance studio and a suite of classrooms added since the previous inspection. Some classrooms are small, and some corridors are too narrow for the present school population, but the accommodation is well managed and used efficiently. Students with physical disabilities are not able to reach all parts of the building, but they do have access to all curriculum areas. The split site nature of the school is disadvantageous to them.
98. The quality of accommodation is good in most subjects, but weak in science, where laboratories are old and teaching takes place in two areas of the school. The school enjoys excellent indoor and outdoor facilities in physical education where the accommodation makes a significant contribution to the effective teaching of the subject. The school's sports facilities are used by the local football club.
99. The school is well-maintained and is particularly clean and tidy at the beginning of each day. Attractive displays are found in many areas of the school. The school grounds, which afford ample opportunity for recreational facilities during breaks, are largely litter and graffiti free.

104. ***Learning resources***

100. Resources overall in the school are adequate, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Despite a deficit in the budget the management is committed to maintaining resources for learning at an adequate level. There is a good range of suitable textbooks in all subject areas, but some departments, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, do not have sufficient numbers of books to allow all students to take them home. There is a lack of original source material and fiction in modern foreign languages. Computer resources are generally adequate and are up-to-date. The ratio of students to computers is 8 : 1, which is average compared with schools nationally. Computers are located for the most part in two specific computer rooms near the library. The library has thirteen computers. There is insufficient provision for computer-aided design to manufacture within the design and technology department. There is also insufficient information and communication technology provision in religious education and modern foreign languages. There are no computers in the music department. There is no provision for pottery or ceramics in art. The school library is attractive and well equipped as a learning resource centre but a little small for the size of the school. The school makes a good effort to generate resources. Home-made resources in geography are excellent. The school also makes effective use of outside resources, such as libraries, museums, and business and industry links to add to resources within the school.

105. **The efficiency of the school**

101. At the end of the last financial year the school's budget was in deficit by about £50,000. This position came about when, after several years of building up a surplus of £300,000, the planned new dance studio and mathematics rooms were constructed. When this project started, there appeared to be sufficient finance to ensure that no deficit occurred; however, there followed a number of costly events that had not been anticipated. These included major repairs to the



annex, like re-roofing and rewiring, and also charges from the local authority for consultancy. The most recent auditor's report was critical of the school's financial management.

102. The school's response has been far-reaching, rigorous and effective. There is a three-year plan for recovery, leading to a small surplus. This has been approved by the local authority and is at present on target. Whilst money will be tight, development in some crucial areas, such as information and communication technology has been allowed for. All of the recommendations of the auditor's report have been, or are being, actioned. The governors and senior management team monitor the effectiveness of the recovery plan very closely and there is a regular monthly meeting between them to review the position.
103. The financial planning is now going forward on a sound basis. The governors are involved with the senior management in both the setting up and the monitoring of the School Development Plan. The plan shows clear educational aims: it is interlinked with the budget and identified staff skills. It has defined priorities, executive responsibilities, timescales, costs and success indicators suitably. Senior management receives input from all staff for the plan, mostly via the heads of faculties. As might be expected in the current situation developments are limited and all possible economies are under consideration. The full value of delegated funds is used on staff development and, together with the funds set aside for students with special educational needs and English as a foreign language, are closely controlled by the deputy headteacher. At faculty level too, financial planning is sound.
104. In the main, effective use is made of teaching and support staff, but there are some concerns. Sometimes staff are deployed in areas that are not appropriate for their qualifications, or inefficient use is made of their time. This is especially pertinent in the special needs faculty, the modern language faculty and the basic skills course. Support staff are not always briefed and fully utilised in periods, due to poor integration of planning. All areas of the school make effective use of their resources.
105. The school's financial controls are very good. There is an effective bursar with efficient systems. Stockbooks are carefully maintained and checked regularly. The petty cash and school funds are subject to rigorous security, recording and auditing procedures. The computer systems are backed-up daily, and access is controlled by passwords of different levels that change monthly. The procedures for ordering and checking materials are carefully dissected and recorded to ensure tight controls. The bursar meets regularly with senior management. The financial control in the faculties is sound. The day-to-day administration of the school is very efficient.
106. Students enter the school with well below average standards of attainment and socio-economic circumstances. They experience good teaching and most establish and sustain a satisfactory rate of progress in the development of what they know, understand and can do. Nevertheless, the standards of attainment at the end of both key stages remain below average. The cost of educating each student is slightly higher than that found in secondary schools nationally. Taking all these judgements into consideration, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
107. Since the last report there has been the problem of arriving at an unexpected deficit. However, all is now on course again. The differences are that there is the deficit, staff deployment is not always efficient, and the school is now judged to give satisfactory rather than good value for money. There is better linking of planning to all relevant factors. Information and communication technology remains ineffectively utilised and the library has too few books.

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

### **112. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **112. English**

108. Students' attainment in English is low in comparison with national standards, both at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The 1998 National Curriculum test results for students at the age of fourteen are below national averages but close to the average for schools with students from similar backgrounds. The performance of girls is better than the performance of boys at this age, as it is nationally. The average scores in the Years 1996 to 1998 show a steady improvement in students' attainment. The 1999 results show that a similar proportion as in 1998 attained the expected level for their ages but that a lower percentage achieved above average levels.
109. The 1998 GCSE English results show that the percentage of students gaining grades A\*-C is below the national average but they are better than the results at the previous inspection, and the 1999 results indicate that this improvement has been sustained. The 1998 results are above average when compared with the results of students in similar schools and they are well above average when compared with the same students' results in the 1996 National Curriculum tests. In the 1998 GCSE examinations girls attained much better results than did boys but in 1999 boys have achieved results that are very close to those gained by girls. Although it is too soon to suggest a trend, observation during the inspection suggests that the strategies in the classroom put in place by the department to address boys' attainment are having a positive effect. The attainment of students from an Asian heritage, for whom English is a second language, is well below the attainment of white students. The department has attempted to address this issue through the support offered by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Project.
110. Students in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress, while students in Key Stage 4 are now making good progress because over recent years teachers have improved the curriculum to ensure that students know exactly what is required to achieve success. Schemes of work have been refined to focus clearly on course work and examination requirements and teachers help students to improve their work through sharing objectives for learning and clear and detailed marking of their work. The department is now focusing on the implementation of similar improvements to the curriculum for students in Key Stage 3.
111. Most students make better progress and attain higher standards in reading and writing than they do in speaking. By the end of Key Stage 3, average and higher attaining students can read most of the texts used in class with understanding. Many of them read for pleasure because of the emphasis the department places on reading through its Reading Trails programme. The reading skills of lower attaining students are less secure. Although most can use a range of word recognition strategies, many of them find difficulty in understanding more than the surface meaning of texts. Most students, including those with special learning needs and those for whom English is a second language, make satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills. This is largely because teachers encourage them to draft and edit their work and because students are keen to improve and to present their written work carefully. The aspect of English where students make less rapid progress is in the development of their speaking skills. This is particularly the case for Asian heritage girls many of whom show reluctance to join in class discussions or to answer questions in whole-class situations. Although the department recognises the importance of talking as a way in which students learn, as yet there is insufficient emphasis given in Key Stage 3 lessons for providing opportunities for students to engage in structured small group discussions.
112. The improved rate of progress in Key Stage 4 is in part because activities in which students are expected to discuss their work have been built into the GCSE course work units of work which all teachers use. The other major factor in the better progress made by students is the very positive attitudes that most of them display towards their work. They want to succeed in their examinations and work hard to achieve this success; almost all students, including those with special learning needs and those for whom English is a second language, gain a pass grade in GCSE English. However, the low proportion of students who gain the highest grades of A\*-B is a clear indication that the department is not yet providing work of a sufficiently high level of difficulty for its highest attaining students. The department is addressing this aspect of their work through the inclusion in new schemes of work of resources, activities and tasks, which provide appropriate work for the full range of students.
113. Students' literacy skills in general are sufficient for them to engage with the curriculum but not as yet to access it fully. The fact that most students gain a GCSE grade but that fewer than average gain the highest grades is evidence of this. The school recognises the importance of improving literacy skills in the drive to improve attainment but the strategies by which this will be achieved are not yet employed throughout all subjects.

114. Students generally display positive attitudes towards their English lessons. Their behaviour is very good; they settle quickly to their work and concentrate well. Relationships between students and between students and teachers are very good. Students are willing to take responsibility for their own learning but are not as yet given sufficient opportunities to exercise this responsibility because their teachers, with the best of intentions, tend to do too much of the planning and redrafting of their work for them.
115. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3, although within Key Stage 3 the teaching is better in Year 7 than in Years 8 and 9. This is because of the improvements already being made to the Year 7 curriculum, where strategies from the National Literacy Strategy are becoming embedded into classroom practice. Teaching at all levels has many strengths; classroom management is good and teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are planned to lead students in small steps through their learning, although progress, particularly in Key Stage 3, would be faster if teachers shared with students what they are expected to *learn* rather than *complete* in the lesson so they could recognise more clearly the progress they have made. Teaching is less effective when the work is not well matched to students' needs, most particularly in Years 8 and 9, and higher attainers are given work that is too easy for them. Another relative weakness is the continuing failure to involve girls of Asian heritage in discussion work.
116. The management of the department is satisfactory. There is a positive ethos and good teamwork amongst the staff. The development plan has appropriate action points but lacks precision in identifying success criteria, costings and time-scales. There is insufficient emphasis given to meeting the specific language needs of the Asian heritage students.
117. Since the previous inspection the department has implemented good systems for the assessment of students' work and has improved pace and direction in most lessons.
118. Media studies is taught as an optional subject in Key Stage 4. Students enjoy the practical nature of the subject and attain very good GCSE results.
119. Drama, which all students follow for half of each year in Key Stage 3, and which is offered as an optional subject in Key Stage 4, makes a significant contribution to the development of students' confidence, self-respect and speaking and listening skills. This is because the teaching is very good, the curriculum is relevant and challenging, and students are fully involved in the planning and assessment of their own work.

## Mathematics

120. Levels of attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 are very low compared with national standards. In 1998, the school's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national averages when compared with all schools. The percentage of students reaching Level 5 or above in the tests and the percentage reaching Level 6 or above were both below the national averages. Results for 1996-8 show a performance for both boys and girls to be well below national averages. However, when these results are compared with schools of a similar socio-economic context, the results are close to the average for schools with students from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls perform at about the same level, both being nearly half a level below the national average. The results overall are rising slightly over the last three years in line with national figures. In 1999, the teacher assessments were very close to the National Curriculum test results, showing a good understanding of the expected standards by the mathematics' teachers of how assessments should be organised and judged. These teacher assessments are much closer than in 1998, showing an improvement in assessment techniques and targeting of students' performance.
121. In Key Stage 3 lessons, students in higher sets have a reasonable grasp of number and show confidence in using numbers. Slower learning students work carefully to develop their numeracy skills; they are very ably supported in their studies and make good progress. Students are interested in sorting numbers by using tally marks and illustrating distributions by drawing bar charts. Time is well considered and students are able to use both twelve and twenty four hour clock notation. They manipulate times between the two systems with confidence. In one very good lesson, students worked practically on areas of combined shapes and showed good thought processes as they considered the conservation of area. Throughout the key stage, students respond well to the teachers' instructions and are keen to develop their mathematical skills.
122. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is low compared with national standards. The percentage of students achieving GCSE grades A\*-C was well below the national average in 1998 and at a similar level in 1999. The percentage

achieving grades A\*-G was below the national figures in 1998. However, when these results are compared with schools of a similar socio-economic profile, the results are close to the average. The results are also average when compared with the same students' results in the National Curriculum tests in 1996.

123. GCSE results are badly affected by absence rates in Year 11 and by students not turning up for the end of course examination. The mathematics' faculty makes systematic use of GCSE results; copious records are kept and analysed by teaching sets, gender and ethnicity. Boys and girls attain at about the same level; there is a significant difference between the results of white and Asian heritage students. Higher attaining students show good understanding of how to use estimates. They work out probabilities of combined events with good confidence. Middle ability students understand how to find the size of angles associated with diagrams involving angles at a point and on a straight line. Number work is well stressed throughout the key stage.
124. Overall, students make good progress in their mathematics lessons at both key stages. Progress is at least satisfactory or better in all lessons, good in about three quarters of the lessons and very good in just over half of the lessons. Progress in higher sets is generally quicker. The progress of students with special educational needs is good, and aided by finely tuned setting arrangements. In nearly all lessons, some revision of previous work takes place that reinforces previous study. This is the most important factor explaining the good progress made by the students. Lessons generally move at a good pace. Occasionally, students are spending too much time on one type of task. Teachers must decide when the majority of students have completed enough practice to feel secure on a particular aspect of the work; in good lessons, teachers interrupt written work, emphasise key points and give further explanations, and then move on to new work.
125. There is a very positive attitude in class rooms; students are keen to learn mathematics and apply themselves well to study. Students concentrate well in lessons. Higher ability students show greater interest and more determination; they sustain concentration better and have higher motivation. There is a reasonably narrow range of learning experiences in lessons in mathematics. Work is very teacher directed, and there are thus few opportunities for students to develop personal study skills or show initiative. Discipline is good in lessons and behaviour is usually good or very good. Students are courteous and trustworthy, showing good respect for property and belongings. Relationships are very good; students assist and support one another and do not interfere with one another's work. Students show good respect for one another's feelings. There is no mockery of wrong answers, incorrect guesses or poor performance in class discussion. They do not criticise other people's values and beliefs. Teachers award certificates which praise and encourage students. The mathematics department strives to encourage positive attitudes among students and the ethos for learning is good.
126. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It is at least sound in all lessons, good in nearly three-quarters and very good in nearly half of the lessons. All staff are secure in their subject knowledge. They have a good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum and of the GCSE syllabus. Teachers have high expectations of students' attitudes and insist on appropriate standards of behaviour and politeness. In a few lessons, teachers share humour with students, demonstrating their confidence and stimulating students' interest. Expectations of students are satisfactory in terms of mathematical achievement and high in terms of behaviour, politeness and attitudes to study. Long-term planning has been carefully considered, and the mathematics handbook is a very organised and useful document. Lesson plans are carefully prepared; some could be improved by the inclusion of time constraints for each specific part of the lesson. Methods of teaching are mainly traditional, including a lot of standard approaches. No use of computers is seen. Teachers are highly organised in their own rooms, but not many teaching resources or visual aids are used. The management of students is firm, fair and friendly, and good standards of discipline are the norm in mathematics lessons. Time is well used in most lessons with prompt starts being made. However, the pace of a minority of lessons is not high enough, teachers at times spending too long on written exercises and not moving quickly enough to new topics. Regular marking of students' work takes place, but there are few useful comments made by teachers and very few corrections of work by students. Assessment is well planned and is used for clearly defined setting in every year group. It is also used for setting targets for individual students and this system is undergoing review and enhancement. Homework is regularly set according to the school timetable, and is well used to extend and confirm classwork. Teachers do not always provide summaries at the end of lessons. There is very strong stress on the way in which students set out their written work. The team of teachers in mathematics is very experienced, shows good commitment and enthusiasm for their teaching, and builds a high quality rapport with students.
127. The head of faculty provides strong guidelines outlining the philosophy, objectives, expectations of staff and expected standards of the students in mathematics. He leads by example in his dealings with students and his high level of organisation. He is very ably supported by his assistant head of the faculty and by a committed team of teachers, all of whom are suitably qualified and work very co-operatively together. It is a very highly organised and structured faculty, with good standardisation of practices by teachers. The department considers statistical data to judge attainment and

pursue improvement in results. A limited amount of monitoring of teaching has taken place, and the faculty should now build on this so that good practice can be shared. There is a very positive ethos and students are well served.

132. **Science**

128. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is very low in relation to national standards. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests, results were below average compared with those found in all schools but average compared with those found in similar schools. The proportion of students reaching the expected Level 5 and above was below the national average. The proportion of students reaching Level 6 was also below that found nationally. The 1999 tests results indicated a decline in the percentages reaching Levels 5 and 6. The attainment of boys is slightly better than that of girls.
129. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is very low when compared with the standards found nationally. In the 1998 GCSE examinations the proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades was very low in comparison with national averages and lower still in 1999. When the 1998 results are compared with the results of similar schools the students' performance is below average and well below average when taking into account the same students results in the National Curriculum tests in 1996. Boys outperform girls. The results over the past few years have shown a slight downward trend.
130. Scrutiny of the students work and the observation of lessons suggests that the attainment in both key stages remains low when compared to that found nationally. This was exemplified by a high set in Year 9, many of whom demonstrated that they had no clear concept of what the differences were between elements, compounds, mixtures and pure substances. Generally, however, the standard of work seen in lessons and in books is higher than that suggested by the examination results. There is, therefore, a failure by students to apply their learning under examination conditions.
131. Students arrive at the school with very low attainment in relation to national standards. There is satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3, after an initial period of settling down in Year 7. The students' experimental work shows a progressive improvement in how the structuring and understanding of experimental work should be tackled. In an experiment to find out how much carbonate was needed to neutralise a quantity of acid, Year 8 students demonstrated that they had acquired a good level of precision when handling apparatus. They also showed that the ability to record and analyse what they had done in a structured way was developing well. End of unit tests and lesson observations show that, as the key stage unfurls, there is a steady increase in students' knowledge and skills.
132. Progress through Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. There is an increase in the competence and complexity of students' practical skills of experimenting and recording. This was well exemplified by a Year 11 class working on the "Sore tummy" investigation. This involved the investigation of the reaction rates and neutralisation between acid and various forms of carbonate. Students showed that they had really built on the skills learned at Key Stage 3: experiments were carefully planned with reasoned predictions; ways to improve accuracy were considered and recording structures perfected. As the key stage unfolds there is increasing depth and breadth in the consideration of topics, especially evident amongst sets containing students expected to be higher attainers.
133. Whilst in both key stages there is progress in learning facts and skills it is limited by teachers not checking that students really understand what they are doing and why they are doing it with sufficient rigour. Also, by students failing to ask when they do not understand. Consequently, students often find difficulties in applying what they are supposed to know in unfamiliar situations. This is the principle reason for the difference in quality between the work seen in lessons and students' books and the low level of examination and test results.
134. In both key stages, students with special educational needs are well known to teachers. They make satisfactory progress towards the targets in their Individual Education Plans and this usually leads to them achieving similar levels of attainment to the other students in their sets. When they are helped by support staff their progress is often good.
135. Most students enjoy science, especially the practical work. They usually concentrate and behave well, as long as there is plenty for them to do. They generally work productively in groups towards a common aim, with all members contributing material. However, these groups often form on gender or ethnic lines. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision. They are confident to suggest answers to questions put to them, but pose few of their own.
136. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. However, there is considerable variation in quality, ranging from a few very good lessons to a few poor lessons. In Key Stage 4, teaching is uniformly satisfactory; no especially good or poor teaching was observed. In most lessons there is careful planning and the stage is set by revisiting the salient points of

the preceding ones. Objectives are crisp and clearly communicated, students views are actively sought and, by skilful questioning, amplified and synthesised into useful extensions of their knowledge and skills. Only in a few lessons are students really ignited to think for themselves, with experiments presented in such a way that they discover for themselves rather than prove what they already know. These lessons, too, tend to employ a wider range of teaching strategies. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, teachers have insecure subject knowledge, lesson objectives are too vague, and students are questioned but not actively involved in generating ideas. The pace of lessons is slow and sometimes the lack of discipline creates an unfavourable learning environment. There are long teacher expositions and few opportunities for students to think creatively.

137. Marking is inconsistent. At its best, work is corrected with useful comments and future targets, most work is at least ticked and graded, often with praise, but some work goes unmarked. Homework is usually set and frequently makes an important contribution to students' learning.
138. There is an enthusiastic and active head of faculty who provides satisfactory leadership. The staff work well together. Schemes of work are well thought out and cover all the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Courses are matched, as far as possible, to student ability in sets. The procedures for assessing students work are good; all is meticulously recorded and carefully analysed. Aspects of data-handling, word processing and data-logging, using computers, are insufficiently utilised in the teaching of science. Their more frequent employment would raise both interest and attainment. There are some visits to lectures and there is some use of the local environment, but the curriculum could be further enriched by such activities as visiting field centres, combining a field course with geography and visiting industry. All these would serve to link the subject with real life and help to create the best conditions in which to stimulate attainment.
139. Apart from information technology resources, the faculty is adequately equipped. Two excellent technicians ensure that equipment is stored in a safe, orderly way, well maintained, and produced when needed. Having two sites, each of which has more than one level and no lift, does not help the subject. Some of the laboratories on the east site are in need of considerable refurbishing.
140. Since the last inspection, standards have dropped and no longer compare favourably with those found in English and mathematics. There has been a great improvement in assessment and in recording procedures. The problems of a split site and split-levels remain unresolved.

145. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

145. **Art**

141. Over the past three Years the pass grades in GCSE art have been in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades has been rising steadily over the past three years with a significant rise of 14 per cent in 1999. This improvement still leaves the results below the national average. Results in art have compared unfavourably with other subjects until 1999 but now compare favourably. In the past, many students achieving only one GCSE pass, have achieved this in art. Girls achieve better GCSE results than boys.
142. By the end of Key Stage 3, for the majority of students, attainment in art is low in relation to national standards. Students' attainment in design and graphics is at the national average. This aspect of work is given more thorough attention than drawing and painting. Where there are specific formal lessons in point perspective students achieve good results in almost all cases. However, these skills once learned are not used as fully as possible in subsequent work, although there is evidence of Year 9 achieving good standards in drawings of landscapes with buildings. Work in colour, pattern and line is generally good but there is less evidence of work in tone and texture generally, although there are examples of very good work in a small number of cases. Students have a satisfactory knowledge of the work of artists and artistic traditions from a range of cultures, western and non-western. Some students do not retain knowledge of artists and their work as reported in the previous inspection. Work in printing is good and often impressive. Although there is some three-dimensional work it is largely card-based with some light sculpture. Attainment in three-dimensional work has improved since the previous inspection but still represents a weakness. There is no provision for pottery or ceramics.
143. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is low in relation to national standards overall but a substantial majority of students achieve good results in specific areas such as graphics, design and printing. Some work in printing is impressive with regard to design, the use of colour and technique. Drawing and painting skills are generally low for the majority of students, with little use of tone in many drawings. Students can follow the very good guidelines given

on how to research a topic in depth but many lack the sophistication in language and thought necessary to research in the depth required to get the higher grades. Again, attainment in three-dimensional work is low although there are isolated examples of very good work in light sculpture.

144. Progress is satisfactory overall throughout Key Stage 3. It is good in design, graphics and printing, which are given good attention. It is unsatisfactory in drawing and painting, in part because there is less time devoted to teaching these skills formally. Where three-dimensional work is done progress is satisfactory but the range of opportunities is limited. Progress in drawing in point perspective is impressive. In Key Stage 4 progress is good, particularly in design and graphics. Students build well on their skills. They learn the techniques of researching a topic in some depth and breadth. Drawing skills, including the use of tone and texture, improve throughout coursework, although there is less than the average amount of time given to drawing and painting from direct observation.
145. In both key stages, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They get specific, appropriate individual help from teachers. Many students on the special educational needs register have average ability in art. Students with behavioural difficulties behave impeccably in art with the two full-time teachers. Students have positive attitudes to this subject in both key stages. They are calm and composed in class and show interest in their work. They sustain concentration throughout lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and make comments appropriately. They work well independently and share resources agreeably. They respond well to challenge and show a good degree of initiative when they understand what is expected of them. They develop a capacity for personal study, particularly in Key Stage 4, as the GCSE syllabus demands.
146. Teaching is good in both key stages. Apart from two lessons each week, the subject is taught by two experienced teachers who have good knowledge and expertise in the subject. They have very good class-management skills and discipline, achieved with ease. They have a good rapport with their students. They create a calm, tranquil atmosphere in their classrooms. Work is presented clearly with good demonstrations of what is to be achieved. They help students to be confident whatever their levels of ability. Lessons are well planned. Resources are well used. They have high expectations of their students with regard to work and behaviour. The very good behaviour of all students is largely due to the teachers' expertise. Assessment is built into all lessons and is ongoing. It is also done formally at the end of all units of work and involves students, including students' self-assessment. Targets are set and written on the back of work as appropriate.
147. As at the time of the previous inspection, the department is well led. The schemes of work are designed to provide creative experience using limited resources, but they need to be updated to provide more time for the development of drawing and painting skills. The department has made a positive response to the recommendations of the previous inspection report by securing an increase in funding for the subject but students' experience of art is still adversely affected by the absence of resources for pottery and ceramics.
148. Literacy is well promoted in lessons and by the displays developed to show the art and design vocabulary. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
153. **Design and technology**
149. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is high. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the 1999 GCSE examination was high and an improvement on the results gained in 1998, which were in line with the national average in relation to all maintained secondary schools. GCSE results have risen in recent years. The number of boys achieving A\* to C grades was particularly high. However, a small number of girls, mostly from Asian heritage, achieved well below the national average in textiles and this affected the overall percentage of grades for girls, which otherwise would have been in line with the national average. Examples of products demonstrates a high level of individual skill. Students develop a wide range of complex designs for their portfolios, which focus on, for example, fashion design, stage management and a variety of wood-constructed artefacts, all of which are supported by the students' quality made product.
150. In business studies, GCSE results in 1999 were substantially above the national average. As a consequence of the fact that there have been changes in the GCSE course being followed over recent years it is difficult to determine a trend in the examination results. The 1998 results were below the national average, while the 1997 results were comparable with those attained in 1999. The standards attained in lessons and coursework of students at currently at Key Stage 4 are generally consistent with the standards attained at GCSE in 1998.
151. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of students is average. There are fewer higher attaining students than at Key

Stage 4 because the most able are not sufficiently stretched by some of the work that is set. In Year 9, a scrutiny of their work showed making skills to be above average. A project in electronics showed that students understood the workings of a simple switch circuit that used light emitting diodes. A Year 7 class, taking part in their first practical cooking lesson, used tools and equipment safely whilst working in teams to bake a series of cakes for tasting and evaluation.

152. Students make good progress overall in Key Stage 3. A Year 7 class made very good progress in recognising simple structures and working in teams; all were able to design a structure capable of carrying an excessive load. One structure, made from four pieces of A4 paper, when tested was able to support 12lb and would have carried substantially more if height and loss of balance had not intervened. A low ability group made unsatisfactory progress in their graphical work due to a lack of clear teacher direction, whilst another low ability group made good progress because of the careful instruction with regard to accurate weighing and measuring.
153. Students make very good progress in Key Stage 4. Whilst this was not reflected in the lessons during the inspection, when students' progress was generally satisfactory, examples of work and examination portfolios and products gave a clear indication of the very good progress. This was evident from examples of work from previous students, not only in the previous year's examination results, but also in the steady and consistent improvement in A\* - C examination grades since 1994. However, whilst a small group of girls did not match the good progress made by others they still achieved satisfactory progress in relation to their individual assessment score. The progress of students following the business studies course is good. This is a consequence of well-structured and demanding teaching.
154. At both key stages, the majority of students demonstrate positive attitudes with regard to the subject. They enjoy the practical activities and respond to the challenges of designing and the making. There is some unacceptable disregard of instruction by a minority of students when travelling between the annex and the main school. All students discuss their work readily and share their designs with a sense of pride. This was never more so than when the Key Stage 3 group who had designed structures or the group who demonstrated very clearly how to zero electronic scales talked about their work.
155. Teaching is good in both key stages. In the most effective lesson seen, the teaching was well organised and students knew the standard expected of them. Relationships were very good and there was a clear sense of a partnership for learning. The lesson plan was carefully designed to extend what the students would know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Great care was taken by the teacher to ensure that the students achieved success through the use of assessment to inform the next stage of learning. Unsatisfactory teaching featured a lack of rigour in ensuring that core lesson objectives were achieved and a slow pace. The quality of teaching in business studies is good. Teaching is characterised by a good level of subject knowledge and high expectations. Well-structured and challenging learning activities promote students' learning effectively.
156. The lack of planned extended work in the Key Stage 3 Programmes of Study affects the potential of students to achieve National Curriculum Level 7 or above. Also, at Key Stage 3, the breadth of experiences within resistant material areas is adversely affected by the lack of engineering projects.
157. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment have improved and although the leadership has changed this has not affected the quality, which remains good, or the commitment of the staff, which remains high. The expectations of students remain high and the excellent display of students' work still does much to promote the subject and the very positive ethos of the department.

162. **History**

158. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is average in relation to national standards. Students of all ability levels achieve satisfactory understanding of historical enquiry, using a good range of historical sources of information. In all the lessons observed, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 demonstrated satisfactory skills in oral work in asking and answering significant questions about sources, including artefacts as well as printed primary and secondary documents and pictures. Students of below average ability, and some students for whom English is not their first language, do not achieve the levels expected in communicating their knowledge through extended writing. The best work of all students is seen in the free topics at the end of each National Curriculum Study Unit, when students co-operate in group projects to carry out longer historical investigations.
159. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is average in relation to national standards. Between 1996 and 1998 the number of candidates achieving grades A\*-C at GCSE was well below the national averages, and the number of candidates



achieving grades A\*-G was also below national averages. In 1999 however, results were much higher, with 60 per cent of candidates gaining A\*-C grades and 98 per cent A\*-G grades. Following a major curriculum change from 1997-99 the department entered students in 1999 for a different GCSE syllabus, based on the Schools History Project. The department considered that this syllabus had the potential to engage student interest and improve their performance, and this rationale has proved to be correct. Students in Years 10 and 11, who were observed studying the core modules of Medicine and Weimar and Nazi Germany, were seen to be maintaining levels of attainment in line with national standards.

160. Students make good progress during Key Stage 3. Students in Year 7 are able to bring their knowledge and understanding of Roman Britain, studied at Key Stage 2, to their first study unit on the Roman Empire. In oral work students throughout the key stage are able to make links between the units studied. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make progress in recording their historical knowledge and understanding, mainly in short written answers and diagrams. By Year 9, the average and higher attaining students have progressed to writing extended narratives and descriptions. In the lowest sets in Years 7 and 9 where the majority of students were of Asian heritage, no support for English as an additional language was being provided and students' progress was not satisfactory. In Year 9, students in the lowest set, many of whom were identified as having special educational needs, received a lower allocation of time for history because of the new basic skills course. As a result, they made only very slow progress in the core unit on Britain 1750-1900. The progress of students with special educational needs at Key Stage 3, is therefore unsatisfactory.
161. In Key Stage 4, students continue to make good progress. Year 10 students studying 'Medicine Through Time' were able to analyse the beliefs and attitudes of people of ancient times towards illness and to make structured notes. They were making satisfactory progress in understanding the concept of Change and Continuity in history. In Year 11, students were able to comprehend and deploy relevant terms to describe the complex political system of Weimar Germany. Students of Asian heritage were making good progress with the help of a teacher from the Ethnic Minorities Support team who was giving targeted support to eight students in the class. In all the lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 above average students were working at the same pace as average and below students. Evidence from the coursework files of able students in the units on Modern China and the local study of Quarry Bank Mill shows that above average students respond well to the challenge to produce work in greater depth later in the course.
162. In both key stages students generally work with quiet interest. They listen courteously to the responses of other students and to the teacher. In a few, where the pace of teacher questioning was brisk and all students were involved, there was positive enthusiasm for the topic studied. In one Year 7 lesson, when all students were asked to analyse a different picture each for evidence on life in the Roman Empire, the students showed initiative and volunteered information from their own experience. A similar lively response to discussion resulted from the team teaching of Year 11 by the history teacher and support teacher for ethnic minority students. Students in all year groups work co-operatively with partners in paired discussions for short sections of lessons. They remain on task during all the short written exercises asked of them. However, students in the special needs set in Year 9 were only able to concentrate in group work and in individual written work with the constant support of their teacher and the two assistants supporting statemented students in the class.
163. Teaching is good at both key stages. The good subject knowledge of the teachers is seen in the good range of resources produced within the department. Assessment procedures are a strength of the department's teaching. Students' daily work is marked regularly. The marking is encouraging and is a good source of motivation for the students. Standardised assessment using national curriculum levels is rigorous and consistent. All students are involved in self-evaluation and target-setting, with individual targets included in their exercise books and files. Student management is good, and high standards of discipline were maintained in all the lessons inspected. In some lessons, which followed the same pattern, students were expected to work at a slow pace. They read a very short extract of historical source material, answered teacher questions and then wrote down the answers. When asked to concentrate for longer on teacher exposition, or class discussion, and to work at a faster pace, students of all ability levels responded well. In one Year 9 lesson on the Industrial Revolution all the students in this middle ability set responded to a challenging pace in learning new technical and specialised vocabulary. They showed great enthusiasm in handling artefacts for combing wool that had been borrowed from a local mill and sustained their interest throughout the lesson. At Key Stage 4, matching of work to individual student needs improves as the GCSE course progresses. Writing frames help students of below average ability to meet the requirements for longer written accounts, and students of average ability and above are given the scope to develop their study skills. In both key stages, homework is well used to extend work done in class.
164. The leadership and management of the department is good, particularly in curriculum planning. Statutory requirements are met in the units of study chosen for Key Stage 3, and all key elements, including historical

interpretations, are taught. The subject makes a positive contribution to the cultural understanding of students through study units on Islam for Year 8 and Modern China in Year 10. The recent full curriculum review has strengthened the links between key stages. Students in Key Stage 3 study two extra skills units, designed to enhance understanding of fundamental concepts required at Key Stage 4. One such unit, on the Luddites, for Year 9 is also linked to a later GCSE coursework unit on Quarry Bank Mill and child labour.

165. Progress has been made since the last inspection in improving GCSE results. The improvement in attainment levels has been achieved with only a small input of additional funding from the school's curriculum development fund. The subject provides good value for money. Progress has also been made since the last inspection in identifying opportunities in schemes of work for students to present and research their work using information and communication technology. The department now needs to implement plans and to monitor the access and entitlement of all students in the use of information and communication technology in history. Staffing in the department is currently in an interim phase, pending the appointment of a new head of department. Appropriate professional development time needs to be available for the newly qualified, temporary and new teachers in the department in order to maintain the good progress made in the subject in the last two years.
170. **Geography**
166. GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 1999 were an improvement on the figures for the previous year, which were well below the national average. Over recent years, the great majority of students have succeeded in gaining A\*-G grades. Asian heritage students performed comparatively poorly from 1995 to 1997, but their results since then are closer to the overall school figures. The difference between boys' and girls' results fluctuates considerably from year to year and shows no clear pattern.
167. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is low in relation to national standards. Fieldwork investigations into the Central Business District in Accrington show good skill development in representing the data gathered in scatter graphs, pie and bar charts. The complex interaction of factors having an impact on tourism in Kenya is less well understood. Lower attaining students have difficulty in using specialist language, which limits their ability to write explanations and develop greater understanding.
168. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is low in relation to national standards. Lower ability students are able to use atlases to work out the general differences in climate between cities. More able students can scan passages of information to extract climatic information and construct bar and line graphs. In Year 7, students can construct a simple sketch-map, using symbols explained in a key, which shows their route from home to school; though understanding of distance and direction can be vague.
169. In Key Stage 3, most students make good progress and by Year 9 can use maps of Italy and climate charts they have constructed from raw data to compare and contrast the different regions of the country. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress in their lessons due to the individual help given by their teachers and support staff. However, their progress through the curriculum is currently unsatisfactory because they spend one third less time in geography lessons than other students due to the additional time they spend following the basic skills course. This means that they do not cover all the coursework.
170. In Key Stage 4, students make satisfactory progress, as do those students with special educational needs. Satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding are made overall, but more able students are not always stretched sufficiently; for example, when studying volcanic and tectonic activity. Students make good progress in the investigative fieldwork elements of the GCSE course.
171. Students show good attitudes to learning. They co-operate well in pair and group work, though the opportunities for this are limited. They demonstrate good levels of concentration and maintain their efforts throughout lessons.
172. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. There is a lack of variety in teaching styles and lesson structure and sometimes the tasks set are mundane and do not stretch the most able. Most lessons, though, have explicit aims and are set in context by linking with previous work. Students are given good individual support by their teachers, who emphasise the importance of using the technical language of the subject.
173. The curriculum meets all requirements and schemes of work link well to give progression through and across key stages. Assessment procedures are good and involve students in judging their own progress and in setting targets for future achievement. Consistency of approach by staff is assured by standardisation across the department. Teachers'

assessments, made at the end of Key Stage 3, accurately reflect the attainment levels of the students.

174. The department creates a positive ethos for learning and has a strong commitment to raising standards of achievement. It works hard to raise the students' expectations of their own performance. Developmental planning is satisfactory but lacks sufficiently clear priorities and a rigorous approach to costing and defining the criteria for success. Overall, the department benefits from good leadership.
175. All teachers are experienced specialists and almost all lessons are taught in three adjacent classrooms. These rooms lack black-out facilities but are large and airy with good displays of students' work. Learning resources are adequate in range and quality, but not abundant, and have been supplemented by high quality worksheets and support material produced by the teachers.
176. Financial planning is cautious and prudent, and efficient use is made of all resources.
181. **Information technology**
177. Only a small minority of students in Years 10 and 11 has the opportunity to follow a course of certification. Nine students representing 4.4 per cent of Year 11 received a certification in word processing. Two of these students also received certification in the use of spreadsheets. Similarly, eleven students achieved word processing in Year 10; two students also achieved a certificate in the use of spreadsheets.
178. By the end of Key Stage 3, the level of attainment in information and communication technology is very low in relation to national standards. Students have had little opportunity to develop their information and communication technology skills throughout the key stage.
179. By the end of Key Stage 4, the level of attainment in information and communication technology is very low in relation to national standards.
180. During the inspection, there was little evidence of the use of information technology by students to develop their learning in subjects across the curriculum. In art, students are using a scanner device in order to place a picture into a computer program. Examples of word processing were observed in the scrutiny of work for English, and a limited amount of data logging was evident in science along with examples of graphs and charts.
181. Currently, in both key stages, students are following a Programme of Study designed as a temporary curriculum. In a Year 7 class, students were working on a word processing exercise, which was also the topic of a lesson involving Year 10 students. The Year 7 students were only able to show very limited information technology skills. Similarly, the Year 10 students did not understand, nor could they show basic word processing skills. Consequently, the judgement on their capability was no higher than that of Year 7 students.
182. The small minority of students following a course in business studies achieves average attainment in information technology. There are also some students with higher ability skills, such as the small group of boys who, with the help of a teacher, have successfully developed a web site for the school.
183. When developing their skills in information and communication technology lessons, or when using information and communication technology to develop their learning in another subject, for example, in art, students generally make satisfactory progress during that lesson. Moreover, in doing so, they made satisfactory progress in the use of information and communication technology as a tool to develop composite designs. However, these occurrences are rare and as a consequence, a student rarely has the opportunity to make progress in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 4, very few students have the opportunity to make progress through the information technology Programmes of Study. Whilst opportunities are provided through business studies, which results in these students making progress, these areas of study do not fulfil the statutory requirements of the information and communication technology curriculum.
184. Over a number of years the information and communication technology provision offered by the school has been unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements have not been met, and this is the reason for the students' low levels of attainment and progress.
185. During the past year the school has made positive moves to address this major curriculum deficiency. It has decided to introduce a specialist information technology lesson because the existing arrangements for teaching information and

communication technology skills across the curriculum were not developing students' skills effectively. New equipment of an appropriate specification has been installed and a manager for the subject appointed. She started work at the school a week prior to the inspection. It was very unsatisfactory that there was no manager prior to this date, because this meant that the cross-curricular provision was not led or monitored effectively. This also helps to explain the low standards achieved by the students.

186. Students enjoy the use of information and communication technology. Response is good, and students remain focused on their work. All students seen using information and communication technology equipment do so with respect. They recognise the value of equipment and treat it accordingly. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum at both key stages is poor, and students are not sufficiently provided with independent opportunities to use it to develop their learning and understanding.
187. The teaching of information technology is unsatisfactory. This reflects the failure of the teaching to develop the skills of the students over a number of years, the lack of teaching of information technology skills across the curriculum, and the limitations of the temporary curriculum now in place. Within individual lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was generally satisfactory. The priority that the school is now giving to information and communication technology is reflected in the recent audit of teachers' skills and the training opportunities that have been created. There is still much work to do in this area.
188. The school recognises the need to extend the capability of teachers in the use of information technology. Current changes in accommodation and learning resources will have a substantial impact upon the school's ability to offer current technology. However, the line management structure of information technology has not produced effective strategies for the day-to-day teaching of information technology. Consequently, no amount of equipment will guarantee success unless the whole-school ethos towards the teaching of information technology and the use of information and communication technologies to achieve teaching and learning outcomes is redefined. With the school having taken the first step in appointing an Information and Communication Technology Manager there is now a clear structure for establishing an appropriate curriculum, and for specialist advice to be given to the senior management team and governors.

193. **Music**

189. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is high when compared with national standards. The percentage of students achieving grades A\* - C in GCSE has been consistently high over the last few years. The 1999 results showed the attainment of boys to be higher than that of the girls, with all boys who were entered gaining A\* - C grades. GCSE grades in music have been consistently higher than grades in other subjects. Only white students have opted to study music at Key Stage 4. Attainment in lessons is broadly matched to GCSE results. Students perform and compose in a range of styles and genres. Several play and sing confidently, often with good expression and secure intonation. The compositions of some students are well-structured, with imaginative melodies and harmonies.
190. The attainment of students in music at the end of Key Stage 3 is average when compared with national standards. By the end of Key Stage 3, many students play simple melodies and add basic chords using electronic keyboards. They show awareness of other performers and fit their own part within the whole. They write about instruments of the orchestra as well as about elementary notation. They listen to a variety of music from their own and other cultures and are able to talk about what they have heard. In the lessons observed, there were few opportunities for students to compose.
191. The progress of students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Through involvement in a range of activities, students are able to develop and refine their musical skills. Performing skills progress largely through keyboard and percussion playing. Written work displays an increasing knowledge of instruments of the orchestra and different forms of notation. The progress of students at Key Stage 4 is good. Of particular note is the extent to which they add expressive range to their performing by time they take the GCSE examination. Their compositions show good melodic and harmonic development.
192. The attitudes and behaviour of students are generally satisfactory and relationships are often good, although there was an isolated example of some disruptive behaviour in one lesson observed. Many students enjoy music lessons, with nearly a hundred in receipt of weekly instrumental lessons. Many are involved in a range of extra-curricular activities in music. Each year a number of students opt to take music at Key Stage 4.
193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In both key stages, schemes of work

are thoroughly prepared, students are well-managed and effective use is made of resources. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of music and offer the students a good range of opportunities to develop their musicality. National Curriculum requirements are broadly met, although information and communication technology is not yet used sufficiently.

194. The provision and range of extra-curricular activities in music is good. Several groups meet on a weekly basis and there is an annual arts week in the school calendar. Standards reached are often high, especially from the steel pan groups, which enjoy a high reputation both in school and in the local community. These groups are given regular opportunities to perform in concerts throughout the year and many become involved in the school's annual production.
199. **Modern foreign language**
195. French GCSE A\*-C grades from 1996 to 1998 were consistently well below national averages. Approximately one student in six achieved these higher grades. Girls regularly outperformed boys, and this was particularly marked in 1998. Although the numbers involved are much smaller, boys' results in German were similar to those of girls in 1997 and exceeded them in 1998. Standards in German were above national averages in 1997 and 1998. Provisional results in French for 1999 indicate a marked decrease in the proportion of students obtaining higher grades, but a significant improvement as many lower attainers achieved E or F rather than a G as in previous years. Results in German remain well above national averages.
196. Over half of the candidates entered for Urdu in 1996 and 1997 obtained grades in the range A\*-C, and in 1998 this rose to three out of four. Results for 1999 indicate a similarly high level of attainment.
197. Attainment in French, at the end of Key Stage 3, is low in relation to national standards. Students make a sound start in Year 7, acquiring basic vocabulary and learning straightforward classroom commands in French. After this solid foundation, students' attainments vary significantly, mainly as a result of teaching quality. In some classes, students develop good accents and speak French confidently. In others, pronunciation is heavily anglicised and students struggle to initiate a dialogue. This feature occurs across the whole ability range. Speaking skills are the weakest element. There is no evidence of sustained oral work. In their writing, all students are able to adapt a model successfully and a few higher attainers can write coherently in some detail. Reading and listening skills are stronger. Many students can pick out key points from texts and tapes. Higher attainers use dictionaries confidently.
198. Overall, the progress of students is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. Progress in a minority of classes is unsatisfactory, particularly in speaking and writing. Students often master a specific skill in a particular lesson, but are then unable to reproduce this knowledge subsequently. This seriously affects the quality of work when they are required to produce extended pieces of writing or more complex dialogues. Progress is particularly slow in those classes where students are not given regular opportunities to use French actively. At this stage, there is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Some students with special educational needs are making good progress as they benefit from substantial reinforcement of key structures, but overall progress for these students is unsatisfactory. Attainment and progress in German by the end of Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall, but there are variations. Some of the highest attainers in Year 9 are not able to communicate effectively due to the lack of challenge and rigour in their work.
199. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in French in relation to national standards remains low. However, many students in lower sets can extract information from comprehension texts, and recognise familiar language in taped conversations. They know how to form the Perfect tense and are aware of the principles of verb agreement. Such basic skills are helping them to reach the standards required for a middle grade at GCSE. Higher attainers continue to produce accurate work within a narrow framework. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to write independently and many are still unable to manipulate language, particularly when speaking. Too few students are aware of the formation of the future tense. The continuing inability to retain critical information from one topic to the next is an important factor in attainment levels.
200. From the low standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3, the progress made by all groups of students in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall. Some students with special educational needs make particularly good progress, as they benefit from the learning partnership created within their teaching group. Many students begin to pay greater attention to detail, and are prepared to experiment more. There is a regular consolidation of writing skills and a developing ability to offer opinions.
201. Attainment in German at Key Stage 4 is high, and progress is very good. Students are able to initiate and sustain

imaginative dialogues. Their writing shows maturity, with an awareness of word order and agreements. They are particularly strong in listening skills. The very good progress results from the atmosphere of high expectation that is engendered in their classes. Boys in the Year 10 group are particularly ambitious and are making significant progress.

202. Attainment and progress in Urdu is satisfactory. Most are able to communicate effectively, although there is some weak spelling, and comprehension skills are underdeveloped. All students have good listening skills and the majority is able to read for meaning. The satisfactory progress is underpinned by solid consolidation of previous learning. A significant number of students who have just started the course have yet to develop confidence in speaking.
203. Students work hard in almost all lessons. In Years 10 and 11, their response is extremely positive and most display impeccable, mature attitudes. They take a pride in their work, support one another sensitively, and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions. In Key Stage 3, students almost always behave well. They do what is required of them and participate enthusiastically when the work is purposeful. Some show a determination to improve their own standards through independent research. Others are sometimes allowed to remain quietly uninvolved in the lesson. There is occasional inattention and frivolity in some lessons, but this is never designed to disrupt other students' learning.
204. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. There are significant variations in teaching styles and effectiveness. This is the single most important factor in the standards achieved. Two thirds of lessons are satisfactory or better and almost half are good or very good. Almost all of the best teaching occurs with older students. Teaching standards are particularly high in German and satisfactory in Urdu. The most effective teachers use the target language exclusively in their lessons and employ challenging questioning techniques. These teachers have high expectations, whatever the prior attainment of students. In a very good German lesson, the teacher constantly referred to previous topics to consolidate learning from that module. In a thoroughly planned French lesson, the work was carefully chosen to match students' needs and the teacher was sympathetic whilst demanding the highest of standards. Praise is often used effectively. All the unsatisfactory or poor lessons were seen in Key Stage 3. These sessions are characterised by weak planning, unclear explanations and a lack of purpose. Lessons do not follow a recognisable structure, objectives lack challenge and inadequate guidance is offered to students to ensure the successful completion of a task. In these lessons, the teacher often remains the focus of the entire lesson and students are not encouraged to use or practise the language in sufficient depth.
205. All teachers in the department are committed to supporting their students, but the methods employed rarely involve imaginative resources, since the course book dominates planning. Assessments at the end of each topic are used to set targets for the future. Day-to-day assessment is generally well-structured, but the information is not always used effectively when planning future lessons. The structure of the timetable creates groups that have to be taught by two teachers. Joint planning takes place, but this is not always sufficiently detailed to ensure continuity and progression for those classes.
206. The department is sensitively led and operates as a friendly, cohesive team. Monitoring strategies are developing, but currently lack rigour. There is no identified programme for improving teaching techniques. There are few resources that come from the countries where the various languages are spoken, and no use is made of opportunities provided by information technology. A major source of concern is the withdrawal of many students from French in Key Stage 3 for varying lengths of time each week to participate in the basic skills course. This affects adversely the progress they are making.
207. The department has established links with a school in France, and Year 7 students can take part in the annual three day visit to Dieppe or Boulogne. Almost 150 students have pen-friends abroad. There are also good links with the local young Enterprise organisation.
208. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment in French have deteriorated, particularly in speaking. Standards in German and Urdu remain high. There is now greater variation in teaching quality, although much of it remains at least good. The department continues to operate without the support of a foreign language assistant, and library resources remain very basic. There is very little fiction available and there is no structured reading course. Nevertheless, there is a distinct sense of optimism and ambition in the department and there is a fundamental determination to update and upgrade teaching standards.

213. **Physical education**

209. The percentage of students gaining GCSE A\* - C grades in physical education in 1999 was above the 1998 national average while the percentage of students gaining A\* - G grades was just below the national average. These results compare favourably with the results obtained in other subjects in the school. The percentage of students gaining A\* - C grades shows a steady rise in standards in each of the past four years. The school has entered students for GCSE dance in both 1998 and 1999, and the percentages of students obtaining GCSE A\* - C grades in both years was below the national average. There are no significant differences in standards of attainment between ethnic groups, although proportionally fewer Asian heritage students choose to take the subjects as GCSE options.
210. Standards of attainment in physical education, at the end of Key Stage 3, are average in relation to national standards. They are high at the end of Key Stage 4. The standards of attainment of some students in extra-curricular activities are high. These findings are consistent with those noted in the previous inspection report. There are some differences in attainment between different groups of students, with girls attaining higher standards in gymnastics than boys. In Year 7 dance, students are able to reproduce a simple dance sequence. In Year 8 gymnastics, girls perform rolls with poise and good body tension whereas boys are less confident gymnastics performers. By the end of the key stage, standards of attainment in games are generally satisfactory, although ball control in soccer is a weakness for many boys of Asian heritage. In other areas of the physical education curriculum there are no significant differences between the attainment of different groups of students. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of students have developed sufficient skill and understanding of rules to be able to obtain a level of satisfaction from taking part in a competitive game. Students with special educational needs are achieving appropriate standards for their abilities at both key stages.
211. Students in Key Stage 3 make good progress, and in Key Stage 4 they make very good progress. Those students following the GCSE courses are making very good progress in terms of examination grades achieved relative to previous standards of attainment. Students with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3, students develop an increasing awareness of space when playing games and of movement to make passing more successful. In gymnastics and dance, students become increasingly able to build sequences, which include travel and balance. At Key Stage 4, students play games and take part in other physical activities with increasing confidence and competence. In dance, evaluations of performance become more accurate and better informed. In GCSE theory lessons, students gain a greater knowledge of the structure of the human body and the functions of the joints and muscle groups.
212. Students' attitudes to physical education are good. Participation rates are high and relationships between teachers and students are good. Students show interest in their lessons and give teachers their full attention when required. Sustained concentration is particularly good in GCSE lessons. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is good and students collaborate and compete with one another in a friendly manner. The consistently good relationships that are evident in lessons make a significant contribution to the progress students are making.
213. The overall quality of teaching in physical education is very good at both key stages. The quality of teaching in dance is good. This has a significant effect on the attainment and progress of students. Teaching is marked by an enthusiasm for the subject which is underpinned by a secure knowledge of the Programmes of Study and GCSE examination syllabuses. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives, which are shared with students at the start of lessons. Clear explanations and demonstrations help to improve the quality of performance. Teaching methods and organisational strategies are good. Lesson activities are carefully structured to include the whole ability range. Classes are well managed and expectations are high. This has a positive effect on students' behaviour in lessons. Time and resources are well used in lessons to enhance students' learning. Assessments are made on a regular basis and these are used effectively to monitor progress. Homework is set regularly as part of the GCSE course. However, marking does not always give students sufficient information as to why particular grades have been awarded or what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work. Teachers dedicate a considerable amount of time to providing an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, from which the students derive substantial benefit. Effective use is made of the excellent indoor and out-door facilities to support teaching and learning.
214. Overall curriculum provision is good. There is a good balance of games, athletics, gymnastics, dance and health related fitness activities. The leadership and management of the department is very good. The head of department provides a clear sense of direction and effective leadership of the work of the department. In this, he is well-supported by the other members of the department. A strong sense of teamwork is evident in the department. The quality of planning, identified as a weakness in the previous inspection report, is good. Departmental policies and procedures are well documented and administrative procedures are sound. The department enjoys the use of excellent indoor and outdoor accommodation, which includes the additions of a purpose-built dance studio and an on-site playing-field since the time of the previous inspection. However, the playing-field is not secure, and some members of the public use the field for exercising dogs, with a consequent risk to health and safety.

215. The department has made good progress since the time of the last inspection and is well poised to make further improvement. The department represents a significant strength of the school and provides good value for money.

### **Religious education**

216. Students' attainments in religious education are low in relation to standards expected by the Agreed Syllabus at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. The proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades is below the national average for religious studies. The average grade achieved by each entrant is similarly low. Nonetheless, in the 1999 GCSE examination, 40 per cent of students achieved a better result than their target grade. The choice of a syllabus that does not match students' aptitudes most appropriately, and frequent changes of teacher due to staffing difficulties, have adversely affected this year's examination results.
217. By the end of Key Stage 3, students acquire a sound factual knowledge of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. They have a good knowledge of the cycle of Christian festivals and their link to the life of Jesus. They also know about the main festivals of other world religions. Students can describe the forms of worship of Islam and Hinduism, and know the story of Buddha. More able students relate important social issues, such as marriage, to the Christian tradition, and discuss moral topics such as forgiveness. Students of lower ability find these abstract elements of religious education difficult to understand and do not reach the standards achieved by the majority of students.
218. At Key Stage 4, students acquire a more detailed knowledge of the Christian and Jewish traditions. More able students extend their understanding of the Christian context of social and moral issues to include broader topics such as global wealth and poverty, and the environment. Students who have an Asian heritage show a very good understanding of Islamic traditions, and can compare and contrast them with Christian and Jewish beliefs. Less able students continue to find more complex ideas difficult to grasp, and for some students a lack of basic literacy accounts in part for their low attainments.
219. Students make good progress at both key stages. On entry to the school they show very little retention of what they have learnt at Key Stage 2, apart from some knowledge of stories from the New Testament and some isolated information about other world faiths. At Key Stage 3 they respond positively to committed and enthusiastic teaching to build up a basic knowledge of the principal religions. A particularly important feature of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus is its focus on religious faith as a shared human experience, which greatly benefits students' social development. Students continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4, by the end of which they acquire new ideas and begin to link religious beliefs and social values. They can, for instance, discuss social and moral issues, such as marriage and divorce, in the context of Christian and other religious beliefs. More able students and those with special educational needs make less swift progress in relation to their abilities than the majority of students because teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of strategies to fully stretch them. The most able lack opportunities to develop their investigation and research skills, and additional in-class support combined with better-targeted materials would help those with special needs.
220. Students respond well in lessons at both key stages, and the take-up rate for GCSE religious studies is very strong. They show a respect for their teachers, which makes them willing to work hard throughout a lesson, and behaviour in lessons is generally good. Students work on their own or in groups as required, ask and answer questions appropriately and treat one another's views on religion seriously. However, a significant number of students following the statutory course at Key Stage 4 are not enthusiastic about religious education and do not see it as relevant to their future needs. The department's plans to introduce accreditation through the Record of Achievement should enhance the motivation of those students who follow the statutory course in religious education.
221. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, and this underpins the good progress that students make. Lessons are well planned and securely linked to the Agreed Syllabus. Teachers show a good knowledge of their subject, for instance, through their sensitive interpretation of the Buddha's spiritual journey. Video is used very effectively, being skilfully edited to present a focused narrative of the life of Christ. A relaxed and confident manner is combined very effectively with firm class management to instil a sense of purpose. At both key stages, use of independent learning skills, particularly including information technology, would help more able students to make faster progress.
222. Religious education is well managed, with an ethos of commitment to high standards. Resources are managed efficiently and the teaching accommodation has very attractive displays which celebrate students' achievements. The heritage of different faith communities in the locality and links with local mosques are being well used to enhance teaching opportunities. Links with parents to enhance the learning and motivation of the students are not as strong as



the department would like them to be. The department has a valuable improvement plan and has made good progress on some of its initiatives, such as the Holocaust seminar. The display of students' work and the quality of the learning environment has been improved, but progress in the use of information and communications technology is unsatisfactory.

223. Since the last inspection, the department has experienced a significant decline in the performance of its students on external examinations. There has been a period of instability in the department, but a new head of department with a strong sense of purpose is now in post. The subject continues to be a very popular option at GCSE, and the change of syllabus to give more emphasis to Islam is a positive development.
228. **Vocational Courses**
224. The school has been allowed to disapply a small number of students from the design and technology curriculum at Key Stage 4 to attend courses at the local college in hair and beauty, trowel trades, painting and decorating, and mechanical engineering.
225. Fifteen students following the course of study in hair and beauty achieved 2 distinctions and 9 pass grades. Fourteen students following a course of study in trowel trades achieved 1 distinction and 8 passes.
226. The Programme of Study for mechanical engineering covers aspects of safety, basic-engineering skills, how to read an engineering drawing, turning and fitting skills. The work carried out by students included the cutting and shaping of sheet metal, riveting of metal parts and the turning and cold bending of steel. Drawing used were made available and the work of students matched the drawings.
227. The hair and beauty course includes aspects of salon placement and the opportunity for students to develop a range of techniques: for example, shampooing, surface conditioning, blow-drying techniques and the use of rollers. Students are also given the opportunity to prepare an independent hair design.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **232. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

228. The team consisted of 13 inspectors who spent a combined total of 50 days, over a five day period, in the school. During the inspection almost all teachers were observed in the classroom, the great majority on two or more occasions. Lessons were observed across the curriculum, including some personal and social education sessions. Form groups were seen during registration with their tutors, as were a number of school assemblies. Extra-curricular activities were observed - for example, in physical education and music. Information about other extra-curricular events was gathered from other sources, such as displays and interviews. Interviews were conducted with governors, the headteacher, other staff, with senior and middle management responsibilities, subject co-ordinators, staff involved with the special educational needs department and support staff. Some representatives from partner organisations gave good support to the school by agreeing to be interviewed by inspectors. The work that students had completed was studied carefully. Students were interviewed informally throughout the week whilst there was a more formal interview for some students in each year group. Prior to the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, teaching staff, governors and parents. Eighty-two replies were received from the questionnaire sent to parents. A number of parents made detailed written comments on the questionnaires, which were helpful to the inspection team. The school provided a good deal of documentary material, which formed the basis of the pre-inspection analysis.

229. DATA AND INDICATORS

**Student data**

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	1029	31	201	316

**Teachers and classes**

**Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	66.5
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.47

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked each week	147

234. **Secondary schools**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	74.4
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Average teaching group size:	KS2	
	KS3	22.97
	KS4	20.29

**Financial data**

Financial Year:	1998/99
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	£
Total Income	2,448,882
Total Expenditure	2,517,540
Expenditure per student	2423.04
Balance brought forward from previous Year	-22,531
Balance carried forward to next Year	-91,189

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

833

Number of questionnaires returned:

82

### 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	22	65	12	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	39	50	7	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	56	21	7	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	27	61	7	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	39	53	3	5	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39	53	3	5	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	46	39	15	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	31	56	3	8	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23	62	12	3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	15	59	19	7	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	30	52	15	3	0

All issues raised by a number of parents are included in the main body of the report.