

INSPECTION REPORT

HEYSHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Morecambe

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119711

Headteacher: Mr. D. S. Ainsworth

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 27th May 2000

Inspection number: 187651

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Limes Avenue
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. W. Riddell

Date of previous inspection: 26th February 1996

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Terence Parish	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' or students' achievements
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
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			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Kathleen Cannon	Team inspector	Information and communication technology,	
		Special educational needs	
Martin Flatman	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Vocational education	
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Terry, who did this: Aspect 4 - Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Heysham High school is a larger than average, mixed, 11-18 school with 1,262 pupils on roll. It is a popular choice for parents and is oversubscribed. Almost all pupils are white. The number of pupils with special educational needs, 221, is above average and the number with statements of special educational need, 86, is well above average. Overall, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds with a significant number socially disadvantaged. In recent years a high proportion of pupils have joined the school later than in Year 7 or left the school before the end of Year 11.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education and is poised to improve further under the very good leadership of the headteacher. Management, overall, is good. Pupils' standards of work are in line with what might be expected in similar schools though well below average compared to all schools. Teaching is good. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pursues and achieves good standards of pupils' behaviour, attitudes, relationships and moral development.
- Supports and enables good progress by pupils at Key Stage 4, students in the sixth form and by all pupils with special educational needs.
- Monitors work and identifies good practice in teaching and pupils' learning.
- Provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities – clubs and so forth.
- Art at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, GNVQ in the sixth form, physical education.
- Makes good use of the money available to it.

What could be improved

- Standards of pupils work at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The use of computers by pupils and teachers.
- Attendance of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Provision for sixth form students of personal, social and health education, including careers guidance, sport and religious education.
- The range of courses pupils can do at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the accreditation offered at Key Stage 4.
- The opportunities available for pupils' cultural development.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The school gives a satisfactory standard of education but there is scope for improvement and these issues will be addressed in the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1996. In the last two years significant strides have been made in establishing how to improve teaching and there is now a much higher proportion of good teaching. However, teachers' marking and assessment of pupils' work is still inconsistent. Special educational needs provision is much improved. Management is better structured. Learning resources are much better, particularly those for information and communication technology. Pupils use computers better, but not sufficiently within all subjects. Exclusions have been reviewed, remain high, but are used appropriately. Pupils' standards of attainment have generally been maintained and show no substantial

improvement, except in art, business studies, physical education, GCSE mathematics and Advanced level languages. Standards in drama remain low. Attendance continues to be poor. Religious education still does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Cultural development remains unsatisfactory. Though school improvements have taken place and are set to continue further, overall improvement since the time of the last inspection is not satisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	D	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

At Heysham, a significant proportion of pupils typically join the school throughout Years 7 – 11, whilst others leave. This makes it more difficult to maintain standards of work and attendance and causes results to fluctuate more than at most schools.

In 1999 the overall standard of pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests, at the end of Year 9, was well below average and below that of pupils in similar schools. Attainment in mathematics and science was better than that in English. All standards were lower than in previous years but this was predictable, given the lower standards of attainment of pupils in this year when they entered the school. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3.

In 1999 the proportion of pupils who attained 5 A*-C was in line with that of similar schools, whilst that attaining 5 A*-G was below and 1 A*-G was well below. This 'tail' of poor performance can, in part, be explained by the very poor attendance of a small number of pupils, including some who never attend. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4.

In 1999 pupils' results at advanced level were below national averages but good in relation to most pupils' previous attainment. Results at Advanced GNVQ were close to national ones and Intermediate results were above them. These results show pupils' progress to be between good and very good. Overall, the sixth form does well.

Current standards are satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years. The school's targets for improvement in examination standards in 2000 are realistic and should at least be reached. It is unlikely that further improvement will be seen in 2001, but it should continue after then.

Standards of pupils' work in physical education at Key Stage 3 and in art at Key Stage 4 and Years 12 and 13 remain above the national average. Standards of work in design and technology are much better than those indicated in the weak GCSE examination results last year. GNVQ leisure and tourism results are particularly good. Standards in music are poor and below average in drama at Key Stages 3 and 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils' respond well to good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. In a few lessons weak teaching allows poor behaviour. Outside classrooms, pupils are generally well behaved.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils take up opportunities available. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are positive. Year 10 pupils seen on work experience are very mature and confident.
Attendance	Poor. Not helped by the significant minority that is a 'floating' population, moving in and out of Morecambe. Monitoring of attendance is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	good	good

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

No classroom teaching of pupils in Key Stage 4 was observed, as Year 10 was on work experience and Year 11 was on study leave. Opportunities to see students in Year 13 were also reduced because of examinations. Written work from all years was available and was inspected. Assessment and examination data was carefully looked at. Teachers were interviewed. Of the teaching seen at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, 92 per cent was satisfactory or better, 28 per cent was very good or better and 8 per cent was unsatisfactory.

Teaching in English and mathematics is good. Teaching in science is good overall, but about 1 in 10 lessons at Key Stage 3 are unsatisfactory.

Strengths in teaching include: teachers' knowledge, methods of working, management of pupils and use of resources. The work of support staff is most often very good, depending on how effectively teachers plan lessons with them. Weaknesses in teaching include: the quality of teachers' marking and the use they make of it to help pupils improve, particularly at Key Stage 3, and the quality of homework teachers set.

Teaching is consistently satisfactory, or better, in many subjects and some very good teaching is seen in most subjects. Pupils' learning is good. Most teaching in music is unsatisfactory or poor. A third of modern foreign language teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory.

Literacy is taught satisfactorily in many subjects, though some of the methods used are inappropriate for higher ability pupils. The teaching of numeracy is not yet as well planned, but some teachers take opportunities to improve pupils' understanding of numbers, for example, in science.

Pupils learn skills and knowledge effectively when lessons are well planned and excite and enthuse them. They do not learn so well on their own, for example, through research, except in GNVQ, where there is good practice.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Unsatisfactory information and communication technology and religious education at Key Stage 3. Short courses not meeting needs of all pupils at Key Stage 4. Combined drama/dance course does not foster pupils' attainment. Very good academic courses in the sixth form, but 'enrichment' activities like life skills are limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Classroom assistants are very effective when teachers plan appropriately with them. Withdrawal groups very effective and computer support good. Pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Pupils' spiritual development satisfactory, moral and social good. Their cultural development is unsatisfactory and weaknesses in it include limited work about local and regional culture and the broader perspectives of culture in Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Very good pastoral system. Child protection procedures good. There are some concerns about health and safety.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher. Management good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory, as curriculum and other work of the school does not meet statutory requirements and some governors attend infrequently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Impact yet to be felt across all standards of pupils' achievements though improvement is considered likely by most staff and many parents.
The strategic use of resources	Good, although a large reserve of cash has only recently been allocated for use. Staffing and resources are satisfactory and accommodation is unsatisfactory. Best Value indicators are also good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and management Teaching High expectations Good progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of homework. Too few parents replied to make significant comments about other issues.

The team generally agrees with these views and those that indicated the school is improving.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In 1999 pupils' national test results at the end of Year 9 were well below national averages and below the averages of similar schools. English results were particularly weak and pulled down the overall average. The mathematics and science test results were in line with those of similar schools. In the previous two years, results in the tests were better, particularly so in English and science. Both these subjects were in line with national averages in 1996. Mathematics has been consistently below average between 1996 and 1999 and in decline during the last two of those years. The performance of boys and girls in the national tests over those four years has been very similar, with girls a little better in the English tests and a little poorer in the science tests. On average, both boys and girls have been about 15 weeks behind the average progress made by pupils in all schools. They fell behind by over double this amount in 1999.

2. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are now improving, though there is some under-achievement in English. The expectation is that overall Key Stage 3 test results should begin to follow the national trend again, though remaining below average. A reason for the overall sharp decline in test results in 1999 is the nature of the school population. More than in most schools, pupils start and leave this school at odd times throughout their careers. This means the school population has not been stable and fluctuations in the ability of pupils in any one year are likely to be greater than in otherwise similar schools. School based tests indicate the Year 9 pupils in 1999 to be, overall, the lowest attaining pupils to have entered the school for some years, particularly in fields relating to literacy, and it is English test results that have plunged most significantly. Similar school based tests indicate an improving picture in the next two years, especially as Year 7 appears to be more stable than of late and most pupils seem likely to remain in the school.

3. The past fluctuating nature of the school population has also had an impact on GCSE results. They have been consistently below, to well below average, compared with all schools, for each of the four years between 1996 and 1999. Sometimes they have been a little closer to average, sometimes a little further away. Currently they are on a roll and results this year are predicted to be better than last year, when they were better than in 1998. Inspection evidence supports this view. Compared with GCSE results in similar schools in 1999, the proportion of pupils who gained 5 or more grades A*-C was in line, as was the average points' score. The proportions of pupils who gained 5 or more A*-G or 1 or more A*-G were below and well below those in similar schools. This highlights other school problems that impact on standards, the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils and the non-attendance of a small number of pupils. In 1999, 12 pupils who were on the school register, but did not attend, made a significant difference to school statistics. If they are taken out of the calculation, the proportion of pupils who gained 5 or more A*-C would have been above average compared with similar schools. This would be a reasonable action as most of those pupils were elsewhere in the education system, but local procedures prevented them being taken off the Heysham register.

4. Pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve well in examinations, particularly the more able and those pupils who attend regularly. If boys' and girls' results are compared with their respective national averages, over the last six years boys have done better than girls. School targets for 2000, agreed with the local education authority, for example 34 per cent of pupils to get 5 or more A*-C grades, are realistic, if not challenging and inspection

evidence supports the view that they are likely to be exceeded. However, it will be more difficult to sustain this improvement next year because of the relatively lower attainment of the current Year 10. After that, results should improve once more.

5. The attainment of students in the sixth form has, overall, been below the national average for the last four years. Given the relatively low starting point of many students and the personal difficulties about a third face, this is good. The raw comparison also hides some strengths. The small number of candidates who take less than 2 A levels attain in line with or better than national. Larger numbers doing 2 or more A levels are not far below the average number of points students get nationally. Advanced GNVQ results have hovered above and below national averages over the last two years and Intermediate GNVQ results were above average in 1999. GNVQ is quite a success and standards seen during the inspection are well above average in advanced business and advanced and intermediate leisure and tourism.

6. In 1999, English GCSE results were well below the national average for English language but close to it for English literature. From the work seen during the inspection pupils have confidence in writing longer pieces of work that are generally well planned. More able pupils write original and entertaining pieces, whilst pupils who attain less well are often inaccurate in their work. Overall, standards are at least in line with those of similar schools. A more exact judgement is difficult, as Key Stage 4 pupils were engaged elsewhere during the inspection. The attainment of students taking Advanced level English is below average and this was also the case in 1999 too.

7. Mathematics results in 1999 were below the national average for higher grades and in line with them for all grades. Consequently, they were above and high compared with the results in similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining an A*-C has significantly improved since the time of the last inspection. Inspection evidence shows work to be broadly in line with national expectations. Considering the relatively poor performance of mathematics at Key Stage 3 over a number of years, something particularly good has happened at Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievements have been good. Standards of work at Advanced level are below the national average, because of many students starting the subject with relatively low GCSE results.

8. Science GCSE results in 1999 were below national averages and this is a decline since the time of the last inspection. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment is satisfactory compared with national expectations. The most able pupils understand about molecules and nuclear radiation and lower attaining pupils are producing very good work for the Certificate of Achievement in Science. All pupils plan experiments well, with the best doing some outstanding investigations. At Advanced level the standards of students' work seen is satisfactory, though results in 1999 for biology, chemistry and physics were below average. Small numbers of students make comparisons difficult.

9. Attainment in art is a little below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, above the national average in GCSE and high in the sixth form. Considering staffing difficulties, art has done well.

10. Attainment in design and technology has been below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and well below national averages at GCSE for a number of years. However, work seen during the inspection was much better than this. Pupils' attainment in making, is in line with expectations whilst design has some weaknesses, some linked to inadequate literacy. At Key Stage 4, pupils' work is close to but below average overall, with some features, for example graphic modelling, above it. Design and technology is likely to

show significant improvements. Few students take Advanced level and standards are generally below average.

11. Recent test and examination results show pupils' attainment in geography to be below average at the end of Key Stage 3, at GCSE and at Advanced level. However, inspection evidence shows pupils' and students' work to be average. GCSE results are on a rising trend.

12. In history, standards are below expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and well below national averages at GCSE. Coursework inspected shows only a minority of pupils are working at standards in line with national expectations. The work of the few students in the sixth form is also below average.

13. Information and communication technology standards are difficult to pin down at the end of Key Stage 3, as there is no formal way of assessing pupils and too few subjects or teachers foster the use of computers by pupils in lessons. However, many pupils seem competent in some aspects of national expectations, for example databases. GCSE results in 1999 were below but close to national averages, so many pupils must make significant progress between Year 9 and Year 11. The work of students taking Advanced level information and communication technology or using computers to support vocational subjects is of an appropriate standard.

14. In modern foreign languages, pupils' standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations. The picture at GCSE is complex. In full GCSE courses standards in 1999 were above national averages in German and well above in French whereas they were well below average in the short GCSE courses for both languages. Standards at Advanced level, for the small number of students involved, are in line with national averages and inspection evidence indicates them to be currently better in German than in French.

15. Pupils' standards in music are well below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and below at Key Stage 4.

16. In physical education the standards of pupils' work is above average at the end of Key Stage 3 and was in line with national averages in the 1999 GCSE examinations. Inspection of written work shows this standard to be improving. Standards of National Curriculum physical education at Key Stage 4 could not be assessed as Year 10 and Year 11 pupils were out of school.

17. Standards of attainment in religious education are below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 because the full requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are not met. Standards are also well below average at GCSE, in the short course.

Literacy

18. Levels of literacy across the school are below average. Many pupils do not read for pleasure and standards of reading aloud are often low. Pupils' writing is generally well presented, but frequently shows a limited range of language and expression. A school literacy policy is in place, headed by a recently appointed co-ordinator. Staff awareness of literacy issues has increased and some in-service training has taken place. Weaker readers are well-supported in science and art lessons. Good reading practice occurs in history and geography. Opportunities for raising pupils' reading and writing levels are not generally evident in mathematics, design and technology or physical education. The science, history and art departments make good use of writing frames to support lower-attaining pupils'

writing. Pupils enjoy a variety of writing in history and art, but writing tasks are limited in science, mathematics and geography. All departments have key words on display and in art these are linked to units of work.

Numeracy

19. The national numeracy strategy is having a positive effect on departmental planning and on the delivery of some lessons. A numeracy co-ordinator was appointed on 1st May 2000 and the structure of a numeracy policy is in place to be confirmed by governors.

20. The pupils' level of competence in numerical and graphical skills across the curriculum is variable. In science, for example, teachers make a positive impact on pupils' numeracy skills, ensuring that they are understood and not simply relying on the assumption that they are known. In design and technology pupils measure liquids accurately, use research to generate line, pie and bar charts on the computer and cost out the ingredients for recipes. In physical education, pupils work out mentally how much time is lost over a number of hurdles if a runner takes an extra half second over each, and how much is lost if relay runners lose 2 seconds exchanging the baton. By contrast, in geography the opportunity for developing skills is lost when pupils copy, rather than construct, graph work.

Special educational needs

21. The school's provision for special educational needs has significantly improved since the last inspection and is now good. The standard and quality of teaching is good overall, and the strongly led department benefits from the high level of commitment from learning support assistants. Consequently, pupils with special needs make good progress. The success of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs lies in the management of both its inclusion and withdrawal systems, and its monitoring and assessment procedures.

22. The standards of achievement by the pupils with learning difficulties are good overall. Although no pupils are disapplied from the curriculum, a quarter of all those on roll are identified under the Code of Practice as having a wide range of special educational needs. From a low baseline on admission, pupils make good gains in their overall literacy and numeracy skills. At the end of Key Stage 3, their work shows improved handwriting skills and confidence in developing from single word tests to sentence construction, and this demonstrates increased levels of reading comprehension. The teachers' and support assistants' records show progressive improvements in reading and spelling skills, sometimes with considerable success, which leads to some pupils being moved to higher ability class settings. Extra tuition for those pupils with hearing impairment is provided on a weekly basis through local authority services, and regular input from speech therapists supports the pupils with verbal communication difficulties, which consolidates their learning, while promoting their self-confidence.

23. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 4 because of the absence of the pupils on examination leave and work experience placements. However, an analysis of their work shows that all pupils with special educational needs follow either the NEAB General Certificate of Education or the Certificate of Achievement syllabi in appropriately selected subjects. An examination of their coursework assignments shows that the majority of pupils complete their work within the set deadlines. Withdrawal tuition is given to the pupils with special needs, which assists them with their reading and comprehension skills, as well as supporting improvement in their written and spelling abilities through practice in handwriting skills. Developing styles show joined and well-formed letters, with improved independent

sentence construction and the volume of work increases. There is some evidence of independent writing, with improved fluency and spelling, and the overall quality of pupils' presentation skills reflects their desire to do well.

24. A number of the pupils with special educational needs continue their education into the sixth form and make good gains in coursework leading to General National Vocational Qualifications in Leisure and Tourism. Some pupils express the hope of going to university.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

25. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are all good. These factors all make a significant contribution to the good quality of pupils' learning and the positive ethos of the school. Pupils' attitudes and relationships have improved considerably since the last inspection and the school has maintained high standards of behaviour and personal development.

26. Pupils' attitudes to the school are mainly good. They value their education and regard 'the right to learn' as being the most important principle in the code of conduct. They co-operate well with teachers and mostly show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in their work. They apply themselves effectively to tasks. They listen well and follow instructions in lessons carefully. They show good levels of concentration and take pride in their achievements. Pupils are keen to answer questions in class and participate fully in their lessons. Many good examples of this were seen during the inspection. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson with a school survey theme, pupils interviewed each other very keenly. They put forward many useful ideas to support the lesson and get the most out of it.

27. Behaviour of almost all pupils is good. This makes a considerable contribution to their progress in lessons. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils behave sensibly in classrooms, and in and around the school. Behaviour at break and lunch times is also good. However, there is a small number of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory at times and who need a higher level of supervision. Bullying is a concern for some pupils, who say that this is an issue. When it occurs, the school has good procedures in place that address it immediately. Pupils are courteous and show respect for staff and visiting adults. The school takes a very strong line over any disrespect or bad language towards adults.

28. Clear expectations of behaviour by most teachers and the well-developed code of conduct give pupils a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They are fully aware of the system of rewards and sanctions and believe them to be fair. However, problems sometimes occur because of inconsistent messages from some teachers, for example, by supply teachers new to the school.

29. The incidence of temporary exclusion at this school is high in comparison with national averages. This was also the case at the last inspection. Since then, the school has fully reviewed its policy on exclusions. Inspectors are satisfied that exclusion is used as a last resort when all else fails. Four pupils were excluded permanently in the last academic year. Records show that all exclusions were for extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

30. The pupils at this school are trustworthy and care for property. They respect their own property and that of others. They show respect for school buildings and share equipment and learning resources sensibly.

31. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils develop good levels of independence in learning as they progress through the school. For example, they use reference books and information and communication technology well in library lessons for specific research tasks. Very good examples of pupils using initiative were seen in physical education lessons. For example, Year 7 pupils' planning resulted in very good and complicated sequences of movements in a gymnastics lesson. Also, many older pupils are successful in achieving leadership skills awards on offer in physical education.

32. Pupils support many charities and good causes. Recently, pupils raised a lot of money for hospital equipment. Clearly, pupils care for their community and make valuable contributions to it.

33. The school offers a few good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and they accept it very well. Pupils are keen to put themselves forward for particular duties in classes. Year 8 pupils respond very well to a full day of helping with office and reception duties under supervision. A system of prefects operates, but only includes older pupils. The school needs to provide more responsibilities for pupils across the year groups. A school forum operates in the sixth form only. The school should consider developing a whole school forum, where more year groups can be represented.

34. Relationships are good. Pupils work together in pairs and small groups effectively. They respect and value each other's contributions in lessons. For example, in advanced business studies, Year 11 pupils worked together well in planning the next stage of a video they were making of the local tourism industry.

35. Attendance is poor. It is well below the national average. This significantly affects the continuity of learning for many pupils. Many new pupils join the school at different times of the year from outside the local education authority's catchment area and this can also adversely affect the progress pupils can make. Only Year 7 consistently achieves 90 per cent or over in attendance, with all other year groups falling between 80 per cent and 90 per cent. Attendance was a key issue at the last inspection. The school does all it can to improve attendance but there are a number of pupils who are unreceptive to these efforts. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance in collaboration with outside agencies and parents, but it remains an issue. Punctuality is satisfactory.

36. Class teachers are not always rigorous in ensuring the regular attendance of those pupils time-tabled for specific behaviour sessions. Furthermore, the poor record of attendance by a number of pupils impacts on overall progress at both key stages and on the coursework assignments at Key Stage 4. This impedes the overall achievement of a minority of special needs pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

37. A total of 143 lessons were observed, of which 118 were in Key Stage 3 and 25 in the sixth form. No classroom teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 as Year 10 pupils were on work experience and Year 11 on study leave. Opportunities to see students in Year 13 were also reduced because of examinations.

38. Of the teaching seen in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, 92 per cent of lessons were

satisfactory or better. 28 per cent was very good or better and 8 per cent was unsatisfactory. There is a higher proportion of good or better teaching in the sixth form than there is in Key Stage 3 and most of the unsatisfactory teaching is found in Key Stage 3. The overall quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good.

39. In Key Stage 4, written work from all years was available and inspected. Assessment and examination data were analysed carefully. Teachers were interviewed. The sample of work inspected reflects good teaching. The overall quality of the teaching across the school is good. The quality of learning matches teaching very closely in each key stage. Since the last inspection, and in particular since the arrival of the new head teacher, the school has monitored teaching closely and shared examples of good practice. This has resulted in overall improvement in the quality of the teaching.

40. The 9 per cent of unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 3 are scattered across many subjects. These include history, art, dance and science. Significant proportions of unsatisfactory teaching are also found in Key Stage 3 music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is poor in music. The major weakness is lack of classroom control and consequently pupils are not behaving well enough to be able to learn. In modern foreign languages teaching is unsatisfactory. The limited opportunities to use and practise the language, lengthy teacher led sessions and a lack of planning to meet the needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment all lead to a slow pace and unsatisfactory learning. In other subjects unsatisfactory teaching and learning is often linked to teachers who have difficulty in establishing good classroom discipline. These teachers are sometimes temporary staff covering for absence.

41. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, physical education and special educational needs in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 3, teaching is also good in design and technology, information and communication technology, geography, history, religious education, and personal and social education and it is satisfactory in art. In Key Stage 4, teaching is good in art and business studies. It is satisfactory in design and technology, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography and religious education. Good teaching in Key Stage 4 is characterised by good planning and appropriate work set for pupils. Continuity and progression is evident and teachers give suitable homework. Teaching remains unsatisfactory in music in Key Stage 4.

42. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in geography, business studies and vocational education - leisure and tourism. It is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology, art, physical education and special educational needs. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects. Good teaching in the sixth form is characterised by teachers' good subject knowledge and the high expectations they have of students.

43. Very good or better lessons were observed in most subjects. A good proportion of high quality lessons are found in English, mathematics and science, in geography and leisure and tourism in the sixth form and in physical education. In these lessons a positive working atmosphere is established. Relationships are friendly but firm and expectations of pupils are very high. Teachers use a very good range of approaches to ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment are challenged and make progress.

44. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good overall. Strong subject knowledge, combined with a good understanding of suitable teaching styles, results in good rates of learning in most subjects. It is especially good in geography, leisure and tourism and business studies in the sixth form, in information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 and in physical education throughout the school. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is particularly effective in personal and social education lessons. These lessons are taught by a group of teachers committed to the subject and who have received specific training. Consequently, pupils have plenty of opportunities to work collaboratively and to learn from their own experiences and lessons are handled sensitively.

45. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. Literacy is taught satisfactorily in most subjects. Many subjects identify key words and use frameworks to help pupils to write at length and for different purposes. However, good practice is not yet consistent across subjects and there is some inappropriate use of writing guidance for higher attaining pupils, who can cope very well without them. The teaching of numeracy is not yet well planned although there are good examples of teachers taking the opportunity to improve pupils' understanding of number. For example, in a science class, where liquid volume was talked about but was not the main thrust of the lesson. Although information and communication technology skills are taught well in information and communication technology lessons, they are not taught consistently well across all subjects. There is no planned programme for teaching information and communication technology directly or by application in either Years 8 or 9 and pupils' attainment in it is not monitored.

46. Teachers' planning is good overall. Teachers identify clear learning targets and in most lessons ensure that pupils know what these are. They plan a good range of suitable activities and ensure that the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment are met. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In some lessons, in modern foreign languages and art especially, planning does not always take account of the wide range of ability of pupils in a class and consequently some pupils are not challenged and the pace of their learning slows down. Planning is unsatisfactory in music and modern foreign languages.

47. Teachers' expectations of their pupils are good overall, but just satisfactory in Key Stage 3 because in English and science they are only satisfactory. They are very high in physical education, vocational education, business education, personal and social education and in Key Stage 3 geography. For example in a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils were expected to prepare and present arguments in order to debate whether traditional farming is preferable to modern farming. The task involved pupils in research, writing, discussion and debating skills. The pupils rose to the challenge and consequently learnt a great deal and improved their confidence in speaking and listening. Teachers' expectations of pupils are too low in music and religious education in Key Stage 4.

48. Teachers generally use a good range of effective teaching methods. This is an aspect of teaching that has improved since the last inspection and has benefited from the efforts the school has made to share good practice. There is a good emphasis on investigation in science and a good variety of approaches are used in mathematics. Consequently pupils' interest is maintained and they are continually challenged. Good teaching in GNVQ subjects promotes pupils' research skills and independent study skills. Pupils enjoy the challenge of the activities and are successful. Consequently, many students move from intermediate courses to advanced level. In some lessons, teaching tends to be unexciting and led predominantly by the teacher. In these lessons pupils do not have the opportunity to work independently or take initiatives in their learning. Teaching approaches in Key Stage 3 modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory, because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise speaking the language. Teaching

methods in music are inappropriate.

49. The management of pupils is good overall. In some subjects teachers have very high standards of discipline, based on positive relationships and high expectations of behaviour. In these lessons pupils behave well, enjoy the lessons and want to learn. In a number of lessons teachers do not use effective means to organise the class and control the pupils' behaviour. Discipline breaks down and consequently very little learning can take place. This is sometimes linked with temporary supply teaching, but not in all cases.

50. Teachers use support staff very effectively in most lessons. Education support assistants know the pupils very well. Generally teachers work very closely with support staff to plan suitable tasks and resources to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are helped to learn.

51. The quality and use of on-going assessment and marking is unsatisfactory overall, but especially in Key Stage 3. Parents commented on this and inspectors agree that marking is inconsistent across many, but not all, subjects. Marks do not always give pupils a clear idea of how they are doing and pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to improve. There are examples of good practice in geography and mathematics. Marking is better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where examination requirements and clear criteria help teachers mark to agreed standards.

52. The use of homework is satisfactory overall but is unsatisfactory in many subjects in Key Stage 3. The exception to this is English, where teachers make very good use of homework to extend and challenge pupils. In other subjects homework is not given consistently and tasks do not develop learning sufficiently. Parents also would like to see better use of homework.

53. Satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3 and good teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form leads to the majority of pupils appropriately acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. They are enabled to reach standards similar to most schools of this type. Most pupils make sufficient effort in lessons and maintain a satisfactory pace of working. The greatest weakness in learning is where pupils are not aware of how well they are doing, because their work is inadequately marked. In a small number of lessons pupils do not learn well because the teachers do not maintain a satisfactory standard of discipline.

Special educational needs

54. In special needs withdrawal sessions and lesson observations at Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is good overall, as is the standard of support given by special needs assistants. Good pupil management and classroom organisation allows the pupils to work in small groups or receive one to one support in reading and spelling. Their literacy and numeracy skills are further enhanced through well planned withdrawal sessions for computerised English and mathematics programmes, which allow the pupils to evaluate what they have learned while promoting their awareness of their own learning. Independent learning is also encouraged through the pupils' use of computers, as they organise their own work, complete their tasks and print out their results.

55. At Key Stage 3, the use of the pupils' individual education plans ensures that in-class support is effective in promoting continuing achievement. In mathematics for example, there is evidence in the pupils' work that they make good progress over time in basic number work and they develop the ability to recognise and calculate units of weight accurately. The pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into English, where good support ensures good progress in reading, writing and comprehension skills.

Individual needs are well catered for in modern languages through effective role play sessions, and in science, where the pupils show a good understanding of scientific concepts appropriate to their ability range. In lessons in information and communication technology, Year 7 pupils with special educational needs demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles of word processing and databases, and there is evidence in their work of steady progress in basic computer skills. There is very good work by the teachers of design technology and pupils with special needs have a good knowledge of conduction in metals and insulation materials. They make very good progress in art, producing some very good ceramics work. However, in history, when the teaching is less than satisfactory and no in-class support is given, pupils' with special needs fail to make sufficient progress.

56. The staff have high but realistic expectations and this is reflected in the good response and attitudes which the pupils with special needs show towards their learning. In withdrawal sessions and where in-class support is given, and where lesson planning is based on the pupils' individual education plans, lesson content is well matched to the pupils' abilities. This impacts on the quality of learning, which is mostly good and sometimes very good. Staff have a good knowledge of their pupils' needs. However, individual education plans are not always used as working documents by classroom teachers and there is confusion in some subject areas as to the exact role of the special educational needs department and the deployment of classroom assistants. This is particularly so in the case of the recently appointed teachers who have withdrawal responsibility for those pupils with emotional and behaviour problems.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

57. The school provides a mainly broad and balanced curriculum, but there are a number of weaknesses. Statutory requirements are being met in all subjects, with the exception of religious education at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. At all stages pupils have the opportunity to study two modern languages. At Key Stage 4 there is a range of courses leading to GCSE or National Certificate of Achievement but the provision for vocational courses is limited. The weekly teaching time of 25 hours in Key Stages 3 and 4 meets Department for Education and Employment recommendations. Registration, tutor time and assemblies are organised as part of the pastoral system. The curriculum provides an appropriate range of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs.

58. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum builds on good links with primary schools. It is planned effectively in most subjects to ensure pupils' learning continues smoothly from one stage to the next. Sex and health education are taught in accordance with local education authority guidelines and approved by the governing body. The two week timetable is organised so that pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum. French and German alternate as the first modern foreign language and all pupils have the opportunity to study both languages from Year 8. Policies for literacy and numeracy are being developed and all departments are developing a range of strategies to link with these. The history department, for example, is already incorporating ways of strengthening pupils' literacy into its teaching strategies.

59. At Key Stage 4, pupils are provided with a broad core curriculum. The school does not at present offer many vocational subjects and this restricts opportunities for those that might be better suited to those courses. There is a careers programme organised within the pastoral system in Key Stage 4 which builds on advice given for choosing options in Key Stage 3 and all pupils receive their entitlement for work experience in Year 10. They also

have the opportunity to take part in mock interviews in conjunction with the careers service and local businesses.

60. In all key stages there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in their everyday work in lessons although the school has plans in place to rectify this.

61. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in all stages. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and they receive good support within lessons to enable them to make good progress.

62. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall. There is a very good programme of study in Key Stages 3 and 4 which covers relationships, health, drugs and sex education, and career choices. The quality of teaching in this programme is very good and activities are well matched to the topics being taught; for example, good use is made of a virtual baby which pupils take home for a night to experience being kept awake by a crying child. Many sessions are conducted by outside speakers such as the school nurse, representatives from the Lancashire Constabulary, the Youth and Community Service, and Health Promotion.

63. Tutorial periods also support the social development of pupils as part of an overall system for monitoring pupils' progress and welfare, but there is some inconsistency in the delivery of this support. An academic monitoring programme has begun in Year 7 that develops the role of the form tutor in pupils' personal development.

64. In the sixth form, students are offered a range of courses leading to A level as well as vocational courses leading to intermediate and advanced GNVQ accreditation. There are opportunities for one-to-one interviews when personal or social problems occur and the GNVQ students have a strong social development element in their courses. However there is no provision for religious education, physical education, or personal and social education for all students. The previous inspection report recommended that a personal and social education programme be introduced. Also, within the sixth form there are no formal opportunities for work experience and careers guidance is too ad hoc. From the examination courses they choose, for example business studies, about 70 per cent of students develop appropriate information and communication technology skills, but there is as yet no 'core' programme for all students.

65. A good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, enriches the curriculum. The school has recently been awarded a Sportsmark which reflects good overall provision and outstanding extra curricular provision and includes activities such as aerobics, choreography and dance, as well as team games. All of these are very popular with both girls and boys. The physical education department also maintains good links with local sporting clubs. Trips to France and Germany as well as 'Euroweek', enrich the modern languages curriculum.

66. Links with the local community are satisfactory and include links with the police, army and local industries, some of whom also provide opportunities for pupils' work experience. Pupils also benefit from links with the careers service and local colleges. They host dance workshops and summer play schemes in conjunction with the local county

council. Liaison with a local employer has enabled the school to provide new sporting facilities.

67. The school functions well as an orderly community, in which pupils relate positively to each other and to their teachers. The school promotes pupils' understanding of moral and social values through its code of conduct and pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Cultural provision is unsatisfactory; multi-cultural and spiritual dimensions are not well developed.

68. The school's lack of large community areas limits the number of daily year group assemblies. Behaviour in assemblies is very good and members of staff speak on a variety of moral themes. These are picked up and reinforced in the daily life of the school. However, since a regular act of collective worship does not occur outside assemblies the school does not meet statutory requirements and in this respect there has been insufficient progress since the last inspection.

69. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The religious education area of the curriculum plays a major role in developing this through display and especially in Key Stage 4, where pupils following the GCSE course explore major issues. Assemblies explore the spiritual dimension and God's laws for mankind. Planning, however, for this in other areas of the curriculum is limited.

70. Provision for pupils' moral development is good and the moral climate of the school encourages pupils to distinguish right from wrong. The school rules and code of conduct create the framework in which pupils are encouraged to consider their relationships with others and the effects of their actions. Moral and ethical themes are explored in religious education in Key Stage 4 and in modern languages in the sixth form. In history, Year 9 pupils consider the value of human life in the past and present, for example when studying rationing in the health service, prohibition in the USA and in their study of the Holocaust. In religious education pupils study the teachings of Jesus and Islamic laws are also covered well. In design and technology pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are encouraged to see the consequences of their work, including environmental and social effects. In geography, Year 7 take part in debate about different farming practices and in Year 11 they debate the impact of the tourist industry. In physical education teachers are very good role models and there is a strong emphasis on fair play and rules in lessons.

71. Provision for pupils' social development is good and is supported by opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in pairs and in small groups for example in art, in team games in physical education, project work in history and group work in geography. In the sixth form in design and technology, students work together to tackle problem solving activities, for example, connected with visual impairment. In modern languages pupils are encouraged to write to pen friends and meet up with them on their visit to Germany. In music a small number of pupils take part in the choir and small groups of pupils help with constructing displays in religious education. The school has recently set up the opportunity for pupils from Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

72. Provision for cultural education, including the diversity of cultures in Britain, is unsatisfactory overall for most pupils. There are a number of strengths. Trips to France and Germany are taken by some pupils and European culture is explored during 'Euroweek'. In history, pupils attend re-enactments at Clitheroe Castle and visit museums. In religious education, very good displays and visits to local churches enable pupils to explore different religions. Pupils from Heysham High School also take part in the Morecambe Music

Festival, carol services and were involved in the 'Voices of Promise' Millennium competition. In design and technology, sixth form students visit museums and in Key Stage 4 pupils consider food and designs from other cultures. All pupils in Key Stage 3 study art from other cultures and these opportunities are further exploited during Key Stage 4. Some pupils studying the performing arts had the opportunity to spend a week working with an Indian dance company and some pupils from Years 9 and 10 worked with an African dance company preparing to perform for the Royal visit. Pupils have also been involved in 'Project Morecambe', presenting their town to foreign visitors. However, this aspect of pupils' development is limited to too few pupils, is insufficiently related to current issues and there has been insufficient progress in its development since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

73. The level and quality of support the school provides for pupils is sound overall. The educational and personal support and advice given to pupils is satisfactory, with some good features.

74. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into all activities and have equal access to the curriculum. They are well supported by staff and are provided with a good level of specialist support from outside agencies.

75. Arrangements to assess, record and monitor pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are regularly assessed in most subjects regarding their attainment, effort and performance in tests. A more rigorous and systematic approach is necessary by teachers to ensure that best use is made of this information. The school needs to ensure that data is better used to aid planning and modify teaching. The school has already devised a new model of monitoring that clarifies and extends the role of form tutors and heads of year. This should help address the present concerns. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that a few faculties either have a backlog of marking or could make better use of marking to tell pupils precisely how well they are doing. Parents also expressed some concern about inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking.

76. The school has good arrangements to monitor pupils' personal development. Staff know pupils well and good quality records regarding pupils' level of effort, attitudes and behaviour are used to advise and guide pupils in their personal development.

77. Arrangements for Child Protection are sound. The school follows the Local Education Authority's procedures fully. The designated officer is appropriately trained and effective in dealing with any issues. Monitoring arrangements are sound and staff are vigilant regarding any issues. Given the number of pupils on roll, the school agrees with inspectors that there ought to be more staff attending formal training courses in Child Protection.

78. The school has a satisfactory health and safety policy. However, the school is behind with its programme of risk assessment in several faculties. Accident and emergency procedures are effective in dealing with problems. Several staff are trained and qualified in administering first aid but probably too few for the size of school. Fire drills are carried out regularly and are appropriately recorded. The school works very closely with external agencies in raising awareness of health matters. The school nurse spends much time in school and this includes giving talks in personal, social and health education. The nurse also holds 'drop in' sessions where pupils can discuss their concerns. The community police officer is a frequent visitor and gives talks on a variety of topics including citizenship and

drugs education. Sex and drugs education is now better planned than at the time of the last inspection.

79. There are very good arrangements to monitor and promote attendance. Problems are identified at an early stage. There is a good partnership with educational welfare officers but current provision for support is only three days a week, inadequate for the size of school and for the ongoing attendance problem. Many informal opportunities are taken by staff to speak to parents and pupils about the importance of good attendance. Certificates are awarded to those pupils achieving high rates of attendance; there are also prizes to act as an incentive. The school has improved the good procedures found at the last inspection.

80. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. There is a good quality behaviour policy in place. Records of incidents of bad behaviour are effective in identifying negative patterns in individuals. The school uses this information well in monitoring and tracking progress. The school recently involved all pupils in identifying the standards of behaviour they want in school. Consequently, there is a sense of responsibility and ownership from pupils towards the codes of conduct eventually produced. Good use is made of a range of rewards and sanctions. Tutorials make a good contribution when the 'weekly focus' concerns behaviour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

81. Parents have mainly positive views of the school. However, replies to the inspection questionnaire were relatively few and hardly any parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. The questionnaire does indicate that parents are pleased with teaching, the high expectations of the school and school management. The questionnaire also indicates that parents feel that their children make good progress in their work and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The great majority of those replying said that their children like school and that there was a good level of extra-curricular activities offered. Evidence from the inspection shows that most of these views are firmly based.

82. A small number of parents replying to the inspection questionnaire were dissatisfied with the arrangements for homework, pupils' behaviour, information about children's progress and parental partnerships. Inspection findings did not support these views except for inconsistencies in the quality of homework and associated marking.

83. The quality of information to parents, especially about pupils' progress is good on the whole. As with parental involvement, there is a similar picture to that of the last inspection. All written information is user-friendly. Parents receive an excellent and informative prospectus telling them about the school, its policies and procedures. 'Termfile' is an excellent newsletter which keeps parents abreast of school issues, dates, events and developments in particular faculties. The English department produces a regular publication called 'Quest' and this contains a good contribution from pupils. However, the recent Governors' Annual Report omitted to provide details of the school's policy on special educational needs. Pupils' annual reports are of sound quality overall. They mostly provide parents with clear information about what their children know, can do and understand. There is a need for these reports to provide more precise details about how well pupils perform and to make more use of target setting – what pupils should be aspiring to do.

84. A strong feature of this school is the level of consultation it carries out. Parents are well consulted regarding school provisions. For example, recent questionnaires asked about: arrangements for parents' evenings, future subject choices and the introduction of

examinations for Year 7. A good example of the positive effect of this approach is evident in the recent marked rise in attendance at parents' evenings. Many parents make good use of student planners to monitor their children's attendance and homework. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are soundly involved with staff and specialists in developing and reviewing Individual Education Plans. The school has an active parents and teachers association and this supports the school well by organising social and fundraising events. A few parents involved in business support the school, for example, in sponsoring sports kits. A few give their time in accompanying pupils on school trips. Helpers are well briefed on their role.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the overall leadership and management within the school is good. Since his appointment almost two years ago the headteacher has established a clear direction for the school to move in, one of improvement on many fronts, including teaching, pupils' behaviour, management, resources, accommodation and pupils' attainment. All have been targetted and, where outcomes are fairly easy or quick to achieve, positive results are evident. The headteacher has also involved all staff in development planning through questionnaires and discussions. The school is increasing in popularity with parents and local residents are of the opinion that behaviour has improved. Examination and test data for last year do not show an improvement in pupils' attainment, but inspection evidence indicates that this is on the way. There is a commitment by teachers and managers to school improvement and a growing knowledge of how they might contribute to it. The capacity of the school to succeed is good.

86. The emphasis the school places on values pertaining to good relationships and equality of opportunity are satisfactory overall. Good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are fostered, but to some extent are still at the stage of being managed through sanctions and rules. Pupils do in general follow the centrepiece of the code of conduct 'Everyone has the right to learn'. Within classrooms, setting pupils by ability has some advantages and allows higher ability pupils to aspire to credible grades in examinations and pupils with special educational needs to get appropriate support. There is a raft of pupils that overlaps the two groups, where teachers' expectations are sometimes not high enough or where sufficient support is not made available. This was a criticism at the time of the last inspection and improvement has taken place through the emphasis on improving teaching that has been introduced by the headteacher. However, all pupils have still to benefit from better monitoring of their attainment. In the sixth form, the curriculum supports those students who need to provide themselves with an income during the school day, but does so by not providing a range of 'life skills' courses that would benefit all.

87. There is satisfactory delegation of management responsibilities. The senior management team is lean and cost effective and includes the head of the sixth form. Delegation of vocational course responsibilities within the sixth form has allowed that area to flourish and be successful. There are weaknesses. The faculty structure is not always successful and allows subjects within a faculty to work too independently, for example French and German, or does not take action to recover subjects with weaknesses effectively, for example music. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently recognised as a whole school management issue. The hardware and cabling is being dealt with effectively enough now, though progress has been slow, but the use of computers by teachers and pupils within subjects remains unsatisfactory from the time of the last inspection. The use of information and communication technology for school management is now better.

88. The governing body has not moved the school forward sufficiently since the time of the last inspection and statutory requirements for areas of the curriculum not met then, religious education and information and communication technology, are still not met. Some aspects of the annual report to parents, for example, provision for pupils with special educational needs, are not properly reported. The statutory requirement for risk assessments of the schools' work has not been identified or acted upon. Consequently, the effectiveness of the governing body is unsatisfactory. The governing body does not act as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher. Parent governors are concerned about the school and meet, as frequently as they are required to do, to discuss issues and elected teacher governors also play their full part. Local education authority appointed governors are more variable in their commitment and the governor with responsibility for special educational needs, for example, has had little contact with the school in recent months.

89. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good. Teachers are observed both by the head teacher and their heads of faculty. Detailed observation reports are compiled, indicating strengths and shortcomings of the lesson. These reports form the basis for discussion between a teacher and head of department to identify areas for improvement. Although no formal written targets emerge, general whole school teaching issues are identified and addressed through appropriate training day provision, which includes both follow-up planning time and classroom application. The effectiveness of this recent approach is yet to be evaluated in terms of raising pupils' standards of work. 'Best Practice' and exemplar guides to good teaching have also been produced to support teachers as a result of lesson observations. These have improved teaching practice. However, though instances of weak teaching came as no surprise to the school during the inspection, actions to recover it have not been rigorous enough.

90. The departmental self-evaluation and monitoring process, which also includes lesson observation and discussion, is in place and already fulfils many of the requirements of appraisal. Individual target setting for teachers in relation to improving professional practice and pupil progress is not yet in place. However, the current system provides a good foundation for the development of performance management.

91. Learning support assistants do good work in the school, but are more effective with some teachers than with others and the responsibility of the teacher to manage and direct the work of the assistant effectively needs a sharper focus.

92. The school has systems for the induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers who are new to the school, but mentoring arrangements are unsatisfactory. Newly qualified teachers receive insufficient support after the initial first few weeks. Otherwise, the good standard of behaviour by pupils, good management by many subject heads and general commitment to the concept of teacher performance management suggest Heysham has the potential to train new teachers.

93. The school is making increasing use of data about pupils' attainment on entry, for example Key Stage 2 test results. There is a substantial proportion of pupils who join the school later in Year 7 or in other years and attainment data about them is often not available. To the school's credit, any pupil leaving Heysham is followed by useful information for the next school within two weeks. Key Stage 3 test results are also being considered more closely. However, within subject areas there is still a tendency to compare results within Heysham to see if they are good or acceptable rather than comparing them with national standards. Priorities and targets for improvement are appropriate and realistic for the whole school and predicted improvements in such things as pupils' GCSE results should at least be met this year. Subject targets need sharpening and to be more closely

related to expectations of individual pupils, based on national testing and school testing.

94. The school makes good use of its financial resources, including specific grants. Educational priorities are budgeted for and the extent to which the principles of best value are applied is also good. An example of this in practice is the careful way the site and buildings are being evaluated and actions to improve them being weighed against evidence from two sources. Governor concern about potential 'clawback' of money due to past unpredictable changes in the school population did allow a substantial contingency fund to build up in the school accounts against a background of inadequate resources and accommodation. A significant part of this fund has now been appropriately allocated for expenditure. Available funds should be spent on the pupils who attract them and, as the school is now more popular, the perceived need for a large contingency fund should be less.

95. The school's staffing is good. There is an appropriate match of staff expertise and number to support the needs of the curriculum. Provision for special educational needs is now managed by a newly appointed co-ordinator and learning support assistants are now under direct school management.

96. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory, although there are good areas. The newly completed humanities block, design technology areas and the newly refurbished sports centre provide bright, attractive environments that support learning. Other areas, in particular those used for English, maths and science, provide poor learning environments. The fabric of the buildings, particularly the north block, is in some places in a poor state of repair and presents possible hazards for pupils, for example, the leaking roof in the sports hall results in a slippery floor at times. The school has a planned refurbishment programme that should remedy some of these shortcomings and will provide the additional laboratory space required in science. The school playing fields suffer from flooding and there are plans to improve the drainage this summer

97. The provision of resources across the school is satisfactory. There has been increased spending on resources used within the classroom and all departments have sufficient text books. The kiln and the pug machine, both used in art, are no longer adequate and there is a need for increased resources for personal and social education. Resources for careers are poor and the careers' library is not freely accessible to pupils. The library has been improved since the last inspection, but it is not yet a vibrant learning resource centre for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. To raise the standards of pupils' attainment, improve the quality of their learning and teaching and generally improve pupils' experiences of school the governors should:

- (1) Raise the standards of pupils' work at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
 - Taking appropriate actions to further reduce the relatively small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
 - Further developing the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
 - Improving all aspects of music education.
 - Improving the quality of teachers' marking.
 - Pursuing plans to improve academic monitoring of pupils' progress by form teachers.
 - Setting pupils clear targets for improvement and supporting their work towards them.
 - Making better provision in the library for private study and research.(Paragraphs: 1, 3, 15, 35, 40, 49, 51, 53, 75, 83, 86, 93, 99, 113, 123, 125, 141, 147, 148, 159, 162, 184, 185, 188, 191)
- (2) Raise the information and communication technology capabilities of pupils and teachers by:
 - Ensuring New Opportunities Funded training for teachers is pursued effectively and relatively quickly.
 - Taking steps to ensure the programmes of study for information and communication technology are fully and appropriately covered at Key Stage 3.
 - Adopting a system to allow the attainment of pupils in information and communication technology to be monitored at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
 - Improving equipment and software appropriately within subject areas.
 - Ensuring Internet and e-mail access continues to improve and is developed along the lines the National Grid for Learning initiative intended.
 - Adopting a core skills course in the sixth form that has information and communication technology as a focus for all students.(Paragraphs: 13, 45, 60, 87, 131, 138, 141, 158, 162, 166, 172, 174)
- (3) Improve the attendance of pupils by:
 - Utilising strategies already adopted to greater effect.
 - Improving the current unsatisfactory provision made for an Education Welfare Officer.
 - Investigating and instigating other strategies in use elsewhere.(Paragraphs: 35, 36, 79, 123)
- (4) Improve provision for students in the sixth form by Introducing personal and social education, elements of life skills, structured work experiences, opportunities for physical education and statutory elements of religious education.
(Paragraphs: 64, 86)

- (5) Improving the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
- Ensuring religious education meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3.
 - Evaluating the appropriateness of short GCSE courses taken by pupils.
 - Re-considering how drama may be best placed within the curriculum.
- (Paragraphs: 17, 57, 112, 200)
- (6) Improve pupils' cultural development by developing opportunities for pupils to appreciate and learn about local, regional and national culture in lessons and through extra-curricular activities.
- (Paragraph: 72)

In addition to the issues above the Governors and school may wish to address the following weaknesses in their action plan

- Improving the health and safety of pupils and staff by: increasing the number of staff trained in child protection measures and qualified to provide first aid; ensuring risk assessments are regularly carried out on the site and within subject areas, including assessments of the tasks pupils are required to do.
(Paragraphs: 78, 197)
- Improving accommodation and furnishings.
(Paragraphs: 108, 134, 197)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	145
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	33	57	35	9	2	1

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1125	137
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	348	26

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	86	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	221	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	88
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	148

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	14.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.013
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	99	107	206

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	46	41
	Girls	57	51	40
	Total	88	97	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (63)	48 (51)	40 (55)
	National	64 (64)	62 (60)	54 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (34)	20 (27)	10 (25)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	52	58
	Girls	55	58	70
	Total	89	110	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (53)	53 (58)	62 (54)
	National	56 (54)	62 (61)	58 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (33)	23 (42)	29 (22)
	National	24 (24)	36 (35)	28 (30)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	82	94	176

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	24	71	75
	Girls	33	75	82
	Total	57	146	157
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	32 (32)	8.2 (79)	89 (86)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	93.9 (93.4)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30 (28)
	National	38 (37)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	18	14	32

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.3	17.4	14.7 (14.2)	5.5	6.0	5.7 (4.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	N/A	N/A	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	22	91
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	1260
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	140	4
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	473

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y13

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	21.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3 098 361
Total expenditure	3 048 404
Expenditure per pupil	2 416
Balance brought forward from previous year	179 094
Balance carried forward to next year	229 051

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1100
Number of questionnaires returned	104

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	55	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	52	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	54	18	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	49	16	11	0
The teaching is good.	33	63	3	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	47	15	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	36	7	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	52	16	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	35	58	4	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	51	7	4	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	50	6	1	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

99. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, as measured by National Curriculum tests in 1999, is well below the national average and also below that of pupils in similar schools. Attainment on entry to the school was also well below average. Pupils' attainment in English is poorer than that in mathematics and science. Results over the last four years have declined slightly against the national trend.

100. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the national average, as measured by GCSE results for English language in 1999, but close to the national average in GCSE results for English literature. Results at the school for English and English literature compared with those for other subjects are better.

101. Attainment in the sixth form is below national averages, as measured by GCE A-level results for 1999 in English literature and combined English language and literature.

102. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to express themselves effectively in class and group discussions and higher ability pupils make extended contributions. Pupils with special educational needs are able to participate successfully in reading aloud and performance activities. All pupils read and understand a wide range of non-fictional and literary writing, including works from previous centuries, such as 'Beowulf'. They understand some of the basic techniques used in advertising, broadcasting and newspapers and discuss these media confidently, as shown when groups of Year 9 pupils analysed television news bulletins. Pupils' written work shows a sense of purpose and is well presented. All but that of the lowest-attaining pupils is generally accurate. Middle ability pupils are also aware of form, for example, Year 9 pupils wrote poems using the same 'recipe' structure as that of a poem they had read. Pupils become competent in using basic word-processing skills to process their writing, for example Year 8 pupils prepared advertising copy for a holiday resort. However, work often shows a limited range of expression and many pupils do not write easily at length when time is restricted, as it is, for example, in examinations.

103. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils of all attainment levels are more confident in sustained writing tasks. Their imaginative work is well-planned and often entertaining, as seen in Year 11 pupils' science fiction stories. Many higher-attaining pupils write original and skilfully controlled pieces. However, the work of many lower-attaining pupils often lacks accuracy and remains uncertain in structure. All pupils make effective use of drafting and re-drafting to improve the quality of their writing. They are able to read complex and demanding literature and respond to it sensitively, as seen when Y11 pupils wrote as the character of Mr. Birling from J. B. Priestley's play, 'An Inspector Calls'. Pupils understand some of the ways in which writers build character and atmosphere, although only the highest attaining are able successfully to evaluate different writers' techniques when comparing stories or poems.

104. By the end of their time in the sixth form, students are relaxed in class discussion. They have good basic knowledge of set texts and understand many of the poetic devices which writers employ. Essays on modern poetry are analytical and often perceptive, but work on Shakespeare is less secure, as seen in some of the responses to questions on Hamlet's madness, which revealed sound knowledge of character but skated over deeper issues. Background reading notes, for example on Thomas Hardy's, 'The Return of the

Native', are thorough and well organised. Essays are usually focused and soundly argued, but the range of language and expression is often limited.

105. Teaching and learning are good at all stages. In seven out of ten lessons teaching is good or better. In around one lesson in six it is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Classroom management is very good. Teachers have positive and friendly relationships with pupils, who are encouraged to give of their best in lessons. Higher-attaining pupils are given some opportunities to take responsibility in group work and paired work and they respond well by steering others in the right direction and by supporting lower-attaining colleagues. Homework is given a high priority and pupils generally complete tasks well. Lessons often have a brisk pace and include a good range of activities, including frequent oral work. Lesson materials such as worksheets and reading matter are thoughtfully chosen to engage the interest of all pupils, although there are examples of writing frames being used inappropriately for higher-attaining pupils, whose writing would benefit from a more flexible approach. Information and communication technology is used by all pupils as part of the Key Stage 3 schemes of work. In some lessons, pupils lack opportunities to evaluate and report back on group activities in order to consolidate their work. In other lessons, teachers miss valuable opportunities to record pupils' progress in reading or in speaking and listening. In the best lessons, learning support assistants plan their strategies with the class teacher and make a valuable contribution to special educational needs pupils' progress. In less successful lessons they seem unclear about their role.

106. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are invariably good. They are attentive to instructions, behave well and are keen to join in class activities. Pupils are often enthusiastic about their work, as seen, for example, in much of their original writing. Only occasionally, and usually amongst lower-attaining pupils, is work not completed. Most pupils make good use of their homework planners. They collaborate effectively in group activities and support each other well. Pupils are generally sensitive to the feelings of others when they work with those having different attainment levels from their own.

107. The department is well led and staff share a common educational vision which reflects school policies. There is good delegation of responsibilities and meetings are held regularly. Teachers are well qualified and make good use of opportunities for further training. Teaching is well monitored across the department and there is increased sharing of good practice.

108. The curriculum meets statutory National Curriculum requirements. However, schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are not clearly structured to guarantee balance, continuity and progression in each year's teaching. Links with National Curriculum programmes of study are not explicit. Information and communication technology units of work do not yet include pupils accessing the Internet. There is a full programme of extra-curricular activities, including regular theatre visits. Resources are generally satisfactory but, despite good displays of pupils' work, rooms are shabby, inadequately heated and suffer leaks through the flat roof. The poor quality of pupils' tables and chairs does not encourage high standards of work.

109. The department has made good progress in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection. More books from other cultures are studied and better use is made of information and communication technology. There is greater emphasis on media work and pupils write more frequently at length. The supply of books has improved. However, under-achievement is still evident, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Drama

110. Drama is taught to pupils in Key Stage 3 as part of the theatre arts programme. Attainment in these lessons is below national levels. Levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 were well below national averages, as measured by GCSE drama results reported in 1999, but Year 10 pupils who took drama GCSE in that year did better, though remaining below average. By the end of the sixth form, levels of attainment, as measured by GCE A Level results in theatre studies for 1999, are above national levels, though the number of students entered is small.

111. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are able to collaborate effectively in groups to produce improvised scenes on a given theme. They are familiar with some basic stage skills and understand aspects of making, performing and responding which underpin drama. Pupils demonstrate self-control in their own performance work. However, levels of achievement are variable and pupils' motivation and behaviour are sometimes poor. The numbers of pupils opting for drama in Year 10 are low for a school of this size. By the time they are sixteen pupils are able to plan and produce longer dramatic responses and they can evaluate scripted drama. At sixth form level, students acquire a range of performance skills, they explore dramatic texts and understand how these work on audiences and they are able to build and direct their own polished scenes.

112. Teaching is satisfactory. Resources are generally good. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities, including regular school productions. However, the low standards in drama that were noted at the last inspection are still evident below sixth form level. Drama receives only limited focus and time under the combined dance/drama curriculum. Pupils effectively take a drama GCSE after a little over two terms in Year 10 and this arrangement does not seem to be successful. The department has also recognised that the current syllabus offered allows pupils to fail too easily in the final examination, rather than taking more notice of work done throughout the year.

MATHEMATICS

113. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, was well below the national average for 1999. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, results were close to average. Over the years 1996 to 1999 the Key Stage 3 results have been below the national average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. There has been improvement over time but the rate of improvement has been below the national rate.

114. The standard of work of pupils aged between eleven and fourteen as seen during the inspection in mathematics was below national norms. By the age of 14, higher achieving pupils can solve quadratic equations by factors finding both solutions, use inverse notation, such as \cos^{-1} , with understanding, and can identify the error in an incorrect statement. They can state the n^{th} term of a sequence such as $1/3, 2/5, 3/7, 4/9, 5/11$, but make occasional mistakes when multiplying and dividing directed numbers. Pupils with average attainment, within the context of the school, can find the area of rectangles with rectangles cut out. They can also simplify linear expressions such as $2a + 3b + c + 4a + 6c + b$. Lower attaining pupils can recognise the size of numbers up to 1000, they know $2x, 3x, 4x, 5x, 10x$ tables. They can tell time using a digital clock as well as an ordinary one. They know what bar charts are and can draw them. They can plot co-ordinates in the first quadrant.

115. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were below the national average for pupils gaining grades A* to C and in line with the national average for those obtaining grades A* to G. Compared with similar schools; results for grades A* to C were above average and for A* to G were high. Improvement since the last inspection has seen the percentage of A* to C grades rise from 14 per cent to 37 per cent - a significant improvement, though national standards have also risen in that time.

116. The work of pupils at Key Stage 4 seen during the inspection was broadly in line with national average standards. Most higher attaining pupils in Year 11 produce good investigational work. One pupil, for example, investigating a problem concerning money received from different methods of giving showed the ability to identify arithmetical and geometric progressions. Books show good work on cumulative frequency, standard deviation, sine rule, cosine rule, and the solution of linear inequalities. Numerical skills are good, including the use and understanding of vulgar fractions. Lower attaining pupils can use a protractor to measure and draw angles 0 to 360 degrees to one degree of accuracy. They recognise vocabulary such as "acute, obtuse". They can also draw up a tally chart and find the mode of fifteen two digit numbers. They can use a calculator effectively for basic arithmetic, including problems involving money.

117. At sixth form level, both results at GCE Advanced Level and standards currently achieved are below national standards, reflecting the ability profile of the pupils accepted to study for the examination course. Those pupils who embark on the course with a grade B at GCSE obtained on a higher tier paper are able to rise to the appropriate level. Very few of those who have not attained this level at GCSE go on to success at A level.

118. In terms of the work seen during the inspection, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. In the sixth form progress is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment on entry is low compared with the national average for pupils aged eleven plus. By the time they take GCSE, they have made good gains.

119. The last inspection identified a number of issues and concerns. Since that inspection, the mathematics department has confronted the issues raised and made good progress towards resolving them

120. Teaching, overall, is good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Teachers know their subject, plan effectively and manage their pupils well in lessons, using a range of strategies. As a result, pupils learn new skills and show interest in their mathematics lessons. There is still room for improvement in terms of ensuring that the pupils know where they stand in relation to national standards and making sure that they know how to improve. Marking of pupils' work is insufficiently detailed.

121. Two excellent lessons were seen, each with a Year 9 class. In one, low attaining pupils learned how to make solid shapes from two-dimensional nets. The teacher, well supported by a qualified learning support assistant, knew exactly at what stage of learning each pupil was and targeted support very effectively to each, challenging them to do their best. In the other, average attaining pupils were made to think hard about an investigation related to the number of squares in a rectangle cut by a diagonal. In this lesson, too, the teacher had detailed records of the pupils' prior knowledge and performance so that he was able to pace the help and advice given extremely effectively. No time was wasted and the pupils were clearly enjoying facing up to the challenge. This contrasted with a satisfactory lesson in which a newly qualified teacher showed that he had planned thoughtfully to involve pupils in learning about pie charts but had underestimated how long each of the many activities he hoped to go through would take. The result was that time

was too short and learning less good because the activities had to be rushed through.

122. The teaching of skills in numeracy was satisfactory in all lessons seen and good in most. With regard to literacy, in the lessons seen the pupils were encouraged to use language carefully when speaking to the class or answering questions, and teachers were at pains, for the most part, to insist on rigorous use of vocabulary in both written and oral work. Steps have been taken to include explicit approaches to the teaching of literacy skills in the departmental schemes of work. Hence, a good start has been made in this respect. Information communication technology skills are built into the departmental programmes of work and well taught. The overall position with regard to teaching basic skills is therefore satisfactory.

123. In lessons the pupils respond well to good teaching. In all of the lessons seen behaviour and work produced were at least satisfactory. Relationships in the classroom both between the teachers and the pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are good. The quality of these relationships does much to contribute to the pupils' progress. Poor attendance, however, has a significant effect upon the quality of learning. It not only means that those who are absent are missing important lessons; it also adds to the burden of preparation and checking that falls upon teachers, taking up time and effort that could be better directed.

124. The head of department is an experienced and sensitive teacher who provides good leadership to a well qualified team. The focus of the department is upon raising standards. To further progress, the department will need to ensure that the monitoring and review procedures for teaching staff, particularly those who are recently qualified, are followed in line with the whole school policy. Formal procedures with written feedback after observed lessons will help to ensure that pupil performance continues to improve. Pupils should be more involved in their own learning and their sense of responsibility for it increased. The objectives need to be made explicit and clearly explained to the pupils in all lessons. The marking of pupils' work needs to be of the highest standard for all classes, not just some

SCIENCE

125. Pupils' performance in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average. There has been a decline in attainment in these tests compared with national averages since the last inspection. However pupils' performance in the tests last year was close to the average for similar schools. Within the context of the school, the science test results were in line with those achieved in mathematics and English. The standard of attainment in lessons seen was below national expectations. For example, in Year 9 investigation work most pupils were able to make predictions, but few based their predictions on scientific knowledge. In a Year 8 lesson, where attainment was above average, pupils were able to construct line graphs using lines of best fit.

126. In 1999 the proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades at GCSE was below the national average. At the time of the last inspection, GCSE results were close to the national average. Pupils' attainment in the work seen, involving knowledge and understanding, is satisfactory across the complete ability range. The most able pupils are able to balance chemical equations, understand the principles of molecular bonding and the theories of nuclear radiation. Pupils who do not find science so easy have gained a great deal of success in their work for the Certificate of Achievement and produce very good work files. Pupils produce good investigation work. They are able to predict, plan, carry out experiments skilfully, record results accurately, control variables and process their results appropriately. Graph work is good. There are some examples of outstanding investigative

work, which includes in-depth thinking by pupils about their conclusions.

127. GCE results for A level physics, chemistry and biology were below national averages in 1999, but comparisons are difficult to make with the relatively small number of candidates taking each subject. The overall results of the Intermediate GNVQ fell below school expectations and the course has now been discontinued. The attainment of students of A level physics, chemistry and biology seen in lessons is satisfactory. In physics, students are able to solve inclined plane force problems at a satisfactory level, in chemistry, students have a satisfactory knowledge of entropy and in biology, students demonstrate a good understanding of mitosis.

128. At Key Stage 3 teaching overall is good. This is characterised by teachers setting clear objectives that the pupils can understand and managing pupils well so that they can carry out their tasks, in a safe environment, unhindered by distractions. In a few lessons teaching is very good. In a Year 8 lesson, on investigating the factors that affect sinking, pupils made very good progress, as a result of the teacher continually challenging their basic skills to ensure that there were no obstacles to impede science learning. Furthermore, pupils' understanding at each stage of the lesson was carefully checked before moving on to the next. In a few lessons the teaching is unsatisfactory. In these lessons classroom management did not create the conditions required for effective learning to take place.

129. At Key Stage 4 the sample of work seen reflects good teaching. Appropriate work is set for pupils that is well planned, shows continuity and results in at least satisfactory learning. Sixth form teaching is satisfactory. An example of good teaching was observed in a biology lesson, in which a variety of tasks were used to motivate students. In this revision lesson, students considered a revision list of words that triggered ideas, discussed an examination question and then worked on an interactive computer programme on mitosis. During these processes the teacher continuously asked the students questions. The students showed a high level of interest, remarking on their enjoyment of what they were doing.

130. Most pupils behave well in lessons, because of teachers providing good classroom management and appropriate learning experiences. Pupils demonstrate respect for each other, particularly during group work, and show respect for their teachers.

131. The science curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages and is enhanced by enabling pupils with certain difficulties to access the Certificate of Achievement. There are good examples of provision for pupils with special educational needs, but consistency in the use of individual education plans is not yet fully developed. The provision for the needs of the very brightest pupils has not been fully addressed. The use of information and communication technology to enhance the teaching of science is limited. Good links with British Energy at Heysham have been established and pupils participate in the annual Science, Engineering and Technology Week for which they have received recognition.

132. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of teachers' marking varies and homework is not clearly identified. It is not always clear if comments refer to attainment or effort, and very few comments inform pupils of what they need to do to improve. At Key Stage 3, general pupil progress is monitored through end of topic tests, but at the end the key stage, teacher assessed levels are way above the national test levels and efforts to address this serious mismatch need to continue. At sixth form level, marking varies in quality and quantity generally. However, coursework is well marked and levels are accurately identified.

133. The department is led by a hard working, dedicated head of department who is striving to improve standards across the complete ability and age range of pupils. His leadership gives clear direction for the department in trying to promote high standards. For example, the recent redesign of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work and assessment plan are beginning to create the conditions for improvement. The head of department demonstrates effective delegation in this task, contributing to staff development and ownership. There is a shared commitment within the department to improve standards and staff work together as a team. There is good monitoring of teaching within the department, paving the way for a more thorough system of evaluation and target setting for individual teachers.

134. Staffing is adequate and appropriately qualified in respect of teachers. Induction procedures are in place for both qualified and newly qualified teachers. The laboratory technicians are valued greatly by the teachers for their contribution to the pupils' learning, but they have difficulty coping with the ever-increasing demands of a practical subject. Learning resources are adequate and improving. The departmental provision of computers is an area in need of development. The science laboratories are kept clean and well organised although a considerable amount of graffiti on benches is present in one laboratory. The shortage of laboratories does not allow science to be taught adequately at present, but plans are in place to improve the situation by converting a classroom to a laboratory. Health and safety provision is satisfactory but the department needs to develop a more rigorous system of risk assessment at the lesson planning stage.

135. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved and a wider range of teaching styles is now used. There has also been a significant improvement in learning resources.

ART

136. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly below national expectations for most pupils. Pupils join the school with very varied experiences of art and most achieve satisfactorily over the key stage as a result of well-structured units of work. The ability to observe and record using line and tone is under developed for a significant number of pupils. Assessment by the head of department indicates few pupils achieving beyond national expectations. Practical skills and techniques with pattern and colour work are more developed and in line with national expectations. Pupils can, when given opportunity and stimulating subject matter, record from direct observation. Year 8 pupils have, for example, created bold paintings of distorted faces based upon their self-portraits. Pupils' experience an appropriate range of materials and processes in two and three dimensions and learn to create work on a variety of scales. They are introduced to art from different cultures, for example, Aboriginal art, and use this in the development of their own work. Pupils make some use of a sketchbook, but this is not sufficiently regular over the key stage to extend their skills of recording and developing their ideas. In some cases, pupils make use of computers for their research but not to develop their own artwork. Pupils with statements of special educational needs often achieve well because of the level of support and encouragement they are given.

137. Standards overall at the end of Key Stage 4 are slightly above the national average. GCSE examination results have risen steadily since the time of the last inspection when they were well below the national average. The GCSE results for 1999 were just above the national average for the higher A*-C grades, which represents a significant improvement upon those of 1998. The achievement of pupils in art is high in comparison to their performance in other subjects. The overall pass rate for A*-G grades in 1999 for all pupils was just above the national average.

138. About a third of the year group opts for art and attainment in Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with the national average, indicating that the trend of improvement is being sustained. Displays of current Year 11 work contain good quality examples of pattern and design work developed from drawings and observations of man-made and natural forms. The coursework in folders shows good achievement by many pupils over the Key Stage with both figurative and more abstract work. The strengths in attainment are the competent use of colour and pattern and the ability to handle a range of media and subject matter with growing confidence. Pupils build upon their achievements at Key Stage 3 and make more use of their sketchbooks. Some pupils make independent use of computers for research, for example by using the Internet and CD-ROMs, but pupils in general do not yet make use of information and communication technology to develop and extend their artwork.

139. Standards in the sixth form are high. Four of the six students entered in the 1999 Advanced level examinations gained A or B grades and all six students passed the examination. As at Key Stage 4, standards in the sixth form have steadily risen since the time of the last inspection and the current students are achieving in line with course expectations. Students develop their critical studies research alongside their practical skills and show growing ability to make personal and expressive responses to a wide range of subject matter.

140. Most pupils apply themselves to their work and their behaviour is good. Pupils show respect for others and their environment, apart from a small minority at Key Stage 3 who sometimes take advantage of weaker teaching and seek to disrupt lessons. When given opportunities to work together relationships are productive and much of the work at both key stages and in the sixth form demonstrates good application by pupils. Sixth form students in particular develop mature and independent attitudes to their work.

141. There has been disruption within the department, particularly over the past two years, due to staff illness and long term absence, which has resulted in the use of supply teachers and non-specialists. This has had an impact upon the rigour and quality of learning, particularly at Key Stage 3. Currently there is a full time specialist teacher of art leading the department who is supported by two part time teachers of whom one is a supply teacher. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 with good teaching in some lessons and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Analysis of folders of work and the steadily improving GCSE results indicate good teaching leading to better achievement at Key

Stage 4. Teachers show commitment to their pupils and work hard to ensure good discipline and positive relationships that support pupils in their learning. The best teaching makes very clear what the focus of the lesson is and ensures that techniques are explained appropriately with good verbal support that enables pupils to progress. Concentration levels and learning are best when teachers ensure an appropriate balance between, demonstration, discussion, practical work and listening that is well matched to the needs of the pupils. The clear structure to the tasks set helps lower attainers in particular to achieve. Teaching at Key Stage 3 tends to focus upon the application of skills to a task whilst opportunities to develop understanding and meaning are missed. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons lower expectations and inappropriate management of pupils leads to poor behaviour and disruption by a minority and insufficient progress with learning. There is scope to develop lesson planning to increase the challenge offered to pupils. Setting clear short-term goals for pupils to achieve within practical work in lessons and making pupils more aware of how well they are progressing would also support better progress. This can also be improved through greater use of sketchbooks at Key Stage 3 and associated marking and discussion. There is a need to develop planned opportunities for pupils to use

information and communication technology to support the development of their artwork.

142. The head of department, since joining the school at the time of the last inspection, has systematically raised standards at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This has been achieved through practical leadership and the provision of a clear framework for teaching within which individual teachers can plan their lessons. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but lacks further enrichment through visits to galleries and the local environment. Clear procedures for assessment to record and monitor attainment and progress are in place and are used to provide information and reports to parents. There is monitoring of teachers' work and an awareness of the issues for development. Art rooms are spacious and well organised to enable pupils to learn. Displays of work in art rooms and around the school are well used to enhance the environment and celebrate pupils' achievement, as do exhibitions of work for parents and the local community.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

143. In 1999 teacher assessments indicate the standards of pupils' work were below national averages. During the inspection, pupils were observed achieving well in the attainment target of 'making'. Good examples of work include the board game and cam projects in Year 9 and the desk tidy in Year 8. Pupils acquire good computer skills. Year 8 pupils produce good 3D designs. Graphics skills are well developed through interesting tasks like designing a drink carton for a catering outlet. Pupils demonstrate competency in the handling of a variety of tools and materials including food and textiles and show careful attention to health and safety. Pupils acquire knowledge of the design process, but written work is insubstantial in many cases, and pupils display poor literacy skills. Some elements of the design process are well understood, like research and generating design ideas, but others are weak, like evaluating and planning. Pupils are heavily dependent on teacher input and some tasks are over-prescriptive, which limits pupils initiative and independence, particularly the more able, who are not challenged sufficiently in some tasks. This hinders their progress. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported and achieve better than expected. There is some slight variation in the standards achieved in the different areas of food, textiles, graphics and resistant materials.

144. At Key Stage 4 results in GCSE examinations have been well below national averages for a number of years in both long and short courses. Results for pupils achieving grades A*-G in 1999 are only slightly below average. A small number of pupils were entered for a Certificate of Achievement and all achieved a pass grade. Pupils' performance in design technology has been significantly below that in other subjects. The standard of work scrutinised during the inspection was much closer to national averages than previous examination results have been. Predicted grades for this year indicate that results will be just below the national average overall, but will be equal to, or will exceed it in some material areas. This indicates a tremendous improvement. Strengths include modelling in graphic products, practical outcomes like the storage units made in resistant materials and the coursework folios in food. Formal drawing skills are well developed and pupils use computers to enhance many aspects of the work. Weaker elements of the work seen include sketching, planning (except in food where it is good) and evaluating final products with reference to the original specification. The theoretical aspects of the subject are not always well understood and this is illustrated in coursework folios, which lack depth, and in the reported poor performance in the written examination.

145. In the Sixth Form standards are slightly below the national average. Currently few pupils have opted to take design technology at A level. Pupils were observed working well

in lessons and making good progress, most of them having achieved grade C in GCSE. They are not yet, however, taking responsibility for their own learning and are reluctant to devote sufficient of their own time in pursuit of knowledge and improving skills like drawing techniques. Practical work is sound but does not yet show the finish and sophisticated use of materials required for high grades.

146. The quality of teaching is good across all key stages. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The teachers are all well qualified and enthusiastic. They communicate their expectations to pupils in a number of ways verbally, via the whiteboard in lessons or in the written form at the start of a task. This results in pupils acquiring the appropriate knowledge and understanding and enjoying the interesting projects that are planned for them. Basic technology skills are carefully taught, often accompanied by practical demonstrations which enable pupils to be aware of what constitutes good standards. Individual lessons are well planned but some further consideration needs to be given to overall planning.

147. Pupils are very well managed and occasionally provided with opportunities to work in different situations, for example, in groups, teams and pairs. This good management is a major factor in eliminating poor behaviour. Support staff are well directed by the teachers so that they have a very positive effect on the progress and learning of pupils with special educational needs. The quality and use of on going assessment is an area of weakness. A significant amount of unmarked work was observed and an agreed standard for marking is not yet in place. Pupils are not made aware of their level of achievement at Key Stage 3, except informally, until the project is complete. Better feedback is given to pupils at Key Stage 4. The use of homework to support learning is also weak, its use is patchy between both in quality and quantity.

148. Pupils respond to what is offered to them by working with interest, maintaining concentration and by working at a reasonable pace. However, pupils do not show much initiative nor do they seek to find out what they need to do to improve. There was little evidence that more able pupils are being stretched or given the opportunity to work outside closely defined parameters. Effective teaching enables pupils with learning difficulties to progress above expectation by providing the extra help and encouragement, which they need to build confidence. This was demonstrated most clearly in the food area where some very good teaching and learning was observed. Scope exists to further develop the provision of textiles at Key Stage 3 and to ensure better progression into Key Stage 4, where currently there is no GCSE option.

149. A new head of department was appointed at the start of this academic year following a considerable period of uncertainty and instability within the department. Within a short time he has had a beneficial impact. After taking time to appraise the situation he has drawn up a realistic action plan which has identified what needs to be done in what order. This is linked to the school development plan and reflects the schools aims. Work has already begun on the most urgent of these issues, like underachievement in Y11, which has been targeted. New systems are almost complete to improve pupil assessment at Key Stage 3, to improve record keeping and to raise pupil awareness of their own achievements. Target setting is included to promote progress. Teaching has been monitored and schemes of work are being examined. Several new initiatives have been or are ready to be implemented like the pupil work booklets and teacher handbooks for new projects that are being introduced. The staff now work well together as a team, with clear educational direction and a strong departmental ethos apparent. At Key Stage 3 course content needs to be reviewed to ensure better coverage of the National Curriculum. Materials need to be developed for use at Key Stage 4 to ensure pupils have better theoretical knowledge for the written examination. The current syllabus used with sixth form

pupils' needs to be reconsidered to see if it meets current requirements or if there is a better alternative.

150. Since the last inspection report the department has been refurbished and computer provision has increased. Year 7 examinations have been reviewed. Resources generally have increased but there is still a need to improve the supply of good textbooks and the printer available for graphics is inadequate. Displays of work designed to raise the subjects' profile with staff and pupils have been put up in and around the department. Time available for lessons in Key Stage 3 is a little short, particularly in Year 8, to allow all elements of the National Curriculum to receive full attention.

GEOGRAPHY

151. Pupils' attainment is below average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.

152. In 1999 the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate that the standards of pupils' work was below national expectations. The proportions of pupils gaining grades A* - C and A* - G in GCSE examinations have been below national averages for the last three years. However, these results show a rising trend and in 1999 were in line with results for other subjects in the school. A Certificate of Achievement course has recently been started for less able pupils and the two entries last year both gained pass grades. GCE A level results are based on too small a number of entries for comparisons to be made. There is no overall difference between the results of boys and girls.

153. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are average. By the end of the Key Stage pupils of all levels of ability have a good understanding of the topics in the syllabus. They listen well and can speak capably and confidently, using correct geographical vocabulary. High ability pupils present their work well and can form hypotheses and draw conclusions, as in the Year 9 lesson where pupils were selecting evidence to explain the different factors that have shaped the economy of modern Japan. Middle ability pupils lack the same level of analytical skill and their maps and diagrams are not always well presented. Pupils with special educational needs show a strong understanding of key concepts, such as sustainable development in the rainforest, but their work is limited by their levels of concentration. Although no Key Stage 4 groups were seen during the inspection, analysis of their work shows an average standard. They can contrast and compare activities in different parts of the world, such as agriculture in Europe and India and they understand the impact of human activity on the environment. They have produced a good standard of coursework based on studies of the development of tourism in Ambleside. Numeracy skills have not been well integrated into their work and there is little use of information and communication technology. The Certificate of Achievement group has produced a good standard of work based on specially prepared resources. The work of sixth form students is also average. The work of the best students showed a good grasp of details of such topics as urban redevelopment, as in a Year 12 lesson preparing students for the third modular examination of the syllabus. However, some of the work examined showed a disorganised approach to note taking and study skills.

154. Overall, pupils who attend throughout the year are making satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when withdrawn from general classes because of the expert teaching they receive. Those in mainstream classes progress less well because of the lack of teaching and learning materials suitable for them in many lessons. Literacy skills are well developed throughout the department. Pupils express themselves well orally and every opportunity is taken for them to read in class. Use

of correct geographical vocabulary is emphasised. Writing and presentation are of a good standard throughout but there is not enough variety of writing styles. Numeracy is not well integrated into the subject teaching and opportunities are missed for the use of statistics or the conversion of data, especially in Key Stage 3.

155. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3, satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. In the Year 12 lesson observed, the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher and the drive and enthusiasm of the presentation led to a lively discussion and promoted a productive exchange of ideas. No Key Stage 4 lessons were observed but the pupils' work seen indicates a satisfactory level of teaching, with work set to match the abilities of the pupils. Two excellent lessons were observed in Year 9 and many of the lessons were ideal examples of active learning with challenging activities that fully engaged the interest and abilities of the pupils. For example, a Year 7 lesson debating for and against modern methods of farming extended pupils' knowledge of farming methods as well as their oral and social development. In a Year 9 lesson pupils worked in pairs to organise evidence that could be used to write a report on the Kobe earthquake. This effectively extended their ability to analyse and compare information as well as consolidating their understanding of the effects of earthquakes. There are still some traditionally organised lessons with activities that do not make good use of pupils' time, such as use of question and answer worksheets and colouring of maps. Assessment of work in class is good but there is some inconsistency in marking levels, with middle ability work often over-graded so that pupils have a false impression of their level of attainment.

156. The attitudes of pupils are good, with most of them working to the best of their ability. This was particularly apparent in one Year 8 lesson for pupils with special educational needs, where outstanding effort went into the completion of the tasks set. Relationships with teachers and other pupils are invariably good and no poor behaviour of any kind was seen.

157. Management of the department is good and leadership is positive. There is thorough monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress and a scheme of pupil self-assessment. However, this has not yet been developed into individual target setting. Teaching is also regularly monitored and the department is engaged in a constant review of teaching styles that is making a positive impact on learning, particularly in Key Stage 3. Resources are adequate except that there is a limited access to computers and the Internet which restricts learning; one Year 8 class was struggling to complete an information and communication technology exercise with two computers between all the pupils.

158. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Attainment has improved across all years. However, it is still below national expectations. The introduction of new teaching styles has improved the opportunity for investigative work and the quality of teaching overall has improved. There are more text books suited to differing levels of ability of pupils. Assessment procedures have been improved, with continuous assessment through tests and monitoring of work. There is still a shortfall in the delivery of information and communication technology, in the development of different writing styles and in the use of different materials for all abilities within classes. However, these issues are being addressed by a team that is committed to improvement.

HISTORY

159. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average. A significant minority of pupils are achieving levels in line with national expectations. Teachers' assessments are in line with national averages for all schools, but there is no regular assessment of key elements on which this assessment is based. Pupils have a sound grasp of the period of the two world wars and they recognise the contribution of the Treaty of Versailles to the rise of Hitler. Using written and pictorial sources they can select and extract information and pupils of higher ability recognise that the source and date of information can affect its value to the historian. Pupils have an understanding of some abstract concepts, for example appeasement and propaganda, and can apply them to the present day. Retention of information and understanding of concepts by pupils of middle and lower ability is weaker. Pupils at all levels can empathise with people from the past, for example, villagers reacting to the Black Death in medieval times, although the presence of anachronisms indicates some misapprehension. Responses are generally superficial, lacking development and analysis. Pupils of all levels are aware that the past can be viewed from different standpoints, for example, reactions to the suffragette movement at the turn of the century.

160. The attainment of pupils who study history for GCSE is well below national averages for all maintained schools and for comprehensive schools. In the limited coursework seen, pupils are achieving levels below national expectations. However, a minority of pupils are achieving standards in line with expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of the war in Vietnam and are able to identify changes in public attitudes towards the war. They recognise the wider political reasons behind the war and have an understanding of the 'domino theory'. Pupils study the main events of the Cold War and those of higher attainment can recognise links between these events. Pupils study the rise of Hitler and make a special study of the Munich Agreement. They use source material to provide information and present it in logical order in extended writing. Responses generally lack supporting evidence and pupils of higher ability only demonstrate an awareness of causal links. There is little evidence of independent lines of enquiry.

161. The attainment of students who continue with the study of history in the sixth form is below national averages. Numbers of students taking the examination are too small for sensible comparisons. They study the development and passage of the French Revolution, and British History of the 20th century. They can present arguments in extended prose and reach a judgement that is supported by evidence. They have an understanding of the tensions that led to the fall of the French monarchy and the development of democracy there. They are developing skills of analysis that they use with source material.

162. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge that enables them to respond to pupils' queries. Good classroom management results in a positive working environment and lessons are well planned. Teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour and as a result pupils are able to concentrate on their studies. Teachers seek to develop in their pupils an interest and enthusiasm for history and make an effort to introduce a variety of teaching strategies. Role play and discussion is used to stimulate pupils' interest. Tasks are generally selected appropriately and support the needs of the less able. Efforts are made to support the development of literacy skills and to build up a wider vocabulary. At times there is a lack of challenge for the more able in middle and lower sets, and insufficient use is made of source analysis to develop analytical skills. Little use is made of self assessment to enable pupils to reflect on their progress and identify areas for development.

The use of

information and communication technology is limited, but the department is investigating future opportunities.

163. The attitude and behaviour of pupils attending history classes is good. Pupils are keen to take an active part in lessons and the rapport between teachers and pupils is positive. They work well in collaboration with their peers and supportive peer assessment was observed in Year 7. Pupils are courteous to their teachers and their fellows, and there is a pleasant working atmosphere. Levels of concentration are satisfactory and pupils remain on task with little need for teacher intervention. Although quick to respond to questions, there is a lack of enquiry and investigation, except in the higher sets.

164. The management of the department is good. Weaknesses have been identified by the head of department and are being addressed. The schemes of work are in the process of being updated; at present they do not contain assessment tasks which would provide opportunities for 'whole year group' formative assessment in order to determine accurate National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3. The department is committed to high standards in behaviour and achievement, and teaching styles and the syllabus are reviewed in the light of this aim. The department reviews its work annually, but regular department meetings are also used to exchange good practice and monitor progress. There is a clear handbook which contains the department's development plan, but this contains insufficient detail to provide an action plan with clear assessment criteria. There is no link between department plans and the school's development plan. The annual report to parents does not report on progress in specific historical skills, but reports on general progress.

165. The department makes a good contribution to the moral development of its' pupils. Opportunities are seized to consider the moral implications of actions from the past, for example the value of human life, whilst studying the slave trade, or the injustice of segregation in twentieth century America.

166. History is taught in an attractive suite of rooms where display is well used to extend learning and to celebrate pupils' achievement. A wider range of text books have been built up since the last report and interesting visits, for example to Clitheroe Castle by pupils in Year 7, have been organised to support pupils' learning. Since the last report standards in examination have fallen but there are clear indications that they are rising again due to changes in teaching strategies and learning support at Key Stage 4, which supports the development of key skills. Positive attitudes have been maintained and the setting arrangements now allow for more challenging work to be set to enable pupils to achieve the higher levels. There is still insufficient use of information and communication technology as a method for wider investigation of history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

167. At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of most pupils is in line with national expectations across a range of information and communication technology skills and knowledge. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow either a GCSE short course or a Certificate of Achievement accreditation. In 1999, one third of all entries for the short course achieved A*-C grades, with an overall pass rate of 90 per cent at grades A*-G. These results are below the national average for all schools but above what might be expected in similar schools. All pupils entered for the Certificate of Achievement gained passes. At sixth form, all students gained passes at A-level, with 10 per cent being at grade C, and the small number of entries at AS level were successful in gaining pass results. It is not possible to give reliable comparisons with national results.

168. At Key Stage 3, only Year 7 receive discrete sessions of information and communication technology and they make good progress. The quality and standards of teaching and learning are good overall. Well-planned modules of work take the pupils through basic computing skills. The teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, and good teaching strategies inspire and retain the pupils' interest. Skilled question and answer sessions encourage the pupils to draw on earlier learning and they build on this with practical work. For example, after entering information on everyday products into a database, the pupils extract and compare selected items and discuss these in class debates, recording their work on written worksheets. In Years 8 and 9, computers are used to support other aspects of the curriculum. Where information and communication technology is successfully integrated into lessons, such as sometimes in mathematics, English, design and technology it supports pupils' learning well. Pupils use word-processors to enhance their presentation skills in English, and produce graphical representations or use spreadsheets and databases to enter, analyse and amend information in mathematics. In design and technology graphics programs are used well to support and present pupils' design work.

169. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 4, due to the absence of pupils on examination study leave and work experience. However, their work shows that the most have completed required assignments on time. Their work indicates they have a range of presentation skills, and completed projects indicate their ability to adapt ideas for required purposes. For example, eye-catching designs and advertising literature are produced for either adult or child audiences. They take pride and care in their work, which is reflected in well-organised projects and improved presentation skills. Pupils' make good progress and standards are similar to last years GCSE work.

170. In the sixth form teachers make good use of information and communication technology to support vocational studies and advanced examination courses, and students use the Internet to research aspects of their leisure and tourism course. However, information and communication technology is not provided as a set of lessons for all students and this means their skills and use of computers do not develop as they should.

171. In the special needs department, the pupils use commercial packages at levels appropriate to their ability, working through numeracy and literacy tasks and recording their own achievements, which gives them an awareness of their learning.

172. The leadership and management of information and communication technology is satisfactory, within the limitations of how it operates. In the last report there was criticism of a lack of whole school co-ordination and development and this criticism still applies. At Key Stage 3, systems for monitoring and recording pupils' attainment are too informal. Year 7 are assessed by end of module tests, but years 8 and 9 are assessed through an annual submission from those teachers who use computers to support their curriculum areas, and this is unsatisfactory. Teaching within the department is monitored by the co-ordinator, but the use of computers by teachers in other curriculum areas has not been effectively evaluated. Assessment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is based on examination coursework and the pupils and students participate in monthly reviews of their progress with the subject co-ordinator. Results seem to indicate this is a successful model.

173. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to teach those lessons that are time-tabled for information and communication technology. There is also a full-time technician. Resources for the subject have substantially improved since the last inspection. Computer networks and Internet access are improving now with significant use of the school's own financial resources. National Grid for Learning funding was inadequate for a

school this size. Teachers are currently registering for computer training under the lottery funded New Opportunities scheme. The ratio of computers to pupils is one to four and this is good. There is a good range of other hardware to use with computers. The range of suitable software within subject areas is inadequate. Accommodation for the main computer suite is good. All classrooms have access to their own computers and the use of a library suite.

174. Although some resources for the teaching of control, measuring and modelling are available, there is no evidence to show pupils have reached any significant standards in these areas of the National Curriculum programmes of study for information and communication technology. Consequently pupils are not receiving their entitlement and statutory requirements are not met. Inadequate use of computers in most subject areas by most teachers is also an entitlement issue. The use of computers to support teaching and learning across all subjects is re-inforced within the National Curriculum 2000 that starts in September. Significant development work needs to be done across the school to meet national requirements.

175. The last report was critical of the provision for information and communication technology. A designated budget now ensures that equipment is maintained or replaced as necessary. The use of information and communication technology to support pupils with special needs is now good. However, the use of information and communication technology within all subjects is not rigorously monitored and this has a particular impact in Years 8 and 9. Neither are all national requirements met. Consequently improvement since the last inspection is not satisfactory and much remains to be done.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

176. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils achieve below national expectations. Teacher assessment confirms this judgement. Standards achieved in German and French by the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages overall. In full GCSE examinations in 1999 the percentage of candidates achieving A*-C grades in German is above national averages and in French it is well above national averages. However, comparisons with national averages are not reliable, since the number of pupils entered for German is high and that entered for French is low compared with national figures. Pupils achieve better in French and German than they do in other subjects. The percentage of candidates achieving A*-C grades in the short course GCSE in both languages is well below national averages. Those candidates entered for National Certificate of Achievement achieve in line with requirements for the course and with their capabilities. At A level candidates achieve in line with national averages overall, but numbers entered are low.

177. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils write fairly accurately to a model or by using prepared notes. They identify the main points from simple texts and can match print with meaning. Higher and average attaining pupils in a Year 9 German lesson were able successfully to identify specific detail from a series of weather forecasts from a German newspaper. Higher and some average attaining pupils display a good understanding of the way the languages work and are beginning to adapt the languages to meet their own needs. For example, in a Year 8 German class, pupils were able to describe their holidays in the past, give their opinions and justify their views. Listening skills are generally well developed and most pupils are able to identify the main points and some detail from short extracts of speech. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson most pupils could identify the buildings in a town and gave simple directions, higher attaining pupils requiring less repetition and guidance to do so. Pupils are able to take part in short dialogues and respond appropriately to questions in the language they are learning. In a Year 9 German

lesson, pupils sustained a conversation with their teacher describing events in the present and past and expressing their opinions about a variety of topics. However, most pupils place undue dependence upon written prompts and lists of phrases and lack confidence in responding spontaneously or from memory.

178. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can write at length and for a variety of purposes, including narrative and letters using a good range of vocabulary and structures. They make presentations from notes describing events in the present and the past and express their own opinions. By the end of the sixth form students analyse a variety of texts and write in detail using a good range of structures and vocabulary and identify the main points and some detail from a variety of texts. Speaking and listening skills amongst students in both languages in the sixth form are less secure; students are hesitant in speaking, place heavy dependence upon written prompts and notes and respond only briefly or in English. In Year 12 in German pupils have a good grasp of the way the language works, apply patterns successfully and are gradually increasing in confidence. In French this is not the case.

179. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in German is satisfactory but in French it is unsatisfactory. A significant number of unsatisfactory or poor lessons were seen in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Some examples of good and very good teaching were also seen in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form showing that the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and use it to conduct lessons effectively to develop pupils' listening skills and to reinforce their previous learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers use question and answer sessions well to enable pupils to identify and apply patterns in the languages. This increases pupils' confidence and competence in using the language for themselves and in increasing their knowledge of the way languages work. In better lessons, teachers use resources to present new material, focus attention and elicit oral responses from pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson in French, pupils with special needs became confident in naming buildings in a town through games with flashcards. In German, a Year 8 group were well supported in their oral work through prompts displayed on the projector. In the best lessons, effective planning lets pupils build successfully on previous learning. For example, in a Year 12 German lesson students were able to see how to change nouns to adjectives and apply this in accessing texts about contemporary issues and preparing their own views. However, in a significant number of lessons activities are not always sequenced well and pupils have difficulty in achieving tasks as a result. In some lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally and use the language for themselves in realistic situations to gather information and pass it on to others. However, this is not common practice across the department and in many cases lengthy teacher led activities decrease these opportunities and result in pupils lacking confidence in speaking and responding.

180. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall. Pupils are well behaved, listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. When given the opportunity they work well in small groups and pairs and are concerned to do well, often persevering in the face of difficulty. However, pupils rarely express enjoyment or enthusiasm for their learning and over the last two years no pupils have opted to take both languages in Key Stage 4.

181. Trips abroad and events such as 'Euroweek' enhance the curriculum, but the provision of the short course in languages with reduced time is inappropriate and leads to pupils being unable to achieve standards they are capable of. However pupils with special needs achieve well because of the provision of a courses leading to the National Certificate of Achievement in Key Stage 4 which is well suited to their needs. Procedures for assessment are good but are not always applied consistently. The department's analysis of

examination data and targeting of borderline candidates is proving effective. In Key Stage 3 assessment is generally accurate but it is not used to plan for the progress of individuals within lessons.

182. Management of the faculty overall is unsatisfactory. The faculty operates as two separate departments. In German the monitoring of teaching and learning has gone some way to achieve consistency of approach and spread of good practice but this is not the case in French where there is considerable variation in teaching and learning at all key stages. Schemes of work detail content and general principles but lack detail as to how groups of differing ability within classes are to progress to reach their full potential and this leads to inconsistency in teaching and learning between classes.

183. Since the last inspection progress is satisfactory overall. Examination results have improved because of the change to the modular course, analysis of examination results and the introduction of the National Certificate of Achievement. There is still considerable scope for the development of the monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of assessment to enable pupils to track and plan their own progress through levels of attainment.

MUSIC

184. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory. There has been no marked rise in standards of music making or in the participation of pupils in examination classes or extra curricular musical activities.

185. Standards of music throughout the school are well below national expectations at Key Stage 3 and below at Key Stage 4. The department's contribution to developments in school literacy is underdeveloped. There are some purposeful computer aided compositions being written by senior pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and supported by music teachers and support staff. When receiving one to one support these pupils make good progress.

186. By the end of Key Stage 3, few pupils have learned to perform and compose music to a satisfactory standard. Pupils have little knowledge and understanding of the form or structures of compositions and lack the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to experiment with compositions or to rehearse them in music lessons with their peers. Pupils have limited knowledge of the rudiments and theory of music and have not listened to a broad spectrum of musical styles and periods. Pupils' music manuscript exercise books fail to demonstrate that pupils have followed a rigorous musical education. High and average ability pupils have not been sufficiently challenged by demanding work. Relatively few pupils continue with their instrumental tuition beyond Year 9 and consequently standards of instrumental performance in the school wind band are low. Standards of class singing are well below average. The musical vocabulary of most pupils is limited despite the school's efforts to promote key words and to display them within the main teaching room. The school has not assessed pupils' abilities at the end of Year 9 with regard to National Curriculum standards.

187. The school has been unable to timetable a GCSE and GCE Advanced Level music class for some years because the demand has been much too low to justify economic provision. There are, therefore, no recent GCSE and GCE Advanced Level results on which to report. Currently the music teacher provides tuition for a few pupils in Years 10 and 11 after school during two twilight sessions in order that pupils have support. Standards are generally low and the volume of pupil's work seen is less than what is

normally found. Of the compositions analysed during the week of inspection, two pupils produced work that is estimated to be of average attainment. Pupils' evaluations of their compositions are of a higher quality than the compositions themselves.

188. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is poor. In most lessons inspected, the lessons failed to capture the imagination and interest of the pupils. Although teachers' knowledge and understanding was good most lessons were poorly planned and expectations were low. One lesson about the characteristics of the march was lively, well planned, challenging and interesting and resulted in hardworking pupils who composed intelligently and listened to each other diligently. In all other lessons pupils were left too long without firm control and further challenge and guidance and consequently pupils became frustrated, restless and silly. In the well-planned lesson pupils worked productively and stayed on the task working in groups to devise their own work. They enjoyed performing to their peers and appreciated the affirming remarks from their teacher. In other lessons, such as those about the pentatonic scale and the revision of chordal sequences, the teacher failed to provide sufficiently interesting materials for different pupil abilities to motivate them and did not intervene to prevent bad behaviour with sufficient determination. In these lessons pupils failed to take the work seriously and some pupils wasted time setting up backing tracks on the electronic keyboards and creating their own entertainment.

189. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. The twilight teaching of GCSE pupils is unsatisfactory. Although lessons were not inspected it was obvious from talking to pupils and observing some of the work of the pupils that the attainment of the higher GCSE grades would be a challenge. The teacher was very keen to ensure that the pupils would not miss out on GCSE music classes and was attempting to cover the syllabus in a very limited time. The teacher had good rapport with these pupils and worked the lessons on a tutorial basis.

190. Pupils' attitudes to music throughout the school are very often poor and few pupils speak of musical activities with enthusiasm. Attitudes of the pupils in music lessons are directly related to the style and demands of the teacher in charge of them. Very few pupils above Year 9 regularly return to the practice rooms to make music together. The music department has much to do to inspire and motivate pupils to sing and to play together. Some of the string players enjoy the string ensemble sessions and pupils in the choir enjoy their rehearsal times.

191. Leadership and management of the music department are poor. The department lacks a clear sense of vision and determination. The department now has a scheme of work but its reference to the National Curriculum is not clearly outlined. The development plan needs a clearer focus on the importance of classroom discipline and methodology. Visiting instrumental teachers are not sufficiently monitored or integrated into the life of the school. The department's contribution to the social and cultural life of the school is currently limited. Curriculum resources have improved with the acquisition of good quality electronic keyboards. The small choirs and small wind band have sung and played at school events and concerts but currently numbers of participants are very low and standards are much below similar schools. The school is aware that the departmental accommodation is drab but there are major plans for much improved accommodation. The drab accommodation does not adversely impact on standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

192. The standard of work seen in Key Stage 3 is above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. As pupils move through Key Stage 3, they make very good progress from a lower than average starting point. This is due to high quality teaching and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities provided by a committed team of teachers. Pupils achieve high standards in athletics and summer games. A significant proportion of Year 9 boys bat and bowl skilfully in cricket. Most Year 9 boys carry out relay take-overs with good technique. Year 9 girls have good long jump technique and they know how to mark out and adjust the run-up. Year 8 girls show good batting and throwing techniques in rounders. A strength of pupils' achievement in Key Stage 3 is their ability to analyse performance and suggest improvements. Pupils answer teachers' questions confidently and use the language of the subject well. They are less confident when discussing performance with each other. Pupils understand the need for exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils know how to warm up and cool down correctly, but they seldom take responsibility for these parts of lessons.

193. In 1999 pupils were entered for the GCSE physical education examination for the first time. All pupils gained a grade and this is slightly better than the national average. However the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below the national average. Girls achieved better results than the boys and the proportion of girls gaining an A*-C grade was above the national average.

194. A judgement on the standards achieved by pupils in National Curriculum physical education lessons was not possible, because Year 10 and 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection week. However pupils' written work for GCSE was inspected and teacher's assessments of practical activities were analysed. Standards in GCSE work are improving and are broadly in line with national averages. The strength lies in pupils' practical attainment in the major games of football, hockey, rugby, netball and cricket. Pupils' ability to analyse performance has improved since the previous year because teachers have provided more opportunities to practice and improve evaluation skills. Pupils generally have a sound knowledge of the theory. Overall the pupils taking GCSE make good progress and are on target to achieve better results in physical education than many of their other subjects.

195. Year 12 students taking the Community Sports Leader Award achieve good standards and meet the award criteria. They demonstrate good leadership skills and an awareness of the need for safety when organising simple games. Their log books reveal substantial practical experience of organising activities for younger pupils.

196. The quality of teaching is good across the school. High standards in teaching have been maintained since the last inspection and some aspects of teaching have improved. In Key Stage 3 just over half the teaching is very good and one lesson was excellent. The high quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' enthusiasm and commitment to participation and learning in physical education. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and discipline in lessons is excellent. Teachers expect a great deal of all their pupils and they respect and value the efforts and achievements of every pupil. Teachers do a great deal to promote pupils' self esteem through valuing achievement at whatever level. Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils. They not only expect pupils to improve their performance but they also expect pupils to analyse performance and use this information to make improvements. For example in a Year 8 rounders lessons pupils were constantly challenged by the teacher to work out how to improve their own bowling and batting techniques and non-participating pupils were required to watch, evaluate and give

advice. Teachers' very good specialist knowledge and use of a broad range of approaches, enables them to give very good demonstrations, give clear explanations and ask probing questions of pupils. As a result, pupils learn correct techniques and are encouraged to work out why, for example, techniques in shot putting, or overarm throws in rounders, are effective. Teachers generally ensure that stronger pupils are challenged and the less confident pupils are supported. For example, in a hurdling lesson pupils select the height of hurdles over which to practice. Groups that compete against each other are carefully selected and the lesson is organised to ensure that all pupils succeed. Teachers work very effectively with education support assistants to provide programmes of activity that enable even the most reluctant pupils to take part in physical activities and achieve success. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons move at a good pace and pupils achieve good levels of physical activity. Pupils' written work in GCSE is marked regularly. Teachers give helpful advice on how to improve and marks relate to exam grades. Teachers ensure that pupils do homework conscientiously.

197. The subject is well led and managed. The head of the subject sets a very good example and leads a highly committed team with infectious enthusiasm. There is a high degree of commitment to raising standards. The sharing of good practice and close monitoring of teaching has helped to improve the overall quality of teaching. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The addition of GCSE physical education in Key Stage 4 and the Community Sports Leader Award in the sixth form have enhanced opportunities for pupils to gain nationally recognised awards. However there are no physical education or recreational opportunities planned for all sixth form students in curricular time. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities give the majority of pupils the opportunity to represent the school in competitive sport. There is no doubt that an exceptionally high number of pupils benefit tremendously from involvement in an outstanding range of activities. Schemes of work need to be improved to ensure that learning targets are made clear and include all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Assessment arrangements are good overall. Accommodation is extensive and, apart from a leaking sports hall roof that causes the floor to become slippery, is in good condition. The library has not been resourced to support examination courses. The cricket mats are in poor condition and are a health and safety concern. Although day to day practice in health and safety is good, a risk assessment of the activities that pupils carry out in the variety of working spaces has not been carried out.

Dance

198. Dance is taught as part of theatre arts. Recent staff absence has caused disruption to the provision at Key Stage 3. On the basis of limited evidence, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. In the 1999 GCSE dance results the proportion of pupils gaining grades both A*-C and A*-G grades was well below average. Standards in the present Year 11 are much improved and results are likely to be a great deal higher than in the previous year. A small number of students are entered for A/S level dance. They persevere in rehearsing and improving a technically difficult piece. They benefit from the teaching of a specialist dance teacher and most are achieving well in relation to course criteria.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

199. The religious education department has improved much since the previous inspection, but the curriculum requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not fully met. The subject profile has been much enhanced by the introduction of the GCSE Religious Studies Short Course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The department is housed in two attractive and adjacent classrooms. There is no teaching of religious education in the sixth form.

200. Standards of attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations for two reasons. The department fails to teach the full requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for the teaching of religious education and the pupils' knowledge and understanding of major world religions is, therefore, less than is found in most other schools. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity and its origins and have a good knowledge of the teachings of Jesus. During the inspection, pupils in Year 7 demonstrated a sound knowledge of the baptism of Jesus and a good knowledge of worship in contemporary Christianity. Pupils in Year 9 struggle to understand the teachings of Islam and Year 7 found the teaching about Mother Goddess hard to comprehend. Pupils' limited literacy skills sometimes prevent pupils from expressing themselves fluently. The standards of work of pupils with special educational needs are better than those found in similar schools.

201. The standards of attainment of pupils in the religious education GCSE Short Course are well below national expectations. Most pupils in the year group take the examination. In 1999 27 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades and 86 per cent of pupils gained A* to G grades. Pupils have good notes on the Eucharist and the importance of prayer in Christianity and clearly benefit from visits to local churches. Pupils consider ultimate questions about life, death, pain and suffering in great depth, but sometimes fail to understand the religious principles and specific religious teachings which underpin them. Pupils' exercise books contain much class and homework related to the meaning and value of life.

202. At Key Stage 3 teaching is good and at Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory. The subject is taught well by two experienced and competent teachers. Teachers plan their lessons well and provide a variety of activities for pupils of all abilities. Their expectations are high and their discipline and classroom management secure. Year 7 pupils are well taught about symbolism in religion and Year 8 are presented with interesting lessons about the ministry of John the Baptist and the importance of giving in Islam. Teachers very purposefully use video clips, worksheets, biblical texts and home made visual aids to illustrate key points and to motivate pupils of different abilities. Both teachers have established a good rapport with their pupils and find time to inject humour and a sense of fun into the lessons. Teachers have invited well-known sports personalities to talk to the pupils about their faith. The teachers must now ensure that their GCSE pupils can refer to biblical and other religious and historical sources in their examination answers in order that higher marks in public examinations can be gained. Marking is carried out effectively and pupils respond positively to their teachers' comments. Teachers currently only use information and communication technology to a limited extent and many opportunities now present themselves with the departmental acquisition of new computers. Teachers provide pupils with special educational needs, when appropriate, with writing frames to assist their learning. The teachers are committed to the development of literacy.

203. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and learning takes place in a calm and purposeful environment. Key Stage 3 pupils are generally keen and enthusiastic to answer questions and take a pride in their work. They enjoy hearing about Christianity and Islam

and often ask intelligent questions about religious beliefs and life styles. In Key Stage 4 most pupils work well but there are some who do not complete all the work that is set. Key Stage 4 pupils generally work at a satisfactory pace but many could work harder.

204. The attitudes of pupils are good and generally positive. Pupils are busy in religious education lessons and have little time to be silly or negative. Pupils respect the teachers and they devote much time and attention to pupils of all abilities. Pupils with special educational needs know that the teachers will support them and will explain things over and over again. Learning support assistants play a very positive role in religious education lessons and work in close partnership with teachers. High attaining pupils know that there are always extension activities available for them.

205. An enthusiastic and committed teacher ably leads the department. The development plan is straightforward and clear. The department is committed to the introduction of the Agreed Syllabus and has already earmarked a suitable range of additional teaching resources to facilitate the teaching. The department gives good support to the Christian Union and works effectively with vicars and pastors from local churches. Accommodation is first rate but the department needs additional artefacts to teach Buddhism and other world religions. The department now needs to implement the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. The raising of standards of attainment of Key Stage 4 pupils must be a priority.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

206. Since the previous inspection the school has made good progress in the management and delivery of the GNVQ programmes and has successfully attended to all the points raised in the previous report. The courses are now popular and provide significant opportunities for students of all abilities.

207. Standards of attainment are well above average and have risen markedly. Students on the advanced business and advanced and intermediate leisure and tourism programmes have made particularly good progress since they took their GCSE examinations. In 1999 students on the advanced business courses gained good results with one pass, three merits and one distinction. The students on the advanced leisure and tourism programme gained six passes. The intermediate leisure and tourism group gained five passes and one merit pass. Students completing their leisure and tourism courses this year have already gained results higher than pupils in 1999. (The first cohort to take GNVQ Performing Arts will complete their studies by the end of this term).

208. Teaching is generally very good at both intermediate and advanced levels. A team of dedicated staff who are well qualified with good subject knowledge and who are GNVQ assessors and verifiers are committed to the philosophy of GNVQ and to the individual support of their students. In all GNVQ lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and choose learning materials and resources appropriately. Teachers have established good working relationships with their students, providing a supportive yet demanding work environment for the pupils. In return, students remain on task, help each other and work collaboratively and independently. Teachers have developed good links with local business and tourist personnel and enrich the learning with contemporary examples of business practices related to the course. Assignments are well marked and teacher assessments are usually fully endorsed by external verifiers. Assessments are thorough and all students know the levels they have been awarded and they know, where applicable, what needs to be done for high level awards. Students know exactly what grades they are achieving and often work hard to increase, where possible, earlier grades. One to one student support and

guidance is built into courses. This strategy promotes high quality and rigorous monitoring and usually prevents students from falling behind in their homework.

209. The quality of students' learning is never less than good. In GNVQ classes students are busy, industrious and well motivated. GNVQ business students have good knowledge and understanding about job recruitment, job applications and selection. GNVQ leisure and tourism students have good knowledge of sport and physical recreation facilities in the area. Students have learned how to work in groups and by themselves and are particularly good at devising questionnaires in order to compile information from providers and users of the relevant industries. GNVQ students carry out a lot of individual research. They analyse data well and generate hypotheses before making conclusions. Students regularly and enthusiastically contact firms in the various industries to obtain first hand facts rather than textbook examples. Many of the students have gained in confidence and self esteem and now believe in their own abilities far more than at the start of their courses. Some students have learned that access to higher education can be gained by acquiring advanced GNVQ qualifications. The courses attract students with special educational needs and those of high academic ability. All work and learn well together.

210. Students' attitudes are positive. They speak highly of their courses and have voted with their feet to continue at the school studying for GNVQ qualifications. For many of the students, the GNVQ work has introduced the students to completely new areas and modes of learning. Students recognise the value of vocational courses and particularly enjoy researching local, national and European companies. Students enjoy the opportunities to develop their key skills and standards of students' literacy have risen. The increased access to computers has motivated many students to produce work with a high quality of presentation, using desktop publishing of documents, graphs and illustrations.

211. The GNVQ programmes are very well led and overseen by a capable teacher. The leadership is very good and promotes high standards. It is supportive of teachers and the students. The department now concentrates on courses that it can effectively and successfully deliver and these enhance sixth form provision significantly. Much experience of examination board requirements and class-room teaching of sixth formers enables the teacher in charge to lead with conviction and sensitivity. The department is well equipped for GNVQ teaching and provides a purposeful suite of rooms in which sixth formers are able to study away from the main student body. The department needs now to develop further learning via the internet and needs some contemporary office machinery such as fax, answer phones and copiers for pupils to use state of the art business equipment that is now found in almost all business, leisure and tourism industries. Core skills are taught more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection, but the school should seek to raise the profile of speaking, listening and writing to even higher levels.