

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ALDER GRANGE HIGH SCHOOL**

Rawtenstall

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119722

Headteacher: Mr I Hulland

Reporting inspector: Mr I Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249184

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Calder Road  
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Appropriate authority: Lancashire

Name of chair of governors: Cllr L Forshaw

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12271	I Thompson	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
2959	B Leek	Team inspector	Science	
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology Educational inclusion	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
27368	M Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	
12408	A Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Music	

2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education	
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Alder Grange High School is a smaller than average sized, 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving Rawtenstall and the surrounding area. The school has close ties with its community. Many more parents want to send their children to the school than the school has places for. There are 676 pupils on roll from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. However, roughly half of all pupils come from areas that have a high level of social difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and rising. The majority of pupils are white but about ten per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds – mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani; 74 pupils come from homes where the first language is other than English but only one is at an early stage of learning English. The school's tests show that pupils' standards when they join the school are below average overall and for many well below average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is about average but the proportion with statements of special educational need, most of which refer to specific or moderate learning difficulties, is well above average.

The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives aimed at raising standards.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school with many outstandingly good features and few weaknesses. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils do very well. Management is very strong and provides exceptionally clear educational direction. The school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Leadership provides exceptionally clear educational direction to establish a very effective climate for learning. Management is very strong at all levels.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and contribute much to the industrious atmosphere of the school.
- The school cares for its pupils very well; relationships are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The school gives pupils confidence to do well.

#### **What could be improved**

- The school's accommodation does not meet its needs, particularly for physical education and special educational needs.

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

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

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection in September 1997 when it was identified as a good school. All issues have been tackled effectively; standards have improved and the school has shown good progress in all aspects of its work.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	B	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E

Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils do at least as well as might be expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 6 and most do better. Results in the 2002 national tests were above average in English, average in science and below average in mathematics. Results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally.

Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were average overall and above average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils did very well in relation to their standards when they joined the school. Virtually all pupils gained a pass at grades A\*-G, representing significant achievement for many pupils with statements of special educational need. Results improved in many subjects, continuing the steady improvement since the previous inspection.

Pupils' performance exceeded the school's targets, which were set at a higher level than those proposed by the local education authority. The school's data shows that in relation to their prior attainment, the majority of pupils did better, many much better, than might be expected. Current targets are challenging and based on detailed information about pupils' prior attainment.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are average.

### Standards in work seen

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Well above average		Music; science
Above average	Citizenship; geography	English; mathematics; religious education
Average	Design and technology; English; history; mathematics; modern foreign languages; music; religious education; science	Citizenship; design and technology; geography; modern foreign languages
Below average	Art and design; information and communication technology(ICT); physical education	Art and design; history; ICT; physical education

### Achievement

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Very good	English; geography; music	English; music; science
Good	Art and design; citizenship; design and technology; history; ICT; mathematics; religious education; science	Art and design; geography; mathematics; religious education
Satisfactory	Modern foreign languages; physical education.	Citizenship; design and technology; history; ICT; modern foreign languages; physical education.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and support each other well. Their attitudes contribute a great deal to the atmosphere in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are attentive in lessons; they behave with courtesy and are considerate to each other around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good – a strength of the school that has a positive effect on learning.
Attendance	Good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.*

Teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils achieve very well. It is very good in English and science and good in mathematics. Some very good teaching was seen in all subjects and overall more than one third was very good or excellent; none was unsatisfactory.

The strengths of teaching come from the school's very good climate for learning. Teachers build upon very good relationships with their pupils to manage very well planned lessons that produce high quality learning. In the majority of lessons, they provide appropriate challenge to stretch pupils and support to build their confidence. In a few otherwise satisfactory lessons, the level of challenge is set too high and lower attaining pupils struggle to meet the demands of the lesson. Good attention is paid to developing the skills of literacy and numeracy.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall – good in Years 7 to 9. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is good. Careers education and provision for extra-curricular activities are very good. The school's very good links with its partners and the community contribute positively to learning. Learning is slowed in some subjects by low time allocations, the distribution of time over the week and the structure of the school day.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good specialist provision and support in classes help pupils to achieve very well
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are supported so that they make similar progress to their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Very good overall. Outstandingly good spiritual development; very good moral and social development – all of which have a positive effect on the atmosphere in the school and contribute to learning. Good provision for cultural

development	development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very high standards of care help build pupils' confidence in the school. Monitoring of pupils' performance and well-being is exceptional. The school has a very effective partnership with parents that supports achievement.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides outstandingly good leadership. Very clear direction is given for the school's development and the determination to improve is shared by staff. Leadership and management of the pastoral system are very strong in supporting learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide good support and hold the school to account well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's improvement is based on excellent self-evaluation procedures.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of available resources. Costs are carefully compared with results to ensure best value.
Staffing; accommodation; learning resources	The school has a good match of staff to its curriculum needs and adequate resources for learning. Accommodation does not meet the school's needs, particularly for physical education and special educational needs.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like the school and make good progress.</li> <li>• The school expects hard work and pupils to do well.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's accommodation.</li> <li>• Some feel that the school could work more closely with them.</li> <li>• Information about progress in reports.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The school's accommodation is a matter for concern and does not meet the school's needs. The school does work closely with parents. Annual reports could be clearer and more individual.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

- The school has a very effective climate for learning in which pupils of all levels of attainment achieve very well.
- Results in tests at the end of Year 9 are rising at a faster rate than nationally.
- The school exceeds its ambitious targets for test and examination results.
- Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented do very well.

1. Pupils of all levels of attainment do very well at Alder Grange. Overall standards when pupils join the school are well below average. By the end of Year 11 overall standards are average; in English and mathematics they are above average and well above average in science. Results in GCSE examinations match the national average and are improving steadily. In 2002, 99 per cent of pupils gained at least one pass in the range A\*-G, representing significant achievement for many pupils with special educational needs. Only one pupil, who did not attend the school throughout Year 11, had no examination success. In national tests at the end of Year 9 results are improving at a faster rate than results nationally and are well above average in comparison with similar schools. The school consistently exceeds its targets, which are set higher than those recommended by the local education authority. Good results are, however, not the full story of the school's success. Parents are right when they comment that the school develops the whole child by finding out what they are good at and encouraging them, with the result that pupils' personal and social development is very good, with a consequent beneficial effect on their learning.
2. A number of factors contribute to pupils' achievement. Foremost is the way in which the school's management has established a very effective climate for learning. The spirit in the school is exceptional – pupils have the confidence to do well, be seen to do well and support each other in doing so. They are happy in the school and keen to learn. Entering the school for the first time in the inspection week, inspectors came across a group of older pupils who were admiring another's art homework – which incidentally was very well done. The pride in achievement, openness and friendly support evident in this group illustrated the atmosphere in the school very well. Teaching is very good. Teachers build upon the very good relationships they have with their pupils to establish high expectations of work and behaviour so that lesson time is seldom wasted in managing behaviour and learning is of high quality. A strong focus on individual performance through the assessment system and tutor reviews means that underachievement is picked up at an early stage and steps are taken to deal with it. Both in departments and through the pastoral system, teachers provide effective support for pupils in all aspects of school life to promote achievement. Throughout this report there are examples of how their efforts develop confidence and contribute to successful learning.
3. Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly average. A key issue of the previous report was 'the development of further strategies to raise basic skills', particularly in this context: the skills of reading and extended writing. The school has tackled the issue through its literacy policy, and the teaching of literacy skills is now satisfactory overall. Good work is being done in most subjects, including those referred to in the previous report as most affected by these weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported effectively in all aspects of their literacy development.

4. Pupils with special educational needs do well overall in relation to their prior attainment. In Year 7 all pupils are tested using well-recognised national tests. Pupils are placed according to prior attainment, and reading and spelling scores are measured; tests are made regularly after this. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well because of the intensive early individual support, assistance and care they receive. The special educational needs department works hard to deal with issues at an early stage to allow pupils to have the best chance of progress. Language enhancement lessons are particularly good at raising standards in Year 7 in reading, spelling and comprehension. This programme is targeted to assist low attaining pupils, pupils with special needs and those whose knowledge of English is not yet secure. By the end of Year 9, tests show that good progress is made by most of these pupils. Success may be seen when comparison is made between the large numbers receiving support in Year 7 and the reduced number in Year 9. By the end of Year 11, pupils make very good progress. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, all pupils with special education needs achieved a grade in at least one subject. Achievement is very good in withdrawal lessons and good progress may be seen in most lessons. Statements, use of individual education plans and the maintenance of good records assist measurement of progress. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) keep good records of achievement through planners and target charts, although there is some lack of consistency in transference and use of these records.
5. The school has a good programme to raise the standards of gifted and talented pupils. The original and very effective programme started in 1998 and the school has built on its success. In response to the government initiative, the co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils has worked with the pastoral, academic and behaviour co-ordinators to develop a good procedure to identify gifted and talented pupils and to keep account of their progress: for example, individual education or personal action plans are used within departments. Many teachers use the plans to negotiate pupils' strengths and weaknesses in learning and develop innovative and inspirational targets to raise pupils' attainment and challenge their thinking.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- Attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Relationships are very good and promote successful learning.
- Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to take responsibility.
- Pupils have the confidence to do well and support each other.
- The school has a very good community spirit.

6. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. Standards of behaviour are equally high. Pupils respond extremely well to the provision for their personal development and flourish in the community atmosphere created within the school. Attendance is good.
7. Pupils like the school and are prepared to work hard and to take full advantage of the many opportunities provided for them. Pupils are interested in their studies, keen to respond and clearly want to do well. An example seen of this was Year 7 pupils, learning about claimants to the throne after the Norman Conquest in a history lesson. Another was Year 9 pupils in a geography lesson during the inspection, who were excited and worked especially hard, motivated and enthused by the way the teacher had chosen to illustrate their lesson on Brazilian Amerindians. Pupils can concentrate effectively and respond well when their teachers build on this and encourage them to learn independently. There was a good example of such independence in a Year 10 English lesson where poetry was used to stimulate creative writing. Pupils are articulate, and have the confidence to express their own opinions, but are equally ready to listen to each other. They also like the activities outside lessons that the school organises and many take part.

8. Standards of behaviour are very high. Pupils behave consistently well in lessons. Teachers expect high standards and get them. In over half of the lessons observed by inspectors, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were considered to be very good. Pupils learn all the better because standards are so good. Behaviour as pupils move around the school is also very good. They behave sensibly when waiting for teachers to arrive. Moving between lessons they observe the one-way system. This is important for safety reasons, given the congestion in narrow corridors and on stairs. Pupils are friendly towards visitors, with ready smiles and good manners. All groups of pupils mix easily and pleasantly together. Although pupils interviewed considered that cases of bullying do occur, they were very confident that these were rare and would be reported and dealt with speedily. The level of permanent exclusions is low, but the number of fixed term exclusions is higher than expected for a school of this size. Most of these exclusions are imposed for justifiable reasons and are for short periods. They are seen by both pupils and the school as a way of maintaining high standards of behaviour.
9. Relationships in the school are very good and an important aid to successful learning. Pupils work very well together. They collaborate well when working in pairs and groups, for example by planning how to share set tasks productively. In discussion they show sensitivity to others' views and opinions. Relationships between pupils and teachers are also very good. Many pupils spoke very highly of the friendly atmosphere in the school and the efforts their teachers make to help them succeed. Pupils also respond very well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. The school aims to help pupils to become confident and responsible individuals. Pupils take the opportunities offered to do well and recognise and applaud achievement. This happened during an assembly when the puppeteers (from Year 9) performed so delightfully that pupils did not want to leave. Pupils were sensitive to the needs of the Muslims among them during Ramadan. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility – and there are many – are eagerly accepted. They are especially keen to do so when this involves helping others. This can be within the school, as prefects, mentors, part of the HOPE (helping other people everyday) team or in the wider community with the Civic Pride Project or their links with a school in Mozambique. Pupils consider that the school helps them to gain confidence and they value this.
10. Attendance in the school is good, above the average for schools nationally. In the academic year 2001/2002 the overall rate was 91.8 per cent. Authorised absence was 7.6 per cent and unauthorised absence 0.6 per cent.
11. The previous inspection report concluded that pupils had good attitudes to the school. They have improved further since then.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

- Teaching is very good overall and promotes high quality learning.
- Relationships are very good and contribute to very good classroom management.
- Pupils are keen to learn; their attitudes support learning.
- Individual needs are met well in the majority of lessons.
- Teachers develop pupils' confidence.

12. Teaching is very good overall and, as a result, pupils make very good progress. Teaching was identified as a strength of the school at the time of the previous inspection with one in ten lessons being very good; in this inspection, more than one third of teaching was very good or excellent and none was unsatisfactory. The improvement in teaching reflects the effort put into checking classroom quality by senior and middle managers and the continuous focus on improving standards of the school's well-developed self-evaluation process. Teachers reacted positively to the most minor criticisms of their teaching during the inspection and made improvements in subsequent lessons. Some very good teaching was seen in all subjects, giving the school a platform on which to build further improvement.

13. A number of closely related factors form the foundation for high quality classroom standards. Teachers know their pupils well and have very good relationships with them; this enables them to set high standards for work and behaviour to which pupils respond. Pupils bring very good attitudes to their work, and are keen to learn and not afraid to be seen to work hard and do well – which is a result of the positive spirit that is present in all aspects of the school's work. The result is that little time is wasted on managing behaviour. Teachers are good at identifying individual strengths and weaknesses and providing appropriate support for both – a particularly strong feature of teaching in English and geography. They encourage pupils to think for themselves. This combination of strengths results in pupils developing confidence in themselves and achieving very well.
14. The main difference between the high quality lessons and those which are otherwise satisfactory is generally in the way lessons are planned to meet pupils' needs, or the primary demands of the subject. For example, in modern foreign languages weaknesses in pupils' speaking skills are not consistently tackled by using the foreign language as the main means of communication in the classroom. Occasionally, such as in some religious education lessons, tasks are not well enough matched to pupils' needs with the result that lower attaining pupils sometimes struggle to cope. In a very few lessons, planning does not meet pupils' needs as well as usual because teachers lack the specialist expertise necessary – such as in gymnastics. Such lessons could be made much better with relative ease and, because of the rigorous monitoring of standards, the school is aware of the matters affecting progress and has plans to deal with them. The best lessons are planned to meet pupils' individual needs with a variety of suitably challenging activities that maintain pace, interest and concentration.
15. Teachers' use in planning of gifted and talented pupils' personal action plans is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, in the majority of lessons, pupils are provided with additional challenge to develop their potential. The result is that overall they make the very good progress of which they are capable – as shown by pupils taking the general studies paper and other GCSE examinations a year early and in at least one case moving on to higher education. Where the plans are in place and discussion has started (for example in English, food technology and art and design), there is a significant impact on teaching and learning. Occasionally the level of challenge in lessons is not high enough to fully challenge the highest attaining pupils.
16. Pupils with special educational needs learn well in most main school lessons because they are grouped according to their needs and attainment and teachers are aware of their needs. LSAs help pupils by checking understanding of tasks, reinforcing instructions and maintaining pupils' concentration. These assistants are attached to year groups so they know pupils well. When there is good planning and liaison between the subject teacher and the LSA, learning is good and sometimes very good. For example, in a mathematics lesson a teacher used progressive teaching to build up pupils' confidence in their learning in a structured way. Pupils in this low attaining group felt secure in the formula used and were able to apply it successfully to increasingly difficult problems. The LSA was briefed well by the teacher. Her contribution helped to reinforce learning and to meet the objectives of the lesson. Targets in individual education plans are not always used in the planning of lessons in all subjects. In some subjects this is an area for improvement so that targets are met and progress is maintained. In the learning support area there is very good, intensive teaching in well-structured lessons. Language support is provided as necessary for pupils who have English as an additional language so that they make very good progress. Specialist lessons in literacy skills for Years 7 to 9 give opportunities for progress across the curriculum. Pupils in learning support areas work purposefully in a specialist environment where they benefit in

catch-up sessions, which enhance coursework and homework for main school subjects. Teachers in learning support are particularly adept at making pupils think and work independently through good questioning. A specialist teacher helps pupils with behavioural and emotional needs. Behaviour and emotional issues are dealt with by this teacher who builds up trust and good relationships with such pupils so that small successful steps are then assured. After this, confidence-building exercises improve pupils' self-esteem and pupils continue to be supported in extra-curricular provision in the conference clubs organised for different year groups at lunchtime.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

- Overall provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Good provision is made for teaching basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Careers education is very good.
- Strong links with the community and other institutions enhance the school's provision.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent.
- Provision for moral and social development is very good.
- Provision for cultural development is good.
- Insufficient time is allocated to some subjects.
- The distribution of time across the week affects standards in some subjects.

17. The curriculum provides a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities.
18. The curriculum provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is broad and balanced and all subjects of the National Curriculum are provided, together with dance, drama and religious education. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow a common core curriculum including religious education and this is supplemented by a choice of options. A number of new courses have been introduced since the previous inspection such as business studies, an enrichment programme and GNVQ in ICT. The school tries hard to adapt its curriculum to meet the precise needs of its pupils, which change from year to year. For instance, until this year the school offered a work-related curriculum for a small number of pupils for whom a full complement of subjects in Years 10 and 11 was not appropriate. These pupils followed a course of study that more closely prepared them for the world of work. The school has identified the need to further broaden the curriculum and make it more relevant to the needs of its pupils by developing more vocational courses that will meet the diverse needs of all pupils fully.
19. Although the overall time allocated to the school's curriculum is higher than the national average, several subjects do not have enough time. The school allocates more than the usual amount of time to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and makes time available to give help to pupils who have weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. This is a major factor in pushing up standards in these subjects but in art and design, design technology and modern foreign languages, the shortage of time each week is holding back standards. This is made worse by the structure of the school day, which means that in Years 10 and 11 these subjects have lessons which are over an hour and a half long. Too much time is lost in the mornings during the tutor time, which is not being used productively enough. The school recognises the need to re-structure the school day to ensure that all subjects have an appropriate and equitable distribution of time.
20. The school has worked hard to introduce ICT into the curriculum and has placed great emphasis on embedding the literacy and numeracy strategies in the core subjects of English,

mathematics and science. The foundation subjects (all subjects other than English, mathematics and science) are also benefiting from these strategies.

21. Provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 with special educational needs is good. Statements are reviewed annually and individual education plans are reviewed twice yearly to check on the changing needs of pupils. Registered pupils spend most of their timetable integrated into mainstream lessons. Withdrawal from lessons for additional support and assistance varies according to a pupil's needs. Literacy is well targeted for improvement in Year 7 and a strategy called language enhancement aids pupils with language, reading, comprehension and spelling difficulties. This scheme is organised by an LSA. Throughout the school pupils' behavioural and emotional needs are dealt with well so that pupils are successfully integrated and encouraged to achieve. In Years 10 and 11, some pupils, for whom a full GCSE course is not appropriate, follow a support programme to improve their chances at GCSE level in fewer subjects. Significant careers assistance and inter-agency work is done to ensure good transition at the end of Year 11.
22. Overall provision for improving standards of literacy is satisfactory. Some good work is being done in most subjects, including those referred to in the previous report as most affected by weaknesses, to improve literacy. Attention to literacy skills in subjects across the school is helping to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported effectively in all aspects of their literacy development. In a few subjects, literacy strategies remain under-developed. For example, although mathematics teachers do, on occasions, encourage pupils to use technical language for explanation in GCSE coursework, they do not clearly focus on the development of literacy skills in all lessons.
23. The provision for teaching numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. There is a good policy statement to guide the development of pupils' numeracy skills in mathematics and other subjects. As a result, most subjects are making some contribution to improving standards as pupils move through the school.
24. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and supports learning in subjects such as art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. The good range of activities provided outside lesson time in departments and the library, together with the generous support given by teachers, make a considerable contribution to the school's high quality provision for pupils' social and personal development.
25. Provision for pupils' personal development is good. The PSHCE programme is well planned. It is stronger in Years 7 to 9 where there is a full lesson each week taught by a specialist teacher. In Years 10 and 11 there is currently less time and the lessons have to be taught by tutors. Topics included in the programme are well chosen and appropriate for the various years. Because of the school's active participation in the Lancashire Healthy Schools Project, there is a strong emphasis on all-round health. The effectiveness of the school's provision is to be seen in pupils' attitudes, their behaviour and the purposeful atmosphere in the school. The school's links with the community are very well developed. There are many examples of pupils' involvement in community activities that benefit their social development. Similarly, very good links with partner institutions contribute to pupils' education. For example, links with primary schools are helping to raise standards and make the pupils' move to the secondary school smooth. Curricular links include bridging projects and an exchange of teachers. At the other end of the school, links with post-16 institutions enable smooth transition and have enabled high attaining pupils to move on to the next stage of their education earlier than usual.

26. Careers education is very good. It systematically builds pupils' knowledge and skills through their time at the school, by means of modules within the PSHCE curriculum. A two-week work experience placement for Year 10 pupils is integrated very effectively into the careers programme. Liaison with the careers service ensures that pupils have access to this outside advice at appropriate points, starting with Year 8 and then into Year 9 when they choose their subject options. This good advice continues throughout Years 10 and 11.
27. The school has identified spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision as a central element of its aims and values. The success of this commitment to the development of their pupils as caring and cared for individuals is evident in pupils' very good attitudes, the relationships in the school and the spirit of confidence in the school.
28. The school's provision for the spiritual development of the pupils is excellent. Whilst supporting and praising academic achievement, teachers also allow pupils the time to reflect on what they have learned and to appreciate the world around them. For example, in geography there are planned opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences during fieldwork and when investigating natural disasters. In English, pupils have the opportunity for reflective writing and their work is included in anthologies that are displayed amongst the works of established authors in the library for the reading pleasure of other pupils. In many lessons pupils were observed evaluating the work of their peers with sensitivity and encouragement that supported the development of confidence and self-esteem. Assemblies, whilst not fully complying with the requirement for a daily act of worship, offer opportunities for reflection and prayer. The use of the dining hall is not suitable for this purpose although it does provide an area for house meetings. Pupils support their peers at times of religious significance such as Ramadan and a room is set aside for Muslim pupils to reflect and rest at lunchtime. In religious education, pupils discussed faith issues with sensitivity and respect, in an atmosphere where the spiritual environment is at times enhanced by the use of candles and perfume.
29. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects, such as in science where pupils consider the moral implications of the new developments in genetic engineering. Pupils are encouraged to consider fairness and equality, for example in sporting activities, and in history when they discuss the treatment of slaves and the effects of the Treaty of Versailles on 20<sup>th</sup> century history. The school gives clear moral leadership through the high expectations of its teachers and through its support for the pupils who work in groups such as the Civic Pride Project. Pupils are encouraged to support good causes such as the Goma crisis and their long-term support for victims of the Mozambique floods enables them to realise that each individual can make a difference.
30. Provision for the social development of pupils is very good. Their support of their fellows not only provides a clear moral message, but also develops their social skills and confidence. The school is expanding its pupil-mentoring scheme to include all years and at present Year 9 pupils are mentoring pupils in Year 7. The HOPE scheme, which is supported by the Red Cross, deals with pupils' problems sympathetically and anonymously via the widely circulated medium of the Hope Newsletter. The scheme also gives pupils the opportunity to support their peers anonymously, over a wide variety of concerns. This encourages the development of tolerance and understanding as well as providing opportunities for pupils' concerns to be raised. Pupils are being trained as pupil counsellors to provide additional 'face to face' support. The prefect system and the active school council enable all pupils to share responsibility for the running of their school. Pupils feel valued members of the school community and this is reflected in their relationships with each other and their teachers. Activity days and visits provide opportunities for social interaction between pupils and the form Christmas parties are happy social events.

31. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good. The school provides a range of extra-curricular music activities. The chamber choir is a very good example of cultural and social development combined, and there are many other opportunities for pupils to develop their individual musical skills. The annual drama production is a social and cultural event while theatre visits enable pupils to appreciate professional theatre. The display of art and pupils' work around the school lifts the cultural awareness of pupils. Through modern foreign languages, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 10 visit France and Spain and the links with French schools via e-mail enable pupils to gain a flavour of European culture. In food technology they derive great benefit from the experiences of their fellow pupils when they investigate the staple diets of other cultures living in Britain and the use of Islamic design enhances the work of some pupils in art. The school's links with Mozambique provide excellent opportunities for pupils to appreciate the cultures of a non-European country and to feel personally involved in them.

### HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- Standards of care are very high.
- Underachievement in work or behaviour is identified quickly and steps are taken to improve.
- Pupils are encouraged to do well.
- Procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline are excellent.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupil's progress are very good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good.
- Assessment information is not consistently used well enough to check pupils' progress or to plan teaching to meet their needs.

32. The school places a very high priority on the way in which it looks after pupils. Its stated aim is to care for the whole child 'with warmth and excellent discipline in a supportive atmosphere'. It succeeds in this aim. Except for the Year 7 manager, who remains in place to provide continuity for the transfer from the primary schools, tutors and year managers stay with their groups and make sure that they know the pupils well as individuals. They use their knowledge of pupils to guide and support them very sensitively. This informal knowledge is backed by exceptionally thorough records of pupils' academic progress, attendance, behaviour and personal development. Academic monitoring and the reports (known as grade collections) are used together throughout the year to record how well pupils work and behave. The school uses the results to praise and recognise those pupils who are making an effort in all aspects of their school life. Praise, when merited, is an important part of the care given to pupils. The monitoring and grade collection procedures also identify underachievement of all kinds, whether in work or behaviour. In addition, all pupils have two reviews. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, one of these reviews will be with a member of the senior management group. Pupils interviewed consider that they are encouraged to do well and they value this.
33. Procedures for child protection are good. The designated teacher is trained. The staff handbook contains good guidance based on the local education authority's procedures. Non-teaching staff are also briefed. Liaison with associated agencies is also good. However, some do not always provide timely support.
34. The procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline are excellent. The school makes it clear that pupils are expected to behave well, but that in return this will be acknowledged. Pupils understand what is required and accept that sanctions will be imposed should they fail to meet these standards. Members of staff act consistently in praising good behaviour. Those pupils who find it difficult to maintain good standards of behaviour are given help. Pupils too

contribute to improving behaviour through their roles as mentors and prefects. The harmonious school community is evidence of how well the procedures work. Bullying and oppressive behaviour are not a problem; the school deals promptly and effectively with cases that do occur.

35. The procedures to promote pupils' health and welfare are extensive and very good. Having been part of the pilot scheme for the Lancashire Healthy Schools Project, the school is now working towards accreditation. The PSHCE programme includes many aspects needed for a healthy life.
36. Pupils with special educational needs are identified as soon as possible and good liaison with primary schools assists this process. Statements of special education needs fully reflect progress. Where necessary, external agencies are involved in the preparation of appropriate support strategies. Reviews take place as required by the new code of practice. Some Year 10 and 11 pupils are included in transition plans to help pupils with special educational needs find employment. Consistency and socialisation are important factors in the social development and integration of pupils with special educational needs and pupils are encouraged to talk about their needs, to seek advice and to integrate as far as possible. Teachers and LSAs are frequently available to help with homework and deal with any concerns pupils may have.
37. The school has good procedures to help ensure pupils' safety. Risk assessments are now carried out by all departments. The congestion caused by the size of the buildings compared with the number of pupils is managed well through procedures such as the one-way system.
38. The school is particularly successful in the manner in which it collects and records information about pupils and uses this to help them do as well as they can. Subject departments and year teams work closely together. The school already uses the information it collects in a sensitive way to give very good educational and personal support and guidance. This is shown by improving results. Moreover, the school continues to seek ways of improving this support for all groups of pupils by evaluating current procedures.
39. Pastoral care was already considered to be good in the previous inspection report. It is now very good. The range of sanctions has been increased as suggested by the report. The quality of academic and personal support and guidance has improved.
40. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good. The assessment policy provides clear guidance for assessment that results in a consistent approach across the school. Year 6 national test results, and other nationally approved means of testing, are combined to build up a clear picture of pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school. This information is collated and made available to teachers so that they know the standards of the pupils they are teaching. Most subjects have good procedures in place to assess pupils against national standards. In some, for example geography, English and modern foreign languages, very good systems are in place that help pupils improve their standards. In some others, however, national levels and descriptors are not used well enough and as a result the procedures do not consistently produce an accurate picture of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9.
41. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are very good. The school has an excellent system for reviewing and checking progress. All teachers are involved in the process and the results are used very well to set targets for pupils. The results are regularly discussed with pupils so that they know what they have to do to improve their standards and reach their targets. The results of this process, however, are not yet being used consistently enough in many subjects to inform how they plan their work. In geography, the information is

used very well to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and in English it is used very well to change schemes of work so that the needs of individual pupils are met. However, in other subjects the information is not always used well enough to monitor pupils' performance and in planning to meet the needs of individual pupils.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- The school has a good partnership with parents.
- Parents very strongly support the work of the school
- Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning.
- Annual reports do not always give clear enough information about how well pupils are doing.

42. Parents very strongly support the work of the school and value what it provides for their children. Almost all of the parents who returned the questionnaire and/or came to the pre-inspection meeting consider that their children like the school and make good progress there. Those parents, virtually without exception, believe that the school expects their children to work hard and to do as well as they can. Parents say that they feel comfortable contacting the school if they have questions or problems. In their view, the school is led and managed well. The inspection team agrees with these very positive views that parents hold.
43. A small number of those parents who returned the questionnaire doubt whether the school does work closely with them and do not think that they are well informed about the progress that their children make. The inspection team considers that the school has good links with parents, but that while parents do receive a variety of information about how well their children are doing, the annual reports do not always summarise this clearly.
44. The school has good links with parents. It believes that forging a strong partnership is an important component of its professed aim to care for the 'whole child'. There are consultation evenings, one (or two at appropriate stages) for each year group. The school is quick to contact parents or carers where it feels better support for the child would result from concerted home and school action. There is an extensive – and developing – range of information about the school, the work pupils will do and how parents can contribute. This is a good feature. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are very detailed and contain much useful information for parents. At the start of each school year parents are told how the school will follow and monitor the progress that their children make. As part of this, parents are sent copies of school, homework and coursework timetables. There are guides to homework and personal study for Year 7 parents and about GCSE for Year 10 and 11 parents. Letters are sent after academic monitoring (a review of progress which takes place four times a year) to parents when their children have done well in their work or behaviour, as well as when the process reveals concerns. Grade collections give a useful snapshot of attainment standards, National Curriculum levels or GCSE predicted grades, as appropriate. However, the full annual reports are currently written in a way that does not give parents a clear view of what their children can do and need to do in order to improve as individuals.
45. The contribution which parents make to their children's learning is good overall. Parents strongly support the work that the school does. Attendance at consultation evenings is good. School productions, musical and sporting events are popular and enthusiastically supported. Parents sign the detailed home/school agreement. They also help in identifying and working with the extra work done by gifted and talented pupils.
46. Parents' views of the school are more favourable than at the time of the previous inspection. The amount of information given to parents is also better.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The headteacher provides outstandingly good leadership.
- Management is very good at translating vision into action and securing improvement.
- The staff share a common sense of purpose and the school has a very good climate for learning as a result.
- The governing body supports the school well.
- Financial management is very good; the school makes very effective use of its resources to secure improvement.
- The school's accommodation does not meet its needs.

47. Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides outstandingly good leadership and educational direction; his vision for the school's development and his determination to move the school forward have resulted in a school that serves its community very well. With the support of the governors he has established a very strong senior management group whose complementary skills ensure that vision is communicated and translated into action and that the school's aims and values are evident in all aspects of its work. The success with which the vision has been communicated is seen in the commitment to high standards that all staff, teaching and non-teaching, bring to their work, their commonality of purpose and the consequent capacity that the school has for further improvement. It is this shared purpose and consistency of approach that have led to the development of such an effective climate for learning in the school and a spirit of confidence among pupils.
48. Two principal factors underpin the approach to management. First, the management group pay meticulous attention to detail – without losing sight of the big picture of strategic improvement. Second, the school's well-developed self-evaluation procedures mean that strengths and weaknesses, which are few, are very well understood – and that quality assurance is a key focus of management at all levels in the school. Firm action is taken to deal with weaknesses and the headteacher does not shrink from disciplinary action if, despite support, any individual cannot, or will not, take the steps necessary to secure improvement. The result is that the school has strength in depth. In departments and the pastoral system, leadership and management are very good overall and in geography they are outstandingly good. The impact on teaching and achievement is clear in the improvements since the previous inspection.
49. The governing body plays an active role in supporting the school and holding it to account. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and of the aspects of its work which could be further improved. They are well informed through regular contacts and departmental reviews. Community views are taken into account in governors' management of the school. Demanding targets are set for examination success based on the school's own analysis of pupils' attainment when they join the school and at the end of Year 9; targets are consistently higher than those suggested by the local education authority. However, governors do not meet their statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
50. The school manages its finances very well. Procedures to ensure that spending is controlled and closely linked to the strategic development of the school are very good. Costs are evaluated against results to ensure that the school obtains best value for spending. The amount of money carried forward for 2001/2002 was higher than might be expected but was planned by governors as a means of maintaining staffing levels this year. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis as the result of efficient administration. New technology is used very well to support the work of the school, for example in the processing and

distribution of assessment information and particularly well in the 'cashless' system for providing school lunches. The school receives an above average amount of funding that it uses well to support its priorities; given its costs and the high quality of education provided, the school provides very good value for money.

51. There is a satisfactory match of teachers and support staff to the school's needs. Some departments are experiencing difficulties such as long-term absence, temporary teachers and some lack of technical support. History, physical education, ICT and modern foreign languages are affected by one or other of these, with a consequent effect on standards. Teaching is monitored regularly and rigorously by curriculum managers. The headteacher acknowledges that opportunities to share experience within the school and by visiting other schools are limited. This is an area for development. The staff development programme is planned and managed well, though budget restrictions limit training opportunities for individual members of staff. This causes difficulties in religious education and citizenship where training needs are more urgent. The programme for appraisal and performance management is good as is the programme of induction for new staff and for newly qualified teachers.
52. Caretaking and cleaning staff work hard to present the school buildings as a clean, welcoming and pleasant environment. Nevertheless, the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory for the number of pupils and staff who work in it. Only the well-organised system and the pupils' co-operative behaviour enable movement around the narrow corridors to be managed safely. There are too many pupils for the existing accommodation and safety is becoming a concern. The toilet facilities are stretched to the limit. Pupils' learning in many areas of the building is adversely affected by the lack of facilities. The physical education department has one indoor space, which is suitable for gymnastics but not for games such as badminton or basketball. Most of the physical education programme has to be arranged outdoors and often in inclement weather. Poor drainage on the grass areas curtails activities such as rugby and there are no facilities for cricket matches. The physical education staff have no suitable office from which to carry out administrative duties. Many departments, including design and technology, ICT and special educational needs, have cramped conditions. Accessibility arrangements for those with physical difficulties cannot be met other than on the ground floor. When they are able to, the school staff make the best use possible of the accommodation, for example the library is a very stimulating area in which to work. Music has very good accommodation that supports learning well. Other effective areas for pupils to work in include the geography, mathematics and science departments. The learning support unit has too little space for learning, mentoring, privacy in reviews and other essential meetings; too much time is wasted finding alternative accommodation when there is a clash of demands.
53. The school has adequate resources for learning overall. Resources are generally well deployed throughout the school, especially in the library, to create a stimulating environment. A section of the library is devoted to pupils' own writing. Nearly half the subject departments have good resources and access to a range of new ICT equipment, deployed centrally. Learning is restricted by shortages of equipment and textbooks in some departments. There are few books devoted to certain subjects in the library and there is outdated computer software in some areas.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

54. To improve standards still further, the governors and the school should:

- (1) Improve the school's accommodation to reduce overcrowding and provide appropriate facilities to meet its developing curriculum needs, particularly for physical education and special educational needs.

(Paragraphs: 8, 37, 52, 136)

The following should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- \* The allocation of time to subjects, the distribution of time and the structure of the school day.
- \* Further enhancement of the work-related curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 18, 19, 76, 85, 92, 136)

\*The school is already reviewing both these matters and planning improvement.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	123
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	38	54	23	0	0	0
Percentage	7	31	44	19	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	676
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	122

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	113

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	74

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	8.1

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0.6
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 (Year 9)***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	73	67	140

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	46	51
	Girls	56	42	51
	Total	96	88	102
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (65)	63 (58)	73 (70)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (27)	39 (40)	33 (37)
	National	29 (31)	43 (43)	30 (42)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	38	45
	Girls	52	36	48
	Total	92	74	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (68)	53 (64)	66 (75)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	6 (32)	29 (42)	31 (33)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	60	54	114

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	25	52	59
	Girls	35	52	54
	Total	60	104	113
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (48)	91 (95)	99 (97)
	National	51 (48)	87 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.8 (36.8)
	National	34.6 (39)

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

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	593	72	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	29	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	42	5	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	12	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

### *Financial information*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	311

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	21.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	1910684
Total expenditure	1809273
Expenditure per pupil	2783
Balance brought forward from previous year	52632
Balance carried forward to next year	154093

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

676

Number of questionnaires returned

160

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	49	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	43	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	52	1	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	54	5	1	1
The teaching is good.	54	41	1	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	43	11	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	3	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	43	7	1	7
The school is well led and managed.	61	33	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	1	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	49	4	1	6

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall and learning is very good as a result.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that the departmental team share a commitment to raise standards and improve further.

#### Area for improvement

- Develop further the work being done to raise the standard of boys' attainment.

55. In 2002, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was above average compared with pupils' performance nationally, and well above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in English was better than in mathematics and similar to performance in science. Girls did much better than boys, and the difference between them was greater than nationally. More girls reached Level 6 or higher than reached Level 5 or higher, an unusually good performance. Boys' performance was in line with national figures. Pupils' points score has fluctuated year by year but on average over the last four years has just exceeded the national average, largely as a result of the better performance of girls. The trend over five years is above the national trend. Given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, the picture is one of very good achievement by many pupils. Indeed, 87 per cent of the Year 9 pupils in 2002 attained Level 4 or higher, reflecting the very good provision for lower attainers and those with special educational needs.
56. GCSE English results for A\*-C grades in 2002 were in line with the national average and above average for A\*-G grades. In English literature, results were above average. Girls did much better than boys in both subjects. The results in English were disappointing compared with the significantly above average performance in the previous year and out of line with expectations given that the same pupils entered both examinations. The department's analysis of why this occurred is thoughtful and objective, identifying both internal and external factors as possible causes for the weaker performance of boys in particular. Concerns about discrepancies between coursework and examination marking are being raised with the examination board. Nevertheless, compared with their average points score at the end of Year 9, boys' results indicate that they achieved at least as well as should be expected in English and better than that in English literature. Girls' achievement was very good. Almost all pupils in the year group were entered for these examinations; three who were not entered, obtained Certificates of Educational Achievement. Analysis of the performance of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds shows that their grades reflected the pattern of results obtained by the year group as a whole.
57. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. These standards represent very good achievement by pupils in all year groups bearing in mind their well below average attainment on entry. Standards of achievement are high because the department has introduced the national strategy for teaching English in Years 7 and 8, and there are very good support programmes in place for the lowest attainers. Pupils from Years 7 to 9 improve their writing skills through word and sentence work and by writing in a variety of different styles in response to interesting and

stimulating material. They gain confidence in speaking and reading, and learn to work in a quiet and concentrated way. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs (particularly boys) benefit from a new venture in Year 9 where Shakespeare is introduced through drama. An early lesson in the programme showed pupils that Elizabethan language is not incomprehensible and gave pupils confidence to tackle their Shakespeare text for the examination. In Years 10 and 11 lower attainers are supported by good frameworks for their writing and show a strong grasp of character. Middle attainers can write at length and with understanding of key issues raised by their set texts. Higher attainers write fluently, knowledgeably and with personal involvement. There are good examples of creative writing from these pupils too. Standards of writing among the highest attainers would be improved by ironing out persistent spelling mistakes and by making the links between paragraphs support the flow of an argument.

58. Pupils have a very good attitude to their work as a result of interesting, enthusiastic and thoughtful teaching. Their behaviour is very good, and very well managed by teachers through attention to individual needs, good humour and personal knowledge. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers create a quiet and concentrated learning atmosphere. In a very good Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils worked independently and undisturbed on their 'diary entries' after discussion and reflection on the main features of diary writing and prime examples of this style of writing. As a result, they produced sensitive and thoughtful drafts for development later as homework.
59. The quality of teaching in English is very good, and pupils learn very well as a result. Well-planned lessons provide interesting and varied learning activities within a secure framework. Teachers often begin lessons with a reminder of previous work, and this not only helps pupils remember important information but also prepares them for the next stage in their learning. Teachers are particularly good at preparing and using supporting material for writing so that lower attaining pupils can do justice to what they know and understand. They are equally conscious of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and ensure that they make very good progress also. Teachers' knowledge of their subject and effective use of paired or group work, question and answer sessions and periods of quiet writing help pupils develop their skills rapidly and give them additional confidence in and enjoyment of their learning. They provide an attractive classroom environment where displays are both informative and celebrate pupils' work.
60. A very good example of the high quality of teaching and learning occurred in a Year 10 lesson where pupils learned a great deal about Aunt Alexandra in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The teacher's warm relationship with her pupils, her very good questioning and development of vocabulary, effective use of 'brainstorming' to share ideas and very good review of work in progress, constantly informed the pupils and kept them moving on. As a result, they responded with enthusiasm, used their knowledge of the text to extract evidence well, and produced lively and expressive writing in which the 'voice' of the character came through. Occasionally, the pace of learning slowed when teachers over-prolonged an activity or introduced unnecessary information, and sometimes not all pupils were involved. These occasions were rare, however, and the strong overall impression is one of a like-minded, consistent and committed team of teachers helping pupils to achieve very well.
61. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment and achievement are higher. Though girls' results continue to be better than boys', boys are not underachieving, and steps such as 'mentoring' of boys in Years 8 and 10 and 'Shakespeare through drama' in Year 9 are already being taken to raise boys' attainment. Teaching quality has improved significantly, with all teaching being good or better now compared with satisfactory or better previously. All these improvements arise from very good

leadership and management by the head of department. She and her teaching team share a continuing commitment to raise standards and enhance pupils' learning.

## Drama

62. Based on the limited observation of drama that was possible during this inspection, pupils are attaining average standards. They are able to work together well, use dialogue effectively in prepared situations, and make judgements about their own and others' performances. Teaching is good. For example, the teacher and her support assistant gave an effective demonstration of how to use a prop to convey understanding of a character. As a result pupils were able to imitate the idea in their own presentations and made good progress.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, which ensures good progress and achievement.
- There is good leadership and management that give a clear focus on raising standards.
- Results continue to improve in the end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils create a very good atmosphere for learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase access to computers in lessons so that pupils can use them to help their learning.
- The use of the time at the end of lessons to get pupils to think about what they have learnt is insufficiently developed.
- The frequency of testing of pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9 could be improved.
- Strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills through mathematics need improving.

63. When pupils enter the school their overall standards are well below average. Current standards are broadly average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Good teaching and a clear commitment by all teachers to improving standards are helping them make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils' achievement is good overall.
64. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average for all schools and average in comparison with similar schools. Boys' results were similar to those of girls. Results were not as good as those in both science and English. This pattern existed when pupils entered the school. Since 1997 results have improved faster than national trends. Results in 2002 continued to improve and are now very close to the national average. These results represent very good achievement for this group of pupils.
65. In the 2002 GCSE mathematics examination the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C was well above average. The proportion attaining grades A\*-G was above the national average. This represents very good achievement in relation to pupils' results at the end of Year 9. Pupils did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Girls and boys did equally well. Results have risen significantly since the last inspection. In the 2002 GCSE statistics examination all 10 pupils gained grades A\*-C.

66. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average and show an improvement on the results of the 2002 national tests, reflecting pupils' slightly higher standards on entry to the school and good achievement in Years 7 and 8. Standards for the highest attaining pupils are above average. Many pupils entered the school with well below average standards. Achievement is good overall. Most pupils handle numbers confidently in mental and oral activities. However, lower attaining pupils still have difficulty recalling tables. Average attaining pupils calculate accurately the exterior and interior angles of regular polygons accurately. Algebraic skills are not as well developed as other skills. Pupils handle data well. In geography and science, pupils draw a range of graphs accurately. Problem-solving skills are developing well. Pupils find patterns, establish rules and use formulae.
67. In Year 11 standards are above average. Overall, pupils' achievement is good in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Number skills are average. Most pupils do mental calculations confidently and use calculators accurately. Higher attaining pupils, in Year 10, calculate gradients of straight lines confidently and draw accurate graphs from algebraic equations. Although middle attaining pupils calculate different measures of average confidently they have difficulty comparing and describing their results. Algebraic skills are still not well developed for many pupils. Data-handling skills are good. Pupils understand well the different ways of representing data and the difference between experimental and theoretical probability. Problem-solving skills are good; pupils find rules, use formulae, predict and test results.
68. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often very good. As a result learning is good. Pupils make good progress and are achieving well. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures they are able to explain skills and concepts clearly, which helps pupils with their understanding. Teachers plan well to provide activities that meet pupils' needs and focus on the learning objectives. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, with lower attaining pupils, the teacher varied the activities well to ensure that pupils remained interested and as a result concentration was maintained. Teachers make good use of starter activities at the beginning of lessons. In a Year 8 lesson the teacher used wipe boards to good effect to develop pupils' understanding of units of measurement and skills for estimating lengths, areas and volumes. The review time at the end of lessons, however, is not used as effectively to get pupils to think about what they have learnt. Key words are displayed in classrooms to help pupils overcome their language difficulties. However, teachers are not referring to them often enough during discussions. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace. Occasionally, learning is very much directed by the teacher, which results in the pace of some lessons being too slow. Questioning of pupils is usually good although sometimes not enough pupils are involved in answering questions. The good management of pupils, together with very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils, ensures that pupils listen well and, when working together, co-operate and share ideas well. As a result, good progress is made in most lessons. Where support staff are provided they are used effectively to support pupils with special educational needs, ensuring that they make as good progress as other pupils. Although a range of activities, including practical and mental activities, are used to help pupils learn, limited access to computers means that insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to use computers to help with their learning.
69. Leadership and management are good. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. Results in Year 9 national tests have improved and those in GCSE examinations have improved significantly. A clear direction is given for the development of the subject and all teachers are committed to raising standards. Good progress is being made with implementing the National Numeracy strategy. It is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching. New schemes of work are being developed to support it. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good and the results are used well to check on pupils' progress and

achievement. However, the frequency of testing in Years 7 to 9 could be improved to produce a more secure record of pupils' standards.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and promotes high quality learning.
- Attitudes to learning are very positive and support very good achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good, promoting improving standards.
- Pupils achieve very good standards by the time they leave school.

### Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for independent learning.
- There is insufficient equipment for practical work and demonstrations.

70. The results of the 2002 national tests taken by Year 9 pupils and teachers' assessments of their work are average and well above when compared with similar schools. This represents good achievement by the pupils, as they enter school with below average attainment. Over the last five years, results have improved faster than the national trend and in 2002 higher attaining pupils achieved particularly good results. Girls do not achieve quite as well as boys but the difference is narrowing. Standards in work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are average overall, improving from just below average in Year 7 to just above in Year 9. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well. There is little difference between the standards achieved by boys or girls and those pupils of different cultural backgrounds. In general, pupils' understanding and knowledge of science concepts, such as genetics, reactivity of metals and energy, is of a higher standard than their skills of investigation.
71. GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average. Results have improved consistently and at a faster rate than the national trend since the previous report. Pupils obtain better results in science than in any other subject. Standards of work observed during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Girls are achieving as well as boys and although pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well, the most able, including the gifted and talented, reach a particularly high standard. Pupils' understanding of such topics as radioactive decay, genes and chromosomes is exceptionally good.
72. The overall quality of teaching is very good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than earlier years but it is always at least good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their specialist areas and they use this to good effect to capture pupils' interest and increase their motivation. This was clearly evident in a Year 11 lesson when the teacher's good knowledge enabled pupils to consider the advantages and disadvantages of genetic engineering. A good debate on the social, moral and ethical issues ensued and pupils gained much understanding. Lessons are also characterised by good planning, using a variety of activities that keep pupils on task. A strong feature of all lessons is the very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. This gives pupils the confidence to ask questions that aid their understanding; little time is lost in lessons in settling pupils down or in managing behaviour. Consequently, time is used effectively and this contributes to all pupils making good progress.
73. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make even better progress because teaching is heavily focused on the GCSE examination. Teachers give good advice on examination techniques, assessment strategies accurately track the progress of pupils; there is good support for potential

underachievers and increased motivation by the pupils to succeed. When lessons are not quite as good as the best it is because learning objectives are not always made clear to the pupils and opportunities for independent learning are missed.

74. Very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning are the key factors in ensuring that pupils make very good progress throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their science lessons and co-operate well with their teachers and fellow pupils. There are no tensions between pupils. Those with learning difficulties are well supported and make equally good progress, usually from a lower attainment base.
75. The very good leadership and management of the department are other important factors in the pupils' high standards. There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of work and GCSE results have risen, teaching has improved and new schemes of work and assessment procedures have been put in place. Strategies for identifying and supporting talented and gifted pupils are currently about to be introduced. However, there are areas that, as time and resources allow, could be improved. The department does not fully build on the pupils' very good attitudes to learning by giving them enough opportunities to use their initiative in solving problems and researching information. Resources for learning need to be improved so that ICT can be used more in the laboratory situation and more pupil investigations and class demonstrations can be undertaken.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching and learning enable all pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes lead to full involvement in their learning and they develop good confidence.
- Attainment in three-dimensional work, particularly ceramics, is good by Year 11.
- Creative use of new computer equipment and software enlivens pupils' work, especially in Year 10.

### Areas for improvement

- There is too little time for art in Years 7 to 9 and lessons are too short to enable pupils to progress as fast as they could in key skills such as painting and drawing.
- Pupils' written work, especially critical analysis, is weak.

76. Pupils' skills are very low when they join the school, particularly amongst boys. All make good progress in Years 7 to 9, but too little time is allocated to the subject for pupils to make enough progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 9. In addition, lessons are too short to allow the very good teaching to develop either the depth of knowledge or the techniques which pupils need to achieve as well as they could. Painting and drawing are weaker than average by Year 9, with only higher attainers' work showing the average range of attainment. Written work is below average and pupils' critical, contextual analysis of artists' work is weak. Pupils achieve well, given the time they have for the subject, developing confidence in practical work, especially in three-dimensional skills, where standards are nearer average.
77. Pupils' graphical techniques are below average when they enter their GCSE course. Very few pupils, usually girls, are above average overall. Three-dimensional work for GCSE, especially in ceramics, is often good, but earlier weaknesses remain and overall standards are below average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' written work, especially critical analysis, is

weak. This reflects recent examination results which, although improving year on year until 2001, were still below average and fell somewhat in 2002. Boys' attainment is improving as a result of good use of recently-acquired good computers and programs. Year 10 pupils make very creative use of ICT. They achieve complex, original images of their own paintings through digital cameras and scanners which they then manipulate effectively for application to three-dimensional work. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their standards at the beginning of the course.

78. Pupils themselves contribute significantly to their own success in art through their excellent attitudes towards learning. Very supportive relationships with each other and from teachers make learning enjoyable. The confidence they gain plays a positive part in the development of pupils' self-esteem. Unfortunately, the earlier lack of time for the subject makes it necessary for many pupils, especially lower attaining pupils, to undertake a significant amount of extra work, for example during lunchtimes, if they are to improve their skills to a level where they can achieve higher grades at GCSE. Those who attend these sessions achieve better than they might, but too many are unwilling to commit themselves in this way. This accounted for some under-achievement in 2002, particularly amongst boys. Even so, art contributes very effectively to most pupils' spiritual development because of the creative opportunities they are offered. Pupils of all abilities share in this success, with the work of pupils with special educational needs indistinguishable from their peers', except for their writing.

79. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are extremely well managed to take maximum advantage of the short time available, covering all aspects of the curriculum. Lessons have a brisk pace, with good changes in theoretical and practical activity, except where a lack of specialist knowledge leads to theory sessions being over-long. A very well paced figure drawing lesson in Year 9 showed pupils discussing and then drawing, from observation, several emotional poses, such as humiliation. Teachers' expectations are very high, so pupils progress very well. The relatively few able artists are encouraged effectively to reach the high standards of which they are capable. Non-specialist teachers are well supported by the head of department, with lesson plans common across all groups. Teachers understand pupils' strengths and weaknesses well. This ensures that all pupils experience media and scale of work where they can be successful. This is particularly evident in ceramics. Teaching also emphasises the need for good drawing and painting. Theoretical, contextual studies are a key component of pupils' studies, with unhelpfully short lessons including these elements effectively. Good management includes a sharp awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the department. Assessment of pupils' attainment gives an inflated idea of younger pupils' levels, however, and teachers need training to ensure that their assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate. The department has made a good improvement from the strong position described in the previous report.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- Leadership and management are very good.
- The well-organised tutorial programme of citizenship modules in Years 7 to 9 contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- Good opportunities for pupils to participate in local and international citizenship projects support learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work do not identify those lessons where the focus is on citizenship.
- Assessment is limited to the taught course in Years 7 to 9 so that the effectiveness of work in Years 10 and 11 is not clear.

80. Promotion of active citizenship has been a feature of this community school, long before the formal introduction of lessons in citizenship for Years 7 to 9 in September. Pupils have been mobilised under the school's Civic Pride Project to clear litter and place flower baskets around the town. Following the floods in Mozambique in 2000, the school raised money to rehouse a family and continues fund-raising to support the education of the children. Links have also been established with the secondary school at Bagamoyo. All pupils are involved in this project through a study of Mozambique in their geography lessons.
81. It is not possible to reach definitive judgements on standards at this early stage in the formal development of the subject but the indications are that they are above average in Years 7 to 9, where specific citizenship modules are taught in the tutor period. In Years 10 and 11, provision for citizenship relies on the contributions which individual subjects make as part of their courses. These have been mapped out to ensure expected standards are attainable. Gifted and talented pupils in Year 11 sat the GCSE general studies paper a year early and achieved above average results. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 7 and 8 were good at expressing their views on a range of controversial issues, listening to each other and observing basic rules of debate. School elections in the past two years have given pupils good experience of the democratic process. The Year 8 environmental days and the Year 9 global awareness week involve all in responsible action on local and international projects. For example, Year 8 pupils decorated the school café with murals on the theme of responsibility towards the needs of people in developing countries. The many opportunities provided for pupils to take part in practical projects are promoting good standards in citizenship.
82. The degree of participation in citizenship activities shows the positive nature of pupils' attitudes towards their responsibility as young citizens. Prominent displays of pupils involved on community projects show their pride in the school and the contribution they can make to the world outside. A number of pupils have won Young Citizens awards for their service to the community. Appeals for charity, such as the current one – making up shoeboxes of Christmas presents – meet a warm response from pupils. Pupils express interest in the new citizenship lessons.
83. Only a few lessons with a focus on citizenship were being taught during the inspection but the quality of teaching was good. In a Year 9 religious education lesson on standing up for what you believe, the teacher devoted time to a discussion of the current firefighters' strike, which increased pupils' understanding of the dispute and paved the way for their study of the prophet Mohammed's determination to proclaim his message in the face of opposition. A Year 10 lesson in business studies effectively combined the skills of managing a business with an exercise in global citizenship, as pupils set up firms to produce gift tags from recycled Christmas cards and raise money for Alder Grange house in Mozambique. In both lessons the citizenship objectives needed to be stated more clearly for pupils at the outset. High quality learning materials and group activities are ensuring a good standard of learning and teaching in the citizenship modules in Years 7 to 9.
84. Management of the subject is very good, with a clear development plan that is reviewed each half term. Leadership is excellent in its vision for extending pupils' understanding of their responsibilities as citizens from the local to the global stage. Close collaboration with the school's community officer means that the school seizes opportunities to involve pupils in

community projects. A thorough audit has been carried out of the various aspects of citizenship taught through subjects across the curriculum and a well-organised course put in place to fill the gaps in Years 7 to 9. The co-ordinator is working effectively with curriculum managers to highlight the subject in their schemes of work. At present it is not prominent in their planning, so it is difficult to monitor provision accurately. A potentially good system of portfolios of work for assessing pupils' progress in the tutorial programme has been established for Years 7 to 9 but it needs to encompass their achievement in other areas of the curriculum as well. The portfolios will eventually move through into Years 10 and 11 with pupils but, at present, there is no system for determining standards in these years.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good quality teaching leads to good learning.
- Improved designing in Years 7 to 9 is raising standards.
- Pupils' relationships and enthusiasm to learn contribute to their progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Review of curriculum time.
- Improving the use of assessment.
- Consideration of alternative vocational examinations.

85. Pupils enter the school with below average standards. In Years 7 to 9, they struggle to raise their attainment because of the low amount of teaching time allocated to design and technology. Teachers' assessed pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 as below average but this shows a considerable improvement in relation to their prior attainment. In work seen during the inspection, standards are now broadly average because of the improved use of data to set pupils' targets and steadily improving use of ICT to support learning.
86. In 2001 GCSE examinations, results were below average, with food technology producing the best results. The figures were similar in the 2002 examinations. Both 2001 and 2002 results show good improvement on pupils' previous results because teachers are building on their experience in Years 7 to 9 and making good use of the examination board's marking criteria. Girls are performing better than boys.
87. In work seen during the inspection, standards are improving and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. The programme of design work has been improved since the previous inspection and is now good. It is having a positive effect on standards; attention to accuracy and the more regular use of computers is consolidating learning. In Year 7, pupils' kites were very successful because their design research investigated structures and forces and designs were personalised. This ensured the design was not only imaginative but that the finished product had the strength for sustained flight. In practical work, pupils have a clear idea of quality; they select correct tools and materials. A range of writing guides and the good use by teachers of technical language are improving pupils' confidence and written work.
88. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are maintaining average standards but do not understand the additional value of first-hand research to help to develop their specification and test their design results. For example, many innovative ideas in Year 11 graphics are a result of pupils' personal choice rather than a response to the needs of an identified target group. This misses opportunities to consider the opinions of others when evaluating their products.

89. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve better than their peers in Years 10 and 11 because of the careful use of individual education plans to target their needs and the effective support from LSAs who work in the department. The department has an inconsistent approach to gifted and talented pupils, although there are examples of good practice. For example, in a Year 11 food technology class pupils discussed their individual learning plans with their teacher; progress was boosted by challenging teaching.
90. Pupils' attitudes to designing and making are very good, illustrated by the buzz of activity at Tec Club twice each week. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and manage pupils well. As a result, pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils have very good opportunities for personal development through, for example, working in groups to extend their learning.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lesson planning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are supported well by a skilled technician. Technical support in food technology is minimal and together with restricted space has an impact on organisation of the room to aid independent learning. Good, skilled demonstrations by teachers, for example in cutting, scoring and folding material for a carrier bag in graphics, have a good impact on quality. High expectations of work and behaviour ensure pupils make the best use of their limited lesson time. Lessons have pace and an air of excitement as pupils reach the end of a project. Year 9 pupils were very proud of their electronic moneyboxes and could not wait to demonstrate the success of their circuit once a battery was added. Occasionally teachers do not insist on pupils maintaining the high standards they require so that pace is slowed by the need to repeat instructions for pupils who have not been giving their full attention – mainly because they continue with their work instead of listening. Assessment is used productively; for example, results from end of unit tests are fed back to pupils individually to ensure they understand what they must do to improve their results.
92. Leadership of the department is good with the result that the diverse group of teachers are enabled to use their individual talents to drive the department forward. Policies are very effective. They match the vision of the school. The department has made a very good contribution to developing the bid for technology college status. Accommodation and resources do not support improving standards. Rooms are cramped and outdated, which has an impact on independent learning, and very hot rooms impede concentration. Issues raised in the previous inspection report have been dealt with, and improvement since that time has been good.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good. It is challenging, supportive and provides all pupils with opportunities to acquire geographic skills.
- Standards are above average by Year 9 and are improving year by year.
- Leadership is excellent and all teachers share a vision for the future development of the subject.
- Relationships are very good. Pupils respond very positively to the subject and speak highly of their teachers.
- The department evaluates its performance very well and has made very good improvement since the last inspection.

Area for improvement

- Better resources for teaching and learning, especially textbooks in Years 10 and 11.

93. On entry to the school, attainment is well below average. However, because teachers are concerned to meet the learning needs of all their pupils and because they challenge and motivate them, pupils achieve very well and standards are above average at the end of Year 9. In the first three years and from a very low baseline, pupils make very good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding of geography and in the skills of geographic enquiry. Pupils with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented make very good progress too because teachers treat them with the utmost dignity and because they try hard to involve everyone in what the subject has to offer.
94. Pupils in Year 7 have good map skills and are quickly beginning to use appropriate geographic terms. In Year 9, they can use geographic evidence very well to make deductions, for instance about the way of life of Brazilian Amerindians. Teachers provide pupils with well-designed resources to encourage them to think deeply about the subject matter. As a result, they ask quite perceptive questions of their teachers, and consider why, for example, we should spend so much money on protecting coastlines from the sea.
95. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 10 and 11 are close to those expected nationally and are better than the examination results of last year. This reflects the big improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9 brought about by the new head of department and new team of teachers. This represents good achievement as many pupils begin their GCSE course with below average attainment overall. In Years 10 and 11, pupils use the language of geography effortlessly and use geographic evidence to solve problems. Their understanding of the nature of the environment and of geographic patterns is good and they approach the analysis of data with confidence.
96. In all years, pupils respond very positively to the teaching, thrive on challenge and show a profound interest in the lessons.
97. In 2002, GCSE results were below average overall but this is a very big improvement over 2001 when results were very low. Girls outperformed boys in 2002 but the difference between the attainment of boys and girls is smaller than that seen in most schools. The department went through a period of staffing instability in which pupils were taught by a number of different teachers and this is one reason why the examination results are lower than standards seen during the inspection.
98. Pupils are able to make this very good progress because of the very high quality of teaching, characterised by the use of methods and resources, which challenge, support and so meet the learning needs of all. Pupils are encouraged to think because teachers have planned their lessons very well to ensure that are fully involved. Teachers skilfully use questions which are designed to encourage pupils to see the world in shades of grey rather than black and white. Pupils are very often quite surprised at what they can achieve. In an excellent Year 9 lesson, for example, the strategies used to include all pupils in what was on offer were so successful that pupils with special educational needs answered questions with such depth of thought that it prompted others to openly congratulate their successes. During the inspection, teaching was never less than satisfactory and in nearly half of lessons it was very good or excellent.
99. Teachers recognise that pupils can learn much from each other and so provide opportunities for pair and group work in every lesson. Because teachers place great emphasis on literacy and because there are word walls in each classroom, pupils are becoming articulate and use the language of geography accurately when speaking and writing. Pupils display very high

levels of industry and give of their best because teachers have very high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils benefit from regular marking of their work and also from extensive comments on what they need to do to improve. Consequently, pupils have the utmost confidence in their teachers and not afraid to ask when they are unsure.

100. Leadership of the department is excellent and the team of teachers shares a real vision for where the subject is going. This drive to push up standards is well seen in all classes: staffing is now good and the display in classrooms is of an exceptional standard. The department monitors its performance very closely and is not afraid to amend its practice when need arises. Learning resources are modest but are augmented by the industry of teachers who work long and hard to produce worksheets and source materials, which are thought provoking and are designed to challenge pupils of all levels of attainment. A shortage of textbooks in Years 10 and 11 is holding back standards
101. Because the department takes self-evaluation seriously, it has made very good improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the last four years. The department is well placed for future development.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching is leading to good achievement.
- High expectations of behaviour and good pupil management enable teachers to involve pupils actively in their learning.
- Very good knowledge and understanding of their subject enable teachers to provide clear support for pupils.
- Attractive display of pupils' work celebrates achievement and raises their self-esteem.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment across the department is inconsistent and is not used to guide planning, or to inform all pupils.
- GCSE pupils have no textbooks for home use, which reduces the opportunities for review and research.
- There is insufficient use of first-hand investigation of historical sites to support pupils' understanding. ICT has not been developed as a learning tool.

102. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average for the higher grades but all pupils achieved a pass grade. Results rose sharply in 2002 after a period when there had been little improvement. Boys' results were higher than those of the girls, and more boys follow the course than girls.
103. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average. This represents good achievement given the standards at the start of the course. Pupils make comparisons between the cottage and factory systems of manufacturing and higher attaining pupils identify the need for change. Pupils can identify differences over time in the lives of people and higher attaining pupils recognise the impact of the changes. Pupils have a secure picture of the developments in transport over time, and higher attaining pupils can differentiate between social and economic effects of these improvements. In oral work pupils often achieve their most perceptive work, supported by good questioning from teachers who encourage them to develop their answers. Books are neat and pupils take pride in their work. Written responses are generally accurate although many pupils write directly from the textbook with little attempt to analyse or develop their

answers. Higher attaining pupils can make reasoned judgements, for example when looking at the reliability of sources describing child labour during the industrial revolution. However, the majority of pupils do not provide reasons or evidence to support their judgements. Pupils recognise that people may hold different views that are affected by their motives although they do not investigate why such motives are held.

104. Standards in Year 11 are below average; however, pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils are gaining a clear overview of pre-war America and recognise the effects of the depression on the population. They are beginning to analyse the topics they study and are aware that all classes of society were affected by the depression, and of the conditions that existed for some groups. Higher attaining pupils identify the links between trade tariffs and trade restrictions, but written work does not demonstrate understanding of what the link is, or understanding of the economic situation they describe in the Wall Street Crash. Generally, pupils do not progress to evaluating the causes of economic depression, or make links between the different groups. Pupils use sources confidently to obtain information and recognise different viewpoints. Higher attaining pupils suggest motive and bias, though with little evidence of interpretation or evaluation. Responses are usually brief but accurate, demonstrating close reliance on the text. Pupils recognise the tensions between the major powers after World War I, and with support from teachers they can explain the effects of their individual agendas on the formation of the Treaty of Versailles. Higher attaining pupils are aware of a variety of viewpoints and can make reasoned judgements as to the fairness of the terms of the treaty, and can identify possible links with discontent in Germany in 1939. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and with confidence and are developing their understanding of essay formation in history. Lower attaining pupils write with the support of writing guides, although they are dependent on the given text.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some very good teaching was seen during the inspection. Lessons are usually well planned to meet the individual needs of pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, and to develop their skills of analysis. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. There is less clear identification of pupils' needs in the GCSE courses, which can result in a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils, when the pace of lessons and tasks are designed to support lower attaining pupils. Lesson objectives are clear and in most lessons teachers revisit them at the close to enable pupils to identify their progress. In the best lessons, pupils are challenged to reflect on information gathered and to consider links between changes and effect. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour, and relationships between them and their pupils are very good. Learning activities are designed to involve pupils and support their interest. Teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge encourage pupils' interest and involvement and increase the pace of work. Good use of group work enables pupils to learn from each other and when tasks are designed to provoke discussion, the understanding of pupils rises. This was observed in a discussion about the Treaty of Versailles when pupils took individual roles from the standpoints of the three major powers. Understanding does not develop well enough when tasks are too closely linked to re-arrangement of text and questions closely echo the arrangement in textbooks. Marking is encouraging and gives good support for the development of literacy. The lack of textbooks for GCSE pupils to use at home limits opportunities for independent learning, review and reinforcement, and preparation for the next lesson. Teachers make good use of display to celebrate pupils' achievement and to ensure classrooms are stimulating environments for learning.
106. The quality of leadership and management is good. Until recently there has been no manager for the subject. Clear structures and policies have been designed, but application has been inconsistent. The recent appointment of a subject co-ordinator has led to an improvement. Developments in teaching methods, assessment and support for literacy and for pupils with

special educational needs are being tried out, but are not yet consistent across the subject. Good systems are being introduced to help pupils evaluate the quality of their own work.

107. The resources for the department have improved since the last inspection; however, they remain unsatisfactory. Access to ICT has been limited and insufficient use has been made of places of historical interest, to support the development of pupils' skills of investigation. One overhead projector is shared between geography and history, causing difficulties for teachers in planning its use. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There has been greater emphasis on analysis of information by pupils and the appointment of the new subject co-ordinator is contributing to the development of the subject.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

##### Strengths

- New leadership of the subject is providing clear direction for improvement.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment contribute to their learning.
- Good use of nationally accredited units of work lets pupils know how well they are doing.

##### Areas for improvement

- Recording and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum.
- Provision of courses at different levels of accreditation to meet all needs.

108. Pupils join the school with below average skills. Teachers assessed standards in 2001 and 2002 at the end of Year 9 as below average and inspection evidence confirms this judgement.
109. For the past three years, GCSE examination results have been below average, but 2002 results showed an improvement. In 2001 the school introduced a new examination at the end of Year 11 – the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) to better meet the needs of pupils and improve results. This course is first examined in 2003. In addition a good alternative key skills internal qualification has been developed for those not wishing to take GCSE.
110. In work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9, standards are average and reflect good achievement in relation to earlier learning. The amalgamation of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) units of work into the department's schemes of work is strengthening the teaching of specific ICT skills and raising standards. Pupils are able to work with word processing, spread sheets and databases and use the Internet for research when supported by their teachers. Independent application of skills in the wider curriculum is underdeveloped because the use of ICT across the curriculum has not been well enough co-ordinated or managed so that good practice might be recorded and shared.
111. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average because in previous years pupils were given insufficient opportunities to become competent in a range of computer skills. For example, pupils' input of data and text is slow, keyboard skills lack efficiency and pupils lack confidence. Use of data for spreadsheets is confused because pupils have not previously done their own data capture in order to understand the value of using a spreadsheet for problem solving or testing out, by using 'what if?' questions. However, now that ICT is under new management, the present Year 10 pupils are using the coursework from the GNVQ more productively. They have a greater amount of teaching and are gaining confidence and capability.

112. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language match the progress of their peers. However, gifted and talented pupils are not making use of their individual education plans to raise their aspirations.
113. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in ICT are very good. Computers across the school are used regularly at breaks and lunchtime. Good after-school clubs for Years 10 and 11 are helping pupils to overcome their lack of application of ICT skills, and helping to bring their work up to examination standards.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers are self-motivated enthusiasts. They give tirelessly of their time to ensure pupils are reaching their potential. Planning is very good and learning has been enhanced in Years 7 to 9 by the recent improvement in schemes of work. Teachers capitalise on opportunities to introduce technical language and use computers to enhance numeracy skills. Year 9 pupils captured data on classroom noise and were challenged to convert the data to present to a wider audience. For many the graph wizard was a new and effective way of presenting data. Teachers' assessment of units of work is in place but pupils are not familiar with the content of National Curriculum levels, which misses an opportunity to help them improve. In Years 10 and 11 the on-line interactive programme for GNVQ has been effectively modified by teachers because they have seen the need to supplement the programme by whole-class teaching in order to raise standards.
115. The department has been under new and dynamic management for a very short period. In that time leadership has been clarified and strengthened by a very good analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Accommodation has a negative impact on learning because rooms are too hot for pupils to concentrate and layout impedes eye contact in teaching and learning. A small department staff, including very effective technical support, is improving the image of the subject across the school and developing very good links with a local primary school. Application of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is inconsistent. There is no record or oversight of the contributions from different subjects, which misses the opportunity to celebrate and share the good work in art and design, design and technology and geography. Many other subjects are also including ICT in their curriculum planning, such as modern foreign languages, where using equipment on a regular basis is enhancing teaching and learning in the subject. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection; the issues raised have been dealt with through new schemes of work, improving resources and open access.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Very good use of ICT and a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils' positive attitudes.
- Very good departmental handbook, providing a comprehensive overview of the department's work and strong links with the school's ethos.

### Areas for improvement

- Raise the level of pupils' attainment in public examinations.
- Develop teaching methods to enable pupils to acquire higher levels of fluency and accuracy when using the foreign language.
- Use the foreign language more consistently for classroom communication.
- Review the construction of the timetable in order to avoid double lessons.

116. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are in line with national averages overall, though the performance of boys is lower than that of girls. Pupils entered for GCSE Spanish in 2002 achieved worse results in this subject than they did in all their other subjects, with girls performing better than boys. Those entered for French achieved similar results to those in their other subjects, with boys performing better than girls. The results in both languages were better than in 2001. In Spanish, the principal language for this year group, the improvement was satisfactory. In French, the improvement was considerable, but the number of candidates entered was too low to be statistically significant.
117. Overall standards are average. In work seen during the inspection, pupils of all levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress. They demonstrate the ability to work independently and ask questions to confirm their understanding. Written work is well presented. Opportunities for pupils to use verb tenses at this stage are few, however, and generally restricted to more able pupils. In Years 10 and 11 more able pupils make satisfactory progress over the two years. They are encouraged to express their own ideas and to work independently. For example, in a Year 10 Spanish class, pupils engaged in a lively conversation with their teacher about the amount of pocket money they received each week. Some errors persist, however, notably with verb forms and tenses. Lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well supported by their teachers and support staff and make good progress.
118. Pupils have very good attitudes. For example, in a Year 7 class, pupils became very enthusiastic when challenged with various ways of demonstrating their mathematical skills in French. The social and cultural aspects of the curriculum are well represented in modern foreign language lessons and pupils work within a clear moral framework. As they move up through the school, pupils behave in an increasingly mature way, offering each other support and developing good social relationships as they do so. For example, all the pupils in a Year 11 French group listened carefully while individuals attempted to talk about household routines and chores using different tenses.
119. Curricular opportunities are good: all pupils learn at least one modern language and a small number continues with two. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to study outside lesson time in lunchtime clubs, including the chance to use ICT facilities. Trips to both France and Spain are undertaken and teachers offer their time outside lessons to help pupils who find homework difficult. Good support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and classes composed of lower attaining pupils are smaller, enabling the teacher to provide more individual guidance. All these factors make a positive contribution to learning, but timetabling constraints, requiring double lessons in Years 10 and 11, have a negative impact.
120. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The management of pupils is effective and teachers establish very good relationships with pupils. Basic skills are effectively integrated into the learning and homework is set and followed up. Teachers have high expectations of both behaviour and effort, responding in most cases to pupils' written work in a lively and encouraging way. Literacy skills are integrated into most lessons and this has a positive impact on learning. For example, pupils in a Year 9 French class were good at spotting the grammatical patterns in unfamiliar structures. There is some very good practice in integrating ICT into the curriculum. However, whilst most staff are fluent speakers of French and Spanish, the practice of using the foreign language for the purposes of communication is not followed with sufficient consistency and persistence. Also, some weaknesses in pupils' learning are not consistently dealt with effectively by the teaching methods currently employed within the department. For example, many pupils have difficulty with verb forms and most lack fluency and spontaneity when responding to questions or initiating conversations.

121. The leadership of the department is satisfactory, providing clear direction. The policies, procedures and schemes of work are relevant, up to date and have a direct impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers make sure that classrooms are bright and attractive despite the fact that rooms are quite small and cramped. Good practice is shared at departmental meetings and sessions have been held for developing teachers' competence with ICT. A very effective exercise in pupils' self-evaluation has been conducted, which has the potential to boost standards. A modular syllabus has been chosen in order to improve results and timetabling improvements are planned, but no in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of different teaching methods has been conducted. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Provision of lunchtime clubs, support for special educational needs, resources (especially in ICT) and links with a school abroad are better, but standards are unchanged and there is still insufficient use of the foreign languages in lessons.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good quality of teaching and learning leading to very good achievement.
- High standards in Years 10 and 11.
- The teacher's expertise and enthusiasm which have led to very good improvement in provision.

### Area for improvement

- Greater challenge for gifted and talented pupils.

122. Standards are above average, rising from well below average on entry to the school, to average at the end of Year 9, and well above average at the end of Year 11, representing very good achievement in all years.
123. In GCSE examinations in 2002, five of the six pupils entered obtained passes within the grades A\*-C range, broadly in line with national averages.
124. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed girls in line with national standards, but boys well below.
125. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils are able to play simple music to a satisfactory standard, for example 12 bar blues on keyboards from notation. They acquire a good repertoire of songs and perform with enthusiasm, for the most part in time and in tune. Pupils' compositions demonstrate understanding of musical forms such as theme and variations, and compositional devices such as ostinato and ground bass (repeated patterns of notes over which other melodies can be contrived), effectively. Knowledge of styles and musical language is generally good.
126. Approximately 60 pupils – a good proportion – enhance their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons; they and many others also do so by participating in a variety of performance groups, for example wind band, and chamber and school choir.
127. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Pupils attain high standards of performance both individually on a variety of brass, woodwind, stringed instruments, and keyboards, and in combination as an ensemble. Studying Renaissance music, for example, they learn about consorts (musical groups) of the

period by acting as one in the performance of *Danseyre* by Susato, thus practising and improving their performance skills and gaining valuable insights into this particular style. Their compositions show good imagination, understanding and use of compositional devices such as free counterpoint (the combination of melodies). They make good use of ICT to check and display their ideas. Pupils' knowledge of styles, composers and technical language is very good.

128. Attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good and often excellent, a state of affairs which contributes immeasurably to high standards of teaching and learning. Pupils are encouraged to think and find out and become independent in their learning. They enjoy music lessons and the take-up in Years 11 and 10 for GCSE is well up on previous years.
129. The quality of teaching is consistently very good at all stages, and sometimes excellent. The teacher has excellent knowledge of the subject and as well as possessing very good all-round musical skills, is a particularly fine violinist. Basic skills are very well taught, given the constraints of limited time, and class management is very good. Lessons are very well planned with high expectations and precise timing. Consequently the quality of learning is consistently very good. Pupils make very good gains in knowledge and understanding of music. Year 7 learn about musical forms, for example binary (two contrasting sections), ternary (two contrasting sections followed by a repetition of the first section) and rondo (several contrasting sections with the first one played before each new one and at the end). Pupils learn this information as language, by singing many examples, by listening to examples – for instance from a Mozart horn concerto – and by hearing an excellent violin performance by their teacher of a theme by Purcell. Year 10 pupils refine their fanfare compositions (based on the harmonic series – the range of sounds available for instance on a bugle), making use of computers linked to keyboards and 'cakewalk' software, to try out various permutations and repetitions of the notes. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress but in general are insufficiently challenged by the broad curriculum offered to all.
130. The previous report makes dismal reading. Pupils were below average in all aspects and there were no extra-curricular activities. A newly qualified teacher had arrived some two or three weeks before the inspection and in that short time had set up a choir and made a good start on tackling what was clearly a daunting and challenging situation. What a transformation has taken place in the intervening years! Standards are above average and extra-curricular groups are well established. A good proportion of pupils are learning to play musical instruments. Choirs and ensembles contribute to a busy calendar of events which are greatly appreciated by the school and the community. The teacher responsible for bringing about such very good improvement deserves the highest praise.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- There are very good teacher/pupil relationships.
- Provision for extra-curricular sport is very good and contributes to progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in gymnastics.
- Accommodation – both outdoor and indoor.
- Timetabling and length of time spent on units of work.

131. In 2002, teachers assessed pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 as average, with boys attaining higher than girls. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 was below average but above average at grades A\*-G. Work scrutiny and observations in Year 11 indicate that similar standards are being maintained. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' standards at GCSE level. In the majority of lessons, lower attaining pupils achieve to their potential because tasks are well matched to their needs. Talented pupils develop their expertise through the very good extra-curricular opportunities and inter-school fixtures. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school.
132. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9 standards are below average in gymnastics and outdoor games. In gymnastics, the basic skills are weak and this has an adverse effect on sequence work. Many pupils have little control of take-offs and landings. A similar lack of basic skills in catching and receiving hinders development in small team games such as rugby and netball. There is an improvement in hockey and volleyball in Year 9 and small group skills reach an average standard. Orienteering in the same year encourages pupils of all levels of attainment to take part in teams and follow a problem-solving course leading to good standards of co-operation within the group. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their standards when they join the school
133. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 11, overall standards are below average. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' earlier learning. The GCSE groups are performing practical work at the standard required but, apart from a few examples, the written work is below average. Project work is improving but the overall standard is still below average. GCSE groups in Year 10 are at the average standard and improving in both practical and theory work. Pupils' standards in mainstream physical education are below average in gymnastics but are average in football at the end of Year 11. In gymnastics, a lack of confidence in linking movements together produces disjointed sequences.
134. Attitudes to the subject are good overall and often very good. There is an enthusiastic response in Years 7 to 9 to netball, rugby, hockey and volleyball that assists learning. Pupils concentrate and focus on developing their basic skills. The demand for extra-curricular activities such as football, dance and trampolining reflects a growing enthusiasm towards the subject. The pupils' inter-personal skills are very good and they co-operate excellently with each other. Their standard of dress for physical education is very good. These attitudes have a positive effect on learning and disruptions to lessons are rare.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Apart from gymnastics, teachers show an in-depth knowledge of the subject. They organise and manage the lessons effectively and the teacher/pupil relationships are very positive. Planning is good in games lessons but a lack of confidence and expertise in gymnastics teaching hinders progression in sequence work. Observations in Years 7 and 8 show that when dynamic practices are offered to the pupils, they make good progress in rugby and netball. On occasions practices are static with lengthy instructions, and progress slows. A very good lesson in volleyball provided an active, challenging and varied approach that promoted rapid progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are given opportunities to make progress through the appropriate matching of task to ability. The restrictive apparatus layout in Year 8 gymnastics lessons and a lack of knowledgeable teaching strategies impeded progress in basic movement skills. A more varied apparatus layout in Year 11 gymnastics helped pupils to participate more enthusiastically. Progress is made in GCSE theory lessons because of the competent class teaching. Pupils are encouraged to present their work attractively and accurately using their ICT skills. Teachers work hard in unsatisfactory accommodation and show enthusiasm in the extra-curricular programme where demand from pupils of all abilities is high.

136. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the breadth and balance of activities is good. However, the units of work are not long enough to allow pupils to progress to a high level of skill. Teachers offer clubs and team practices in the extra-curricular programme and approximately a third of the school population attend the sessions to improve their standards. Assessment procedures are good and meet the criteria set in the National Curriculum programmes of study. Leadership and management are satisfactory and documentation has been clearly presented and acted upon. Checks on the quality of gymnastic teaching and the sharing of expertise with non-specialists are not done well enough. Accommodation is unsatisfactory with a consequent effect on overall achievement. Outdoors, there are good hard surface areas but the medium-sized gymnasium is the only indoor space. The playing fields have drainage problems and are hardly used. There are no adequate facilities for cricket and indoor games such as badminton. Most of the teaching is outside and the staff and pupils combat the facilities and weather conditions with fortitude. Resources are good and sufficient for the development of basic skills.
137. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There are very good relationships. Extra-curricular opportunities in sport are very good. Teachers and pupils work hard in difficult conditions. Areas for improvement should be centred on gymnastic standards, timetabling issues and continuing with the school's bid for more indoor facilities.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching based on very good relationships between teachers and pupils leads to good learning.
- Above average standards in Years 10 and 11, as an increasing number of pupils are taking examinations in the subject.
- Good management of the subject and curriculum development.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.
- Matching of tasks and materials to the needs of lower attainers in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for in-service training for non-specialists.

138. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. They achieve well and reach average standards in Year 9, rising to above average in Year 11. In 2002, GCSE results on the full course were around the national average at grades A\*-C and on the short course they were well above average, from a combined entry of nearly half the year group. Girls did significantly better than boys. These results are a big improvement on 2001 when they were below average on both courses.
139. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average, the result of good achievement. Pupils have a good knowledge of the three main religions studied – Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. In their work this term on ultimate questions about creation and the origins of evil, Year 9 pupils show satisfactory understanding of religious and humanist points of view. Higher attainers are discerning in their imaginative writing and poetry on how God might view the world in its present state. Most pupils manage to put forward religious and secular views on these issues in imaginary interviews with people who hold them. A number of pupils, mainly boys, tend not to develop their ideas in sufficient

detail or explain reasons for holding them. Pupils express their views fairly well in writing and have a reasonable grasp of subject vocabulary. Weaknesses in literacy affect the work of lower attainers, who struggle to complete written assignments. When the work involves some practical activity, as in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils made symbols out of coloured paper to represent attributes of God, lower attainers learn well. Pupils are competent at finding out information for themselves as homework preparation for lessons. Year 9 pupils were well prepared for their lessons on Islam, enabling them to progress quickly from factual knowledge to an understanding of the prophet Mohammed's sense of mission after the revelation on Mount Hira.

140. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 11 standards are above average. All pupils are being prepared for GCSE examinations and their achievement on the courses is good. Pupils preparing for the full course are reaching average standards, making good progress. Their detailed notes covering aspects of Islam studied this term show good knowledge and understanding. In a lesson on Ramadan, the contributions from Muslim pupils observing the fast helped the class to understand the spiritual benefits of fasting. They are building up a good knowledge base on the five pillars of Islam but need more practice in applying their learning to answering examination questions. Pupils receive detailed feedback on their work and are responding to their teacher's high expectations of them.
141. On the GCSE short course, followed by all pupils, above average standards are being achieved in the higher sets, where they are developing effective examination technique through regular practice of GCSE questions for homework. In the lower sets, pupils are knowledgeable about legal and moral arguments surrounding abortion and euthanasia but not so sure about the teachings of different religions on these issues. The focus on examination preparation for homework is not as good. Progress on the medical ethics topic varies between groups. Girls' work tends to be more detailed than boys' work. Girls pay more attention to planning answers to questions, and discuss the issues more fully.
142. Pupils display good attitudes towards the subject in all years. Good teaching makes the subject relevant to pupils' own experience of life by linking religious commitment to topical examples of people standing up for their beliefs in Year 9, and involving pupils in discussion of important moral issues in Years 10 and 11. Pupils collaborate well on tasks and listen to each other's views in discussion. The presence of pupils of different faiths in most classes informs their studies and promotes healthy respect for other religions.
143. The quality of teaching is good overall. There is some very good teaching in Years 7 to 9, where the specialist teaches most classes, in a most stimulating subject environment created by displays of pupils' work and exhibits of artefacts. In these lessons, pupils achieve spiritual insights, for example into religious symbolism in a Year 8 lesson and into the power of religious revelation in Year 9 lessons observed. Non-specialists are teaching lessons well from the excellent lesson plans and learning materials they receive. They would benefit from in-service training on the assessment criteria in the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus and on the GCSE short course. All the teachers establish very good working relationships with their pupils and create the right learning environment in which pupils can confidently explore values and express views. Lessons are characterised by a variety of activities, as teachers make good use of discussion, video, texts and practical work to help pupils to learn effectively in different ways. High expectations are made of pupils in detailed comments on their work and they respond to the challenge. Sometimes, the academic challenge is set too high in broad ability classes and there needs to be a better match of tasks to the needs of lower attainers. Effective use is made of homework for finding out information in preparation for lessons, often from websites. Use of ICT to support learning in lessons is underdeveloped. Short tests of factual knowledge are used to good effect to help pupils memorise information.

144. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Valuable work in curriculum development was done over the summer by the new subject co-ordinator, revising all the schemes of work and preparing detailed lesson plans and a guide for staff teaching outside their subject areas. Support for teaching is very good. Assessment has been rightly identified as a weak area in Years 7 to 9 and new common tasks are being introduced, based on subject criteria and level descriptors similar to those used by National Curriculum subjects.
145. There has been a big improvement since the previous inspection, when the school did not have a specialist teacher. Teaching is now consistently good or better and results have improved appreciably, with more pupils sitting examinations in the subject. The subject has become established as a GCSE option and the short course has developed as the programme of study for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.