

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CARDINAL ALLEN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Fleetwood

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119799

Headteacher: Mr J O'Brien

Reporting inspector: Mr E Wheatley  
10013

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2003

Inspection number: 254092

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: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Melbourne Avenue  
Fleetwood

Postcode: FY7 8AY

Telephone number: 01253 872659

Fax number: 01253 772143

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Vivien McCarron

Date of previous inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	E Wheatley	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What could the school do to improve further?
19720	D Granville-Hastings	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?
2893	J Manning	Team inspector	English Drama	
2919	P Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27503	M Foulds	Team inspector	Science	
30901	S Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Business studies	
12118	J Paver	Team inspector	Inclusion Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities? GNVQ
2740	B Barrett	Team inspector	Special education needs History	
3793	J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	French, German	
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Spanish	
1340	D Wigley	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	
22042	J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Cardinal Allen Catholic High School has 842 pupils age 11 to 16. Numbers have risen in recent years but the school is smaller than the average 11 to 16 school. The school draws pupils from mainly 14 parishes. No pupils have English as an additional language and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs and who are on the school's register of special educational needs are average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, though the school and large parts of the catchment area are in identified multiple deprivation areas. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and has been for several years, though the cohort of pupils who took their end of Year 9 national tests in 2002 entered the school with below average attainment.

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

This is a good and improving school with several very good and outstanding features. Pupils achieve well and teaching is good and often very good. The school is well led and managed and the senior staff provide clear direction for further improvement. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and their personal development is outstanding. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Overall, standards are above average.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and often very good.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes to school, and relationships with each other and adults, are excellent.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a clear direction for the school's continuing improvement.
- The school's links with parents are very effective.

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

- Standards in geography are not high enough.
- Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The observation and evaluation of teaching and sharing good practice are not systematic enough.
- There are insufficient resources for learning.
- Accommodation for some subjects is unsatisfactory.

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

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

The school was last inspected in November 1997 and since then improvements have been satisfactory. Statutory requirements for design and technology are now met, though there is

maximum uptake of the subject as far as facilities and staffing will allow. Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is still unsatisfactory, though improved accommodation from the next school year is intended to solve this. Work for higher attaining pupils is challenging and there are increased opportunities for independent learning. The monitoring of teaching and dissemination of good practice are still inconsistent. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has improved and plans to improve resources for learning and the library are advanced.

## 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			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	B	C	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In the national tests taken by 14 year olds in 2002, attainment was above average overall. It was well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Results are improving in line with the national trend. Compared with similar schools, results were above average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average overall and they are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve very well in English and well in mathematics and science. Standards are well above average in art and design and design and technology, above average in history, ICT and modern foreign languages, and average in citizenship, geography, music and physical education. Overall, pupils achieve well and very well in art and design, citizenship, design and technology and ICT.

In the GCSE examinations in 2002 results were average overall and have fallen in recent years. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was above average and the proportion obtaining five or more A\*-G grades was average. The percentage obtaining one or more A\*-G pass grade was below average. Compared with similar schools results were broadly average. The school did not meet its targets. This was because a small but significant proportion of pupils did not take GCSE examinations either because they were on alternative non-examination courses or because they had personal and behavioural problems. The school has already improved approaches to supporting pupils who could have performed better than they did. Results were best art and design, design and technology, ICT, English literature, French and Spanish. Inspection evidence shows standards to be above average overall. Standards are above average in English, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are well above average in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and ICT. They are average in citizenship, music and business studies, and below average in geography. Overall pupils achieve well though in geography the highest attainers underachieve.

Standards of literacy are above average overall. Standards are average in numeracy and below average in cross-curricular ICT.



Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets and those pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils arrive to lessons with a desire to learn. They ask and answer questions, listen effectively, and work efficiently and with interest. Pupils speak proudly and loyally of their school and feel fortunate to be there.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around school is very good and often better. The number of exclusions is low and incidents of bullying are very rare. Generally, pupils are supportive of one another in lessons, helping each other naturally and readily.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are excellent and have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils relish the chance to take on responsibilities as they progress through the school. They do so with maturity and a genuine desire to help others and their school.
Attendance	Attendance is consistently above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is low.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in nearly all of the 116 lessons seen. In a third of lessons teaching was very good and occasionally excellent and it was good in just under a half of lessons. Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. It is very good in art and design and citizenship, and satisfactory in geography and music. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one geography lesson where work was not challenging enough for the highest attaining pupils and poor in one music lesson where the main teaching style limited the involvement of pupils, who lost interest and concentration.

Where teaching is at its best, there are very good relationships and management of pupils. Pupils learn in a secure environment and gain confidence in expressing their knowledge and understanding. Work is challenging, there is often searching questioning and pupils respond well, pushing themselves to answer well and produce good work. Teachers' expectations are high; they provide a wide range of activities well matched to pupils' needs. Activities often fascinate and engage pupils' interest and concentration.

The teaching of literacy is good and of numeracy is satisfactory. Teaching of ICT across the curriculum is variable. Where it is taught in English, business studies and design and technology it is taught well; elsewhere it is unsatisfactory because there is not enough access to computers – an issue that is due to be resolved by February 2004.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and teachers are well informed of individual learning needs and receive the help of effective learning support assistants.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Provision for PSHE is good. The non-examination curriculum for those pupils for whom GCSE courses are not suitable is limited but improving. There is too little time for some subjects to cover the National Curriculum to sufficient depth and the provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils make good progress as a result of the consistently good teaching and support for their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Overall, the school makes excellent provision for pupils' personal development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is all closely interlinked and is at the heart of everything the school does. In this way, the school has established a clear set of values, principles and beliefs by which everyone lives and works, and an environment within which all pupils can grow and flourish.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good support for its pupils on a day-to-day basis. Staff know the individual needs of all pupils and this information is used well to support pupils and provide the most appropriate approach and help for them.

The school enjoys a very good relationship with parents and considers this an essential basis for its work. Similarly, parents show their love and respect for the school by supporting it in all it does.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher provides a very clear direction for the work of the school. The school provides an excellent environment for learning, and the clear vision of the headteacher for the development of the school is shared by the whole staff. Some of the structures and procedures required to secure future improvement are still developing.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors generally meet their responsibilities and have a very good understanding of how the school can improve. Statutory requirements for physical education are not met, but new building is intended to ensure this issue is resolved from autumn 2003.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and sharing effective practice are inconsistent. Nevertheless, there is a high level of collaboration among teachers, leading to some awareness of the issues the school needs to address in order to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used and the school plans its expenditure carefully with suitable attention to obtaining the best value for its available funds.

The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Some is very good, but the age and range of other accommodation adversely affect the delivery of the curriculum and the standards achieved in some subjects. Improvements in games and physical education and for the library and computers are under way and are due to be completed in the academic year starting in September 2003. Resources are unsatisfactory because there are too few computers. Staffing is satisfactory.

## 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>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• They make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school deals with questions and concerns parents have about their children's education.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations.</li> <li>• The school generally works closely with parents.</li> <li>• Leadership and management are good.</li> <li>• The school helps children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents are concerned at the amount of homework – at the meeting the Registered Inspector held with parents before the inspection the feeling was that there is too much homework.</li> <li>• A small proportion think they are not as well informed about children's progress as they could be.</li> <li>• A small proportion of parents think the school does not work closely enough with them.</li> <li>• A small proportion think the range of extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory.</li> </ul>

Inspectors are in agreement with the strengths parents identify. In general inspectors did not find evidence to support the concerns of small numbers of parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1 Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and has been over the last three years. Prior to that, attainment fluctuated and the year group that took their end of Year 9 national tests in 2002 entered the school with attainment below the national average.

2 In the national tests taken by 14 year olds in 2002 the attainment of pupils based on the average points score achieved was above the national average. It was well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. The percentage of pupils obtaining the average level 5 or better was above average in English, mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils obtaining the higher levels was well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Results have improved in line with the national trend over recent years. Compared with similar schools the average point score was above average overall. Results in English were well above the average for similar schools, those for mathematics were above average and those for science were average. Pupils made very good progress from when they entered the school. In 2002 boys performed better than girls but over recent years there has been little difference in performance. In teachers' assessments in other subjects at the end of Year 9 in 2002, attainment was well above average in art and design and in design and technology, above average in history, modern foreign languages and music and broadly average in geography, ICT and physical education.

3 In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the average total point score achieved by pupils was broadly average. Results over recent years have not improved as fast as nationally. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C GCSE grades was above average. The percentage obtaining five or more A\*-G grades was average and the percentage obtaining one or more A\*-G grade was average. The school did not meet its target for five or more A\*-C grades, but met the target for one or more A\*-C grade passes at GCSE. Compared with similar schools, results were broadly average. Published figures indicate that based on their prior attainment, pupils performed well below average. However, the school did not enter a small but significant number of pupils for GCSE examinations, but placed them on work-related courses more suited to their needs. In addition a small number of pupils had personal difficulties or behavioural problems and did not take examinations and the school has rightly identified a small number of pupils who ought to have done better and has improved its strategies to support and guide pupils to minimise this problem in the future. While the progress that the latter groups of pupils made was unsatisfactory, the great majority of pupils achieved well. Taking all factors into account, pupils' achievement was satisfactory overall.

4 GCSE results were best in English literature, art and design, ICT, design and technology and French. They were worst in geography, religious education and English, based on pupils' performance in other subjects. In English, changes in staffing broke the continuity pupils should have experienced and the department has taken steps to ensure that more careful curriculum planning will prevent this happening again. In religious education pupils the curriculum was not fully matched to the examination requirements, but this has been resolved with a new appointment to the department and improved curriculum planning more closely matched to the examination requirements. In geography, results were lower than they should have been because the highest attaining pupils in particular were not sufficiently challenged and they underperformed.

5 Inspection evidence shows that standards are above average by the time pupils are 14. In English standards of work are well above average and pupils achieve very well. In science standards are above average and pupils achieve well. In mathematics standards are average and pupils are now achieving well because staffing problems have been stabilised. In art and design and in design and technology standards are well above average. Standards are above average in history, ICT and modern foreign languages and they are average in geography, citizenship, music and physical education. Overall pupils achieve well; they achieve very well in art and design, citizenship, design and technology and ICT, well in history, modern foreign languages and physical education, and satisfactorily elsewhere.

6 By the time pupils are 16, standards are above average overall. They are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. They are slightly lower in mathematics as a result of changes in staffing, but this is now stabilised. Standards are well above average in art and design, and ICT. They are above average in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and physical education, and average in business studies, citizenship and music. Standards are below average in geography, largely because the highest attaining pupils do not reach the levels they are capable of. Overall pupils achieve well and in art and design, citizenship, design and technology and ICT they achieve very well. In English and mathematics pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The highest attaining pupils generally achieve well, though in geography their achievement is unsatisfactory.

7 Standards in reading and writing are good by the time pupils reach age 16. Pupils read a variety of texts clearly and confidently in many subjects although they could do more in mathematics. In drama in Year 10 they interpret scripts and devise their own independently. They understand the importance of showing ideas through varied intonation. Writing is above average in most subjects. In art they adopt different techniques such as captions for paintings and annotation to analyse the work of famous artists. In design and technology they write detailed and clear briefs before making their products. There is some extended writing in Year 10 and 11 mathematics coursework. More could be done to develop writing skills in geography but there is some isolated good practice in this subject.

8 Standards of numeracy across the school are generally average. Several departments have well-established procedures to develop numeracy work, largely to support work done within those subjects. In science and design and technology, for example, pupils show a sound grasp of number work, draw and interpret graphs, measure and carry out calculations competently. However, the school's policy for numeracy is inconsistently applied.

9 In ICT across the curriculum standards are below average overall, with the exception of in English, business studies and design and technology where teachers use computers frequently to support learning. Elsewhere, teachers find it difficult to obtain access to computers so do not include sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills. However, the completion of a resource centre during spring 2004 is intended to resolve this issue.

10 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress in improving their reading and spelling, and their self-confidence and esteem. The great majority often exceed their targets in their statements of special educational needs and individual education plans. All those entered for GCSE examinations gain grades in at least one subject, with the majority gaining grades in more than five. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils progress very well when taught in small groups for intensive intervention for the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and for wider curriculum support. Their learning requirements are well known by subject teachers and this, together with the high quality of support by learning support assistants, enables pupils to make consistently good progress in

most subjects. It is only occasionally when planning does not cater specifically for their learning needs and support from teaching assistants is not used to full advantage, that their learning is slowed.

11 There are no pupils with English as an additional language but the small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally as well as other pupils.

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

12 Overall, the attitudes, values and personal development of pupils are excellent and contribute to the sense of orderly calm around the school and the progress pupils make in lessons. This area is a strength of the school as it was at the last inspection.

13 Pupils really enjoy being at school. They speak proudly and loyally of their school and feel fortunate to be there. Many pupils have organised and participated in a variety of activities over recent years to raise substantial amounts of money towards the building of their new sports hall. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are excellent in all year groups and in all subjects. Pupils arrive with a desire to learn and enjoy the tasks prepared for them. They work hard, listen carefully and are willing to volunteer answers and ask questions. For example, in a science lesson, a lower attaining Year 9 group of pupils was still well motivated despite having a succession of supply teachers over the year. They showed real interest in their topic on nutrition and health, working sensibly and independently. In a mathematics lesson, Year 7 pupils enthusiastically tackled their work on rotational symmetry, responding well to the high expectations of the teacher. In a Year 10 history lesson on Roosevelt and the New Deal, pupils' shared enthusiasm enabled them to work at a demanding level. In English, Year 8 pupils were learning about cinematic techniques and were captivated and excited by the creative and inventive approach which helped them to grasp a difficult topic.

14 Behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around school is very good and often better. The number of exclusions is low and incidents of bullying are very rare. Generally, pupils are supportive of one another in lessons, helping each other naturally and readily. They like working in groups and enjoy practical work, often working well independently. For example, in design and technology lessons, pupils work sensibly and with a minimum of fuss, paying attention to health, safety and hygiene in their activities. Between lessons, pupils move around the site quickly and patiently even when in very busy in the narrow corridors. At lunchtime and breaks, pupils mix and socialise easily creating a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere. Pupils are friendly and welcoming towards visitors, showing a natural curiosity about other people.

15 Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are excellent and have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. For example, Year 9 pupils were anxious to please their teacher in a French lesson and eager to make progress and improve. The school community works and lives together in close harmony and members genuinely caring towards each other. Pupils quickly appreciate and understand what is expected of them. For example, pupils are told the areas around school that are out of bounds at lunchtimes and breaks. Pupils respect this and, with very little supervision, keep away from these areas.

16 Pupils relish the chance to take on responsibilities as they progress through the school. Many older pupils become prefects and take their role very seriously. Some Year 9 and Year 11 pupils have volunteered to become mentors and after training provide a comforting yet practical listening ear, helping younger pupils to sort out their problems and resolve conflicts. The school council is now an active and vocal group representing pupils' views in the day-to-day work of the school. Many pupils show a strong commitment to their

environment and the eco council has initiated many practical changes around school. The school also prides itself on being the first Fairtrade school in the country. In Years 8 and 11 all pupils have the chance to go on a residential week at Castlerigg and photographs show their enjoyment of and enthusiasm for all their activities. Many pupils take part in outdoor pursuits at weekends and benefit greatly from the experience through living and working with others.

17 Attendance is good and consistently above the national average. Unauthorised absence is low.

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

18 Teaching and learning are good overall and in art and citizenship they are very good. The teaching in all but two of the lessons seen was at least satisfactory. A third of teaching was very good and occasionally excellent and in two out of five lessons it was good. The best teaching is associated with very good management of pupils and this is a direct result of the very good relationships, care and strong Christian ethos seen throughout the school. As a result, pupils are willing learners. They co-operate with teachers, listen to each other and are prepared to voice their own understanding in class or small group discussion, sure in the knowledge that their comments will be treated seriously and respected.

19 Teachers' subject knowledge is good and leads to clearly explained factual information, perceptive questioning and challenging work. For example, in science lessons, questioning prompts pupils to think about what they are doing in some depth, and to respond with carefully thought-out answers. Questioning in some English lessons is outstanding and prompts perceptive, detailed answers from pupils. This is significant in helping pupils to become critical of their own performance and, ultimately, in preparing them for answering examination questions accurately. Lessons are well planned and the learning objectives are shared with pupils.

20 Teaching methods are effective overall. Most lessons are structured in such a way that previous work is reinforced and built on, and at the end of lessons what has been taught is reviewed to ensure pupils have a clear understanding and knowledge. In art and science, activities are planned so that pupils enjoy what they do and they become heavily involved in their own learning. In almost all lessons, work is challenging and pupils respond well to this – they enjoy the challenge and are proud of their efforts to do well. Teachers have high expectations of the standards pupils should achieve and also of their efforts. This leads to high levels of concentration and effort with work and to pupils working at a generally fast pace.

21 Activities are well matched to pupils' learning needs and pupils generally know how well they are performing and what they need to do to do even better. Teachers encourage independent learning and although access to computers is currently restricted, pupils are encouraged to engage in research at home, the library and from resources in subject areas. Investigative work in science further encourages independent learning and pupils are expected to evaluate their experimental results. Pupils learn to be critical of their own work and they develop a sound awareness of their own learning. In geography, the opportunities for fieldwork are limited and this has a detrimental effect on how well pupils learn and how well they take responsibility for their own learning. Homework is used well in most subjects – it is set regularly, reinforces learning started in lessons and encourages pupils to work on their own and to become independent learners.

22 Ongoing marking is generally satisfactory and there is very good practice both in art and design and in design and technology where pupils review their own work and discuss



with teachers what they need to do to achieve better. However, this practice is not widespread, though the majority of teachers have a good knowledge of the learning strengths and difficulties of pupils and work closely with individuals to help them improve.

23 The small amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching seen was in geography and music. In geography unsatisfactory teaching was associated with a lack of sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils, in Years 10 and 11 in particular. In music, poor teaching arose from unsuitable teaching methods involving too much information provided by the teacher, leading to lower attaining pupils losing interest and concentration and failing to learn very little of value.

24 The teaching of basic skills is good overall, although there are too few opportunities to teach ICT because access to computers currently is not easy. The teaching of literacy is good. The teaching of reading and writing is good in art and design and in design and technology where note-making is taught well. In physical education at GCSE, pupils are given the opportunity to write at length and teachers ensure that they understand relevant technical terms. All teachers display key words in the classroom and most draw pupils' attention to them, for example in music where the word 'syncopation' was emphasised.

25 The teaching of numerical skills is generally satisfactory in all years, with some examples of good practice. Modern foreign languages classrooms have useful numerical displays and references are made appropriately to conversion of miles to kilometres and pounds to euros. ICT makes good use of measurement and scales to generate working drawings on the computer. Science, most notably the physics element, uses estimating and a wide range of other mathematical skills effectively.

26 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is very good in the learning support department and consistently good in most subjects. Teaching in the learning support department is highly skilled and finely tuned to meet pupils' learning requirements. Lively, imaginative approaches boost pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and provide good encouragement, pace and challenge, enabling pupils to work at a very demanding level. In the best lessons, a range of good support strategies results in pupils being fully involved in their learning and making good progress. Year 9 pupils in an English lesson on advertising techniques, for example, participated fully and made good progress because they were constantly involved in answering questions. The good match of work to pupils' learning needs is a significant strength. Pupils' individual education plans are used well to ensure that planning is guided by the clear identification of pupils' learning requirements. This results in pupils achieving well as in a Year 7 modern foreign languages lesson, where good planning ensured that pupils with complex learning needs were fully involved. Learning is very strongly enhanced in most lessons by the skilled support of learning support assistants who work closely with teachers in ensuring pupils understand the work and are able to participate fully in lessons.

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

27 The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. However, most subjects do not include enough ICT in their teaching because there are not enough computers in school and access to those available is restricted mainly to discrete ICT lessons. Lack of accommodation limits the breadth of design and technology – there is no textiles option in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11 too few pupils can follow design and technology course to GCSE. At the time of the inspection neither dance nor gymnastics is taught as part of physical education, but new facilities being built at the time of the inspection

are intended to resolve this problem. The absence of suitable practice rooms inhibits the teaching of instrumental music.

28 The time allocation to history and geography in Years 7 to 9 is below average and whilst teachers cover all of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum, there is insufficient time, particularly in geography where provision for fieldwork suffers. Religious education is taught for less time than normally seen in Catholic schools. The school is reviewing curriculum organisation with a view to including PSHE within the religious education programme, with an increase in time, but also providing flexibility in other areas of the curriculum.

29 The lengths of lessons in Years 10 and 11 are too long for some subjects, notably modern foreign languages and mathematics and geography lessons for lower attaining pupils. The single 35-minute lesson sometimes requires practical activities to be carried out very quickly, for example, when showing a video in geography or when performing experiments in science. Occasionally, in some subjects, lessons start late because pupils have to travel some distance between different parts of the building.

30 The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are broadly satisfactory. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught in Years 7 to 9 along with religious education, PSHE in Years 7 and 8 and the choice of one of two extra foreign languages. Consequently, the breadth and balance of the languages curriculum are good Years 7 to 9. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 offers a choice of up to ten subjects with a compulsory core of English language and literature, mathematics, double science, religious education and recreational physical education, together with a choice of four other subjects. Some departments offer alternative accreditation for those of lower prior attainment as an alternative to GCSE. This is effective in maintaining pupils' involvement in and commitment to education. The work-related curriculum is limited to extended work experience for a small number of disaffected pupils each year. Procedures to ensure that these pupils maintain contact and catch up with work in lessons missed to follow work experience are inconsistent. There are no vocational qualifications offered within the school. Whilst contact with the local college relating to off-site vocational education is strengthening, the cost of such courses inhibits their provision. The consequence is pupils who would benefit from pre-vocational study follow less suitable courses.

31 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is guided by the importance of ensuring full educational and social inclusion. All pupils have full access to the whole range of the curriculum, and to additional learning opportunities designed to match their specific learning requirements. There is a strong focus on the improvement of reading and literacy skills through well-chosen programmes to support reading, spelling and numeracy. The intensive intervention literacy and numeracy programme and the small curriculum support groups are particularly effective. Learning across the curriculum is also very well supported through very good guidance and support to help other teachers to support pupils with learning difficulties. The curriculum is enriched by out-of-lesson groups at lunchtime, one for social support and the other for homework. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning through word processing, but the computers are not able to run interactive software.

32 The school's implementation of the literacy strategy is good. The school policy has been drawn up carefully over the last four years taking account of developments in the national strategy. There are good links with the primary schools, including the use of bridging units and model teaching lessons. All departments have been involved in training. As a result the policy is applied in a largely consistent manner across the school

33 The effectiveness of teaching the skills of numeracy is satisfactory. Modern foreign languages, ICT, English, art, physical education and history identify numeracy in their planning and teachers generally employ the mathematical concepts to good effect.

34 Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There are areas of strength: provision for boys' sporting activities is particularly strong with well-organised inter-school leagues in a number of sports. Girls too have a variety of opportunities to participate to a good level and a Lancashire Ladies cricketer plays in the school eleven with the boys in Year 8. There are inter-house sports competitions and some outdoor pursuits. Football teams tour Belgium every other year and there are occasional ski trips abroad. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities to perform in various musical activities and in school productions. The modern foreign languages department organises trips to Spain and France. There is a lunchtime club and a homework club organised by the learning support assistants, together with a small number of additional varied activities which have enthusiastic support.

35 Equality of opportunity and the inclusion of the whole community are good and a central pillar of the school's philosophy. Every pupil is valued equally and highly. There are very high levels of expectation, care and support. The success of the provision of mentors for Year 11 pupils has been extended to include all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is excellent. Statutory requirements to provide for pupils in wheelchairs are well met. Pupils learn to support each other well in class: they listen with respect to the reading of others, support each other in co-operative learning and value those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are eager to take responsibility as prefects and anti-bullying mentors.

36 Overall, the provision for pupils' PSHE is very good. Since the last inspection, arrangements have been made for pupils to receive discrete lessons in Years 7 and 8, and for aspects of PSHE to be comprehensively delivered through subjects and tutorial time in Years 9, 10 and 11. PSHE teaching also includes some aspects of citizenship. There is a full policy document outlining the way in which PSHE is taught through tutorial work, assemblies, group and individual mentoring, the structured careers programme, work experience, out-of-school visits and extra-curricular activities, visiting speakers, and designated PSHE days. The programme includes drugs awareness issues and sex education, being informed members of the community, having respect for each other, and demonstrating honesty in all matters, through teaching that has a strong Catholic emphasis. In discrete lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was very good, pupils had a very good quality of learning, and they had very good attitudes to the subject.

37 The provision for careers education is good. The programme is well structured and progressive and very well supported by the partnership with Connexions. Up-to-date information relating to the full range of opportunities, both locally and nationally, is built into planning and pupils are well aware of vocational as well as other training routes. All pupils are interviewed, either in a group or personally by the Connexions personal advisor. The interviews are targeted to meet pupils' needs by a three-tier structure. Identified pupils who need extra support will be seen as early as Year 9. The careers office is well resourced and open each lunchtime as well as for drop-in sessions. Active learning is encouraged by the use of a computer programme, which is networked throughout the school but unfortunately not in the careers office. Theatre groups lead drama sessions with follow-up workshops and mock interviews are held with local businessmen. Links with local colleges are good and all pupils in Year 9 attend taster sessions in a vocational area of their choice. In Year 10, work experience is very well organised by a separate member of staff who works closely with the careers co-ordinator. It is well supported by all staff who play an important role in overseeing the pupils' progress. Extended work experience is offered to particular pupils. An information evening is held for parents with the co-ordinator and a representative from the Education

Business Partnership. On completion pupils gain the 'The Personal Challenge and Community Involvement Certificate', which is presented at a school assembly. Positive strategies to involve parents in the decision-making processes are further supported by the attendance of the Connexions advisor at parent evenings with information on opportunities and training vacancies.

38 The local community makes a good contribution to the education of the pupils who in turn make a good contribution to their community. The school works hard to involve employers in the school. Links with industry are good and are strengthening. A wide range of employers supports the work experience programme for Year 10 and the extended work experience for disaffected pupils. Visiting speakers, from Lancashire Police and Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, make substantial contributions to the PSHE course. Arrangements with a local rugby club ensure access to good all-weather facilities for pupils. The drive to recycling and fair trade generated by the pupils involves them in their community and in local newspapers. Year 9 anti-bullying mentors support pupils in a local primary school.

39 Relationships with partner institutions are good and are improving. Pastoral links with feeder primary schools are good. The transfer of information across the gap between primary and secondary is very secure. Pupils are visited in their primary schools and have familiarisation days and sample lessons during Year 6. Curriculum links are strong in English, mathematics and science and are a target for development in other subjects. Individual departments have made a strong initial impact with project work such as in art and ICT. The school is setting up a local learning network with its feeder primaries to share good practice in teaching and learning.

40 Contacts with providers of education at 16 plus are good and improving. The numbers going into extended education and training are average for the area. The school works hard to raise the aspirations of pupils. Good numbers go into vocational training, partly because pupils who have studied technology here are sought out for apprenticeships. Links with the local college are therefore strong and pupils are made well aware of opportunities as early as Year 9.

41 Overall, the school makes excellent provision for pupils' personal development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is closely interlinked and is at the heart of everything the school does. In this way, the school has established a clear set of values, principles and beliefs by which everyone lives and works and an environment within which all pupils can grow and flourish.

42 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The school has a very strong Catholic identity of which it is proud. Together, all involved in the school celebrate festivals throughout the church year and many special events in school. Masses are held for the new Year 7 pupils and for the Year 11 leavers. Obligation day masses are regularly attended by up to 450 pupils. Each year group meets together once a week for an assembly and pupils pray together in tutor groups on other days. There is also a programme of class masses organised on a weekly basis. Pupils are often involved in presenting assemblies, leading prayers and selecting readings. Every half term, the whole school joins together for an assembly to celebrate the work of the school. Pupils respond naturally and with reverence on these occasions, seeing it as a natural and enjoyable part of their day. Many subjects provide spiritual experiences within lessons and the curriculum, and teachers value pupils' questions, often giving them time for their own thoughts and ideas.

43 Provision for pupils' moral development is also excellent. There is a clear moral code that is promoted consistently throughout the school. The code of conduct is prominently displayed and often referred to by staff as the standards expected of pupils. Merits can be

earned for good behaviour, positive attitudes, acts of kindness and contribution to school life as well as for academic achievement. Staff act as excellent role models, treating pupils and each other with respect, friendliness and humour. This creates an atmosphere in which pupils feel that they are treated fairly and that they can voice their opinions and views. Pupils are encouraged to think about others, and organise and participate in a huge range of fund-raising events for a range of charities throughout the year. The school is quick to encourage pupils to follow their beliefs and the eco council is a wonderful example of this.

44 Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Through its well-established ethos and climate of honesty, trust and respect, the school has a strong sense of community in which all pupils play an equal and important role. There are many occasions when the school celebrates together and these times are enjoyed by all. In lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups, and sports and residential activities involve many pupils. The school council and prefect system provide the chance for pupils to make a real contribution to the running of the school and the school is quick to respond to pupils' initiatives, such as the creation of a garden of remembrance which is currently under construction and involving many pupils, parents and parts of the local community.

45 Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Most departments organise a range of visits, trips and guests to supplement pupils' studies and this encourages pupils to explore their own cultural environment and widen their experience. Links with the Fleetwood Nautical College have been used in assemblies to explore issues around racism and prejudice. There are opportunities to take part in drama workshops, stage productions, musical groups and performances. Some subjects make a strong contribution towards introducing pupils to different societies. For example, in modern foreign languages a new textbook covering 20<sup>th</sup> century France is being used to look at the development of French society and culture. In religious education, pupils learn about the faiths of other people. In design and technology, much of the topic work is centred around cultural and moral issues. For example, a project on the use of raw materials from Brazil considers the effect that the exploitation of raw materials has on the culture, societies and economy of developing and third world countries. In art, pupils study the work of a wide range of artists and regularly have an artist working alongside them in school. Through the music curriculum, pupils are introduced to the music of Africa, India and the West Indies. They look at different styles of music such as disco and rave, country and western, jazz, rock and blues. However, the school still needs to develop within pupils a greater understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures to found in Britain today and also to clearly identify those pupils with particular talents in art and music and nurture their development.

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

46 The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and this is recognised and appreciated by parents. This aspect has always been a very effective and important part of the school's work and it continues to be a strength.

47 The school provides very good support for its pupils' personal development on a day-to-day basis and as a result pupils are confident and relaxed as they move through the school. Teachers and tutors know pupils and their families very well and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well-being. There is a well-established and experienced group of heads of year which provides a comprehensive and effective level of support for pupils. Records are meticulously kept and information is shared very well. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the school, the excellent relationships result in teachers and pupils interacting well and there is a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere. Some pupils have learning mentors

from outside the school with whom they meet weekly which helps to motivate and encourage them. The school has set up a new system in which all Year 11 pupils have support and mentoring as individuals and in groups and this has resulted in them being much more confident as they go into their GCSE examinations. This system is to be extended into Year 10 next year.

48 The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. There is an expectation of pupils and parents that pupils will attend regularly and the vast majority of pupils do. The heads of year and tutors rigorously check and chase absences and pupils are made very aware of their own attendance record. The computerised registration system now in use is providing useful data that is being analysed by senior staff to identify particular patterns of non-attendance of groups and individuals.

49 The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are very good. The reward system of merits and certificates motivates pupils well and is used consistently by all staff. Pupils clearly understand the detention and report structure and feel that it successfully modifies the behaviour of most pupils. Every incident is recorded and monitored and used with pupils and parents to decide on an appropriate way of managing unacceptable behaviour. There is a very good programme of assemblies, celebrations and PSHE, and the theme throughout is the importance of the individual and respect for others. There is an atmosphere of trust, fairness and integrity which pervades the school and staff have very high expectations that pupils respond to. This creates an environment in which there is extremely little oppressive behaviour and pupils are particularly caring towards each other.

50 The school pays good attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. There is an effective child protection policy which follows the local authority procedures. Good use is made of outside specialist agencies where necessary with individual pupils and within the PSHE programme. Arrangements for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents are satisfactory. The school follows clear and detailed guidelines for the organisation and participation of off-site visits and activities, and there are regular checks on fire systems and equipment. Overall, the school is a safe place to work and staff are vigilant in reporting health and safety issues. However, the school does not have a formal, rigorous and recorded way of monitoring health and safety and risk assessments across the whole school and in departments, and one should be implemented.

51 Assessment overall is satisfactory and is improving. The school has recently improved its methods of gathering information about pupils' attainment. New computer software produces good information that allows subject departments to compare pupils' actual performance in the subject with their potential based on their results in national and other standard tests. As a result of this, teachers are beginning to make better use of assessment data and are able to track pupils' progress and pinpoint where an individual is under-achieving.

52 Since the last inspection the school has made some improvements to its procedures for assessing pupils' progress and using that information to help pupils achieve better. In particular, the unsatisfactory situation in mathematics and history has been put right and reports to parents are now much clearer about the standards pupils have reached. However, progress has been uneven. A few subjects, such as science and design and technology, are well advanced in their tracking of progress and setting targets for improvement. In these subjects, for example, pupils are invited to evaluate their own work and play a part in setting their own targets. In most other subjects pupils are less involved in their own assessment and setting targets is a less established practice. In geography,<sup>[N42]</sup> assessment is unsatisfactory because little is currently done to use assessment information, through tracking and target-setting, for the benefit of pupils.

53 Teachers make too little use of National Curriculum levels in day-to-day work to motivate pupils and coax them to do better. Currently, the main use of these levels is at the end of a test or examination to grade a pupil's work and compare it with the national picture.

54 A good new initiative introduced since the previous inspection is the close tracking of pupils in Year 11. True to its core values of equality and fairness, the school provides an adult mentor for each pupil in that year to oversee progress in all subjects and help and advise in cases where an individual is under-achieving. There are active plans to extend this good practice to pupils in Year 10, and eventually further down the school. Currently form tutors play an important part in offering personal support and advice to pupils in their charge. However, there is scope for widening this role to provide greater oversight of pupils' academic progress.

55 The procedures for the assessment of the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good. They are well conceived and provide a good basis for the close monitoring and review of progress through regular monitoring, testing and other clearly focused assessment procedures. These include an effective range of screening tests to identify reading and spelling ages and the regular review of targets on individual education plans. Assessment information is used very well to systematically track pupils' progress against their earlier attainment and to set targets for improvement. The annual reviews of statements of special educational needs fully meet statutory requirements and are well attended by pupils, parents and representatives of external agencies. The objectives set in statements are very well met in practice.

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

56 The school enjoys a very good relationship with parents and considers this an essential basis for the work of the school. Similarly, parents show their love and respect for the school by supporting it in all it does. This area has continued to be a strength since the last inspection.

57 Parents' views of the school are very positive and they are very appreciative of the work of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the values that the school promotes and the continually high expectations of pupils to live and work within those values. They feel that this is helping their children to become mature and responsible and that they behave well. Parents see the school as being well managed and that the standard of teaching is good. Parents are less happy with the amount of homework set and the range of extra-curricular activities available for pupils.

58 Parents are kept well informed about school life in general. The prospectus gives a good flavour of what parents can expect and the newsletters are an informal way of keeping parents up to date with news, events and activities written by staff and pupils. Each year group provides information particularly relevant for their parents in a variety of formats. For example, booklets about revision techniques and target setting for year 11 pupils and parents have been very warmly received, and parents really appreciate a better understanding of how they can help at home. Formal reporting is through an annual progress evening where parents can meet subject teachers and through an annual written report. The reports clearly illustrate pupils' attitude to their work and the contribution they make to school life. Most teachers say whether pupils are achieving the levels or grades expected of them. Some teachers clearly indicate what pupils do well and what they need to do to improve but this is not consistent across all subjects and with all teachers. Reports now include pupils' self-evaluation of their achievements in the year, which is interesting for parents.

59 The communication between home and school is very good. The heads of each year, in particular, are quick to telephone home to discuss any problems, whether it is within a subject or more general. Parents are informed quickly when behavioural issues arise and kept fully informed as to any action the school is taking. The school offers parents many opportunities to be involved in their children's education. The homework diaries are continually checked by tutors and show that virtually all parents do sign to acknowledge they have seen them. Similarly, parents are asked to make comments on the children's reports and many parents do, acknowledging teachers' comments and asking questions of their own to which the school responds directly and quickly.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

60 The headteacher provides very good leadership and manages the school well. His highly thoughtful leadership, very clear vision for the development of the school, approachability and highly visible presence have created a strong and genuine shared commitment to succeed and an excellent environment for learning. The support of the deputy headteacher in several critical areas relating to both curriculum development and care and progress of the pupils has made a significant contribution to the development of the school in the last two years. It is a stated aim of the school to encourage relationships with others which promote acceptance, tolerance, respect, friendship and Christian love. The headteacher, through the way he conducts himself and through his relationships with all in the school, has ensured that this aim is fulfilled. It is the foundation for the success of the school. A community is being developed which is proud of what has been achieved but is ready to move forward.

61 Severe budgetary constraints have restricted progress on the development of an appropriate senior management team until very recently. Although assistant headteachers have now been appointed and have responsibilities which reflect the priorities for development identified in the school improvement plan, their impact has yet to be fully realised. Their role in monitoring and evaluating the work of departments is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, they make a significant contribution to the efficient day-to-day running of the school. The overall quality of leadership at middle management is good and is very good in modern foreign languages where the department has a very clear educational direction supported by a very good development plan. In design and technology, the department has developed a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning but this is the only department where this is the case. There is no clearly established procedure in the school for sharing good practice within and across departments. Performance management procedures are fully in place. Departments have now been provided with a clear framework for self-evaluation, but these are early days and it is too soon to judge whether it will be effective in ensuring appropriate departmental development. There are several inconsistencies in the way that departments are managed, particularly in the way that they approach such important issues as the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and assessment. A good range of data on pupil performance is now available for staff but use of this is not yet consistent across departments; nor is there consistency in the way that departments evaluate and monitor the work of individual pupils and set targets for improvement, although the procedures now being used in Year 11 are very thorough and are being extended into Year 10.

62 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well led and managed and the co-ordinator provides a very clear direction for development. Systems and procedures are highly efficient and effective. Very good liaison with other teachers ensures good teamwork across the school in supporting pupils' learning. The specialist staff are very well



supported and guided. Deployment of staff is effective in helping pupils to make good progress in lessons. High standards are ensured through practice being kept under constant review and clearly focused improvement planning. The learning support centre is very attractive and well ordered. It provides a positive and welcoming learning environment which is valued by pupils. Resources are very carefully chosen with very good use being made of the limited funding available. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

63 Governors play a significant role in planning the school's improvement. They work very closely with the headteacher and senior staff and have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and how it needs to improve. They have been closely involved with planning the improved sports accommodation and developing the learning resource centre. Their support for the headteacher in financial planning and school improvement planning during the difficulties the school has experienced with its budget has been particularly good.

64 Overall provision for staffing is satisfactory, as is the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. However, staffing for music is unsatisfactory. Many of the staff have been at the school for some years so that staff retention is not a significant issue. However, the school is experiencing the problem of recruitment in some subjects. Current staff turbulence, mainly due to illness, has had a minimal effect on pastoral support systems in the school because of good planning by management. The school administrative team work together very well and, although a stable group, frequently need additional support. The school provides good induction and support to all new teachers.

65 The school has made some progress on the accommodation issues raised during the last inspection. Most of the windows have been replaced, there is now good suitable accommodation for working with pupils with educational needs and every building and every room in the school is accessible for pupils in wheelchairs. However, overall the accommodation is still unsatisfactory which adversely affects the delivery of the curriculum and the standards achieved in some subjects.

66 In design and technology the quality of the rooms is now good as they have been refurbished but there are insufficient rooms to teach the whole design and technology curriculum and the school is not able to offer the textiles option in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is also restricting the numbers of pupils able to take design and technology as a GCSE subject. In music, again the teaching rooms are good but there are no practice rooms for individual tuition and personal performances. In physical education, the current lack of indoor accommodation severely inhibits the range of activities provided but the completion of the new sports hall in Autumn 2003 will remedy this situation. Currently, the library is used as a teaching room and cannot be used as an effective learning resource but once again, on completion of the sports hall, other accommodation is to be converted into a learning resource centre. In art, the two teaching rooms are open-plan which can cause difficulties when noise travels between them. However, in other subjects the quality of accommodation is better, particularly in English where it is very good.

67 Although there have been some improvements in the provision of learning resources since the last report, they remain unsatisfactory overall. The project to provide a new learning resources centre has begun, but the small size of the present library limits the number of books available. Its use as a classroom results in a lack of accessibility to promote reading and research. In the newly built learning support centre there is good provision of reading books, but the bank of computers is out-dated and there is no ICT equipment specifically adapted for pupils with special needs.

68 The number of computers across the school is lower than average. There are departmental suites in ICT, design and technology, and science, but, at the present time,

there are none available specifically for general use. The provision of ICT for teaching is improving and there are now six rooms with interactive 'smart' boards.

69 Learning resources are good in design and technology, where the department has been recently refurbished and newly equipped. In history, physical education, ICT and art, provision is just satisfactory, but in the remainder of subjects it is inadequate. For most departments, accessibility to computers is difficult, and in English, geography, mathematics and science, books are insufficient or in need of renewal. In music, a shortage of keyboards impacts on learning. Although funding is well below average, the school does make good use of the limited resources available.

70 Financial management is good and the recent auditor's report confirms this. The bursar and the assistant head responsible for financial management provide the governors with accurate information in good time so they make informed financial decisions. The school's basic budget is well below average. Parents and teachers raise substantial sums for the school. Funding for special educational needs is very high and the school supplements this. The school has a deficit budget due to costly repairs to damage done by flooding and also to the re-drainage of the playing fields, and is working closely with the local authority to reduce this. Governors evaluate the school's expenditure effectively and ensure that the school obtains best value for its funds. All funds are spent effectively.

71 Governors have taken hard decisions to reduce the budget deficit, including not replacing senior staff. Although the decision to appoint a deputy headteacher has recently been made, the absence of senior staff limited developments within the management of the school. Limited funds have also restricted expenditure on computers and improving accommodation. Nevertheless, the school has attracted some extra funding to systematically deal with leaking flat roofs and rotting windows over the long term. Further funds have been raised to provide a sports hall, other facilities for physical education and a learning resource centre.

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

72 The school now needs to:

1 Raise standards in geography by: -

- ensuring that work for the highest attaining pupils is challenging,
- improving the use of assessment information to set targets for pupils,
- ensuring there is enough time to cover National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9,[N51]
- providing there is sufficient fieldwork and ICT,
- observing and evaluating teaching and sharing good practice.
- (paragraphs: 4, 23, 116, 117)

- 2 Improving provision for ICT across the curriculum by: -
  - establishing a management structure to co-ordinate ICT across the curriculum,
  - identifying what ICT is currently taught in subject areas,
  - producing a cross-curricular [N52]plan of what ICT skills should be taught in subject areas,
  - organising ICT facilities so that teachers have improved access to computers,
  - providing accreditation for all pupils at the end of Year 11.
  - (paragraphs: 139-142)
  
- 3 Establish a whole-school system for observing and evaluating teaching, and sharing good practice.  
(paragraph: 61)
  
- 4 Improve resources in learning by identifying specific needs and focusing spending in those areas.  
(paragraphs: 67-69)
  
- 5 Improve the accommodation for art and design, design and technology and music as soon as is practicable.  
(paragraphs: 27, 65, 66)

Minor issues the school should also consider are:

- i. Ensure that there is sufficient time for the full breadth and depth of the National Curriculum in science, design and technology, geography, history and physical education to be taught.  
(paragraphs: 28, 29)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	116
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	33	49	27	1	1	0
Percentage	4	28	42	23	1	1	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	841
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	76

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	122

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	77	94	171

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	54	56
	Girls	75	72	71
	Total	131	126	127
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (75)	75 (75)	74 (80)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (47)	49 (50)	33 (36)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	61	55
	Girls	81	75	61
	Total	137	136	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (87)	80 (87)	68 (73)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (42)	39 (43)	33 (29)
	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	74	73	147

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	41	66	71
	Girls	39	65	70
	Total	80	131	141
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (56)	89 (88)	96 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.5
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A
	National	N/A

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	831	12	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	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	0	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)	48.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.29

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

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	684

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.0
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	20.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2002
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	£
Total income	2,097,739
Total expenditure	2,062,091
Expenditure per pupil	2,518
Balance brought forward from previous year	-112,890
Balance carried forward to next year	-77,242



### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.1
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	842
Number of questionnaires returned	348

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	54	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	51	4	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	52	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	40	55	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	53	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	40	2	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	34	53	10	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	61	36	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	42	5	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	48	12	2	12

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents raised no other issues at the meeting they had with the registered inspector before the inspection.

## 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 **good**.

#### Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 7 to 9.
- GCSE results in English literature are very good.
- There is a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching which enthuses pupils of all abilities.
- There are many examples of lively, well-constructed pieces of writing.

#### Areas for improvement

- The approach to tracking pupils progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is not rigorous enough.
- Pupils' experience of drama in Years 7 to 9 varies from class to class and some pupils miss the chance to develop their speaking and listening skills to the full.

73 In the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils in 2002 the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 or higher was above the national average. The percentage obtaining the higher levels was well above the national average. Results have been well above average over recent years. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average and compared with their results in the end of Year 6 national tests, pupils achieved very well. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 the percentage of A\*-C grades was well above average and continued the pattern of recent years. However, the proportion of A\* and A grades dropped because of recent staff changes and inconsistency in tracking pupils' progress. Results in GCSE English literature were very high. Progress in Years 10 and 11 slows a little after Year 9 but most pupils maintain at least sound achievement in English up to the age of 16. Boys achieve well and this shows in lessons too, where they work hard and are keen to answer questions. Pupils with special educational needs are often very well motivated by carefully planned teaching which helps them to build on their progress at a good rate.

74 Standards in Year 9 are well above the national average in all aspects of English and in Year 11 are above average. Speaking and listening are good. Pupils have many opportunities to discuss ideas in a whole-class setting or in groups. They organise themselves well and collaborate enthusiastically. They listen to others and develop their own understanding in this way. In a lesson where Year 7 pupils had to explore sensory images to prepare a piece of writing the level of debate was very high. Excellent teaching kept their attention the whole time and varied teaching techniques such as the use of video extracts and practical tasting tests gave them new angles to investigate. Questions were sharp: "Is immense the right word for speed? Think again." In Year 9, lower ability pupils received equally excellent stimulus from the teacher's input. "Why does this Land Rover have 'Born Free' on?" On receiving the correct answer he further extended the discussion. "Give me another example of a slogan in advertising." By using a range of vocabulary the teacher placed high demands on the class and they responded very well. Similarly good examples were seen in Year 10 where pupils of all abilities were keen to take part in lessons. A lower ability pupil was able to articulate the importance of the language in *Julius Caesar*: "The emotion of Antony's speech makes this scene effective".

75 Reading is good throughout the school, and teachers use every chance to encourage pupils to develop their reading. The limited access to the library and the small quantity of

stock reduce the effectiveness of this resource and create difficulties for teachers trying to promote wider reading. Teachers themselves read very well and this gives pupils a clear example to learn from. Pupils show good understanding of what they read in their written answers and in the way that they read their own work aloud. They bring poems such as *Night Mail* to life with vivid renditions that reveal a good understanding of how rhyme and rhythm help the meaning. Year 7 learn to use the library for research and though they occasionally are over-hasty in their conclusions, they are clear about the importance of skimming and scanning and have good strategies for research.

76 There is evidence of high quality writing in all year groups. The youngest pupils write with humour and originality as in devising recipes for the opera: "Take one fat lady and blend at high speed with a Viking hat and orange plait. Leave to simmer for an hour." Pupils in the top sets in Year 8 produce some sophisticated use of varied vocabulary: "The unforgiving waves made their second pass at the ship very hazardous." By Year 11 some pupils have developed a near-professional writing style: "The anger that infested her bones began to overpower her sense of wisdom and sapience." Pupils learn to write essays in literature that are tightly structured and well supported by quotation. Their analyses of media constructions are astute. They have a good understanding of how social and historical factors affect the writer, for example in their discussions of McCarthyism related to *The Crucible*. Many pupils show competence in their use of ICT when researching ideas on the Internet or presenting narrative and discursive topics with word processing and publishing programs. They also apply their numeracy skills through the use of flow charts to track the development of the story in *The Speckled Band*. Presentation of work is often very good. Spelling is usually sound except for some carelessness in Years 10 and 11 where incorrectly spelt common words such as 'sentence', 'brake' for 'break' and 'their' for 'there' appear too often in the work of middle and lower attaining pupils. Teachers help pupils to improve by marking work closely. In some instances they give advice on how pupils can raise their levels and grades. This process does not appear in all classes. The enthusiasm with which many pupils write can, however, be attributed to consistently good teaching.

77 Since the last inspection the school has introduced GCSE drama as an option and the take-up is satisfactory. This year sees the first examination entry. Standards are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils have a good understanding of a range of dramatic conventions and acting techniques. They are well taught and given opportunities to evaluate ongoing work. Many more girls than boys enter for drama but the few boys that choose the subject are integrated well into group work. There is some drama teaching in Years 7 to 9 but this does not happen in all classes. As a result a minority of pupils of all ability levels do not develop their speaking and listening skills as well as they might.

78 Standards of literacy across other subjects are good. Most subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to read in lessons though they could do more in mathematics. Nearly all subjects provide key words in classrooms and offer essays that challenge pupils to write extensively, especially art, design and technology and physical education at GCSE. In science, there is some imaginative use of rap poetry to help pupils understand important technical terms in their topic on electrical safety.

79 The quality of the teaching is good. There is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching to pupils of all abilities. No teaching is unsatisfactory and over nine lessons in ten are good or better. The major strength is that teachers make lessons fun so that pupils enjoy learning. They create a lively working environment with very good displays of work, and engage pupils in very practical activities that involve them all at the correct level of participation. Teachers are also very sure of the subject and can test pupils by challenging them with extended tasks. There are no significant areas for improvement except the lack of

drama teaching in Years 7 to 9. There is some inconsistency in tracking pupil progress in Years 10 and 11.

80 The leadership and management of the subject are good overall. Staff morale is very high. Systems for evaluating and sharing good practice are informal but effective. The department has been rather slow in developing schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 but lack of funding creates difficulties in planning resources for the topics and tasks. The good standards reported last time have been sustained and teaching remains of good quality with no remnants of the over-directive teaching mentioned last time.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and effort.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- The use made of ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The co-ordination and application of numeracy across the school are underdeveloped.
- Monitoring of classroom practice is insufficiently formal.
- The setting of groups does not reflect pupils' mathematical attainment.

81 The mathematics department is coping well with an extended, and ongoing, period of staffing turbulence. Dealing with the staffing issues places additional burdens on the head of department who, nonetheless, is effectively improving provision.

82 In the 2002 National Curriculum tests taken by Year 9 pupils, attainment in terms of the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 or higher was above average when compared with schools nationally, and above average when compared with similar schools. Overall boys performed marginally better than the girls. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 6, or better, was above average in comparison with all schools and average when compared to like schools. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. Overall, the results represent a continuing improvement over the past three years, with the rate of improvement mirroring that nationally. Results were better than those for science and broadly the same as those for English. In the 2002 GCSE examination taken by pupils in Year 11, results were better than those nationally, both in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C and those achieving A\*-G. In this examination girls performed better than boys in terms of the proportion achieving the higher A\*-B grades, though for A\*-C grades, boys performed better than girls overall. The results in mathematics were poorer than those for English and science. The overall trend in GCSE results has been one of improvement, with a slight dip in 2002. Much of this can be directly attributed to the issues of staffing, now stabilised if not resolved. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and higher attaining pupils generally make sound progress.

83 Overall, standards of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of past work are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 lessons, pupils' overall achievement is good, and sometimes very good. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils

worked well with estimated means for a given set of data and were able to explain cogently the effect of the use of different interval values. Pupils of average attainment coped well, distinguishing effectively between discrete and continuous data and developing tally charts from given information. Although they had received clear instructions, many failed to display their discrete data as separate columns in their graph, instead joining them together as a histogram. Lower attaining pupils use mathematical terms correctly and, when considering data concerning pupil height and shoe size, are able to hypothesise before they begin an analysis. Pupils with special educational needs, although concentrated in lower attaining sets, are present in most groups. They play a full part in lessons and generally work at the same rate, and with the same degree of interest as the rest of the class. In most cases they make good progress. The majority of lessons employ the three-part lesson structure, a feature of the National Numeracy Strategy, but not all Years 7 to 9 lessons seen employed this format. Gender differences are slight in terms of level of involvement; both boys and girls have the same work rate and level of interest.

84 Year 11 were preparing for their GCSE examination and evaluation of their work relies on a limited sample of coursework and past class work. In their past work, higher attaining pupils had worked competently with the sine and cosine rules, applying them in a range of contexts. However, in other work they showed hesitation when dealing with multiplication of negative signs. Pupils of average attainment, in dealing with an investigation of crosses of increasing size, made good use of prior knowledge but occasionally failed to explain where key numbers had come from. Others, in generating a scatter graph failed to impose a line of best fit. Lower attaining pupils, who worked towards the WJEC Certificate of Educational Achievement, dealt confidently with the most basic material but sometimes misunderstood the question and made basic errors of number. As with younger classes, pupils with special educational needs are present in most groups, although most numerous in lower attaining sets. They play a full part in lessons, and work at the same rate and with the same degree of success as their classmates. They therefore make good progress, bearing in mind their prior attainment. In none of the lessons seen was there a significant difference in attitude or work rate between boys and girls.

85 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Within this, examples of very good and satisfactory teaching were seen, with standards of teaching broadly the same for all age groups. The best teaching is characterised by good teacher-pupil relationships, high expectations of both behaviour and effort, good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher and regular checks on the class that everyone understands the point before the lesson is moved on. Teaching that is satisfactory often lacks an appropriate level of demand, so that pupils' learning is not as well paced as it should be. In nearly all lessons, pupils maintained a good level of interest and motivation. They asked good, thoughtful questions and responded well to the teachers' high expectations. Homework is set regularly and, like class work, is marked effectively, usually suggesting ways in which it could be improved. Reports to parents are variable in quality, the best making it clear what a pupil should do to improve, whilst others appear unwilling to criticise pupils when necessary.

86 Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has dealt effectively with the staffing disruption. This extended disruption partly explains the recent fall in examination results, but has also meant that management of the department has had less time to devote to other tasks. Full analysis of test results is now effective and pupil- and group-specific data is used well to track pupils' progress. Use of this data has highlighted some anomalies in setting of pupils which is detrimental to their progress. Work on whole-school numeracy has been adversely affected by the staffing problems and currently lacks focus and drive. Monitoring of classroom teaching, although effective and ongoing, has yet to be formalised. Good departmental plans have been laid, all focused on improvement. They provide a clear framework for continuing departmental progress. The National Literacy

Strategy is having a positive impact on the work of the faculty with teachers highlighting key words and their meanings. The National Numeracy Strategy is used in many lessons with younger pupils but not all. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory because access to ICT facilities is severely restricted, an issue due to be resolved when the new learning resource centre is completed. A well-considered paper highlights the contribution mathematics can make to whole-school provision in citizenship. The department makes good use of limited resources.

87 Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements. The department has made great strides in building on work done at Key Stage 2, for example with the use of bridging units. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum remain satisfactory, due mainly to staffing turbulence rather than over-use of calculators, as at the time of the previous report.

88 Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. A policy for numeracy has been in use for some years. It is not helpful to teachers of subjects other than mathematics as it fails to suggest meaningful topics that could be used to strengthen pupils' handling of graphs or number in other subjects. Despite this, some subjects, notably modern foreign languages, science, ICT and art, do make a useful contribution to numeracy. The department provides a booklet of guidance for parents of Year 7 pupils, which is good practice.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Management and leadership are good.
- The subject's performance is monitored very well.

### Areas for improvement

- There is no formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Cultural and multicultural issues are not identified in the scheme of work.
- Resources are unsatisfactory; there is no data-logging equipment and the ICT curriculum in science cannot be fully delivered.
- The time allocated to Years 7 and 8 is less than recommended.

89 In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for Year 9, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level 5 was above the average for all schools. The proportion achieving the higher level 6 was in line with the national average. The results were poorer than those in English and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, they were above average. Over recent years, results have fluctuated, but since 2000, have risen with a trend slightly steeper than that seen nationally. The boys have consistently performed a little better than the girls. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in science was well above the national average and the proportion gaining the highest A\* grades was also well above average. All pupils gained A\*-G grades. When compared with similar schools, the results were above average. Within the school, results were better than mathematics but lower than English, except for A\* grades where science results were better than English results. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades has been similar for the past two years but was higher in 2000, mainly because this year group was a higher attaining group from when they entered the school. The boys' and the girls' results show no significant difference.

90 Standards of work seen by the end of Year 9 are above average and reflect the National Curriculum test scores. The most capable pupils have a detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. They recall past work confidently, grasp new work effectively and use scientific terminology well. Middle attaining pupils have less detailed understanding, but their knowledge is often good and their recall is sound. Those with lower prior attainment use scientific terminology less well, but, although they find the application of their knowledge and its retention difficult, the fundamental scientific principles are generally secure. Relative to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils across the ability range make good progress; their very good attitudes and behaviour contribute to this very significantly. Literacy skills are good overall. They listen carefully, speak confidently and most can write up reports clearly. Pupils show good use of number when doing calculations in chemistry and physics, and can use graphs effectively, to represent experimental data. They have good investigative skills; higher attainers relate their predictions to prior knowledge very effectively, whilst lower attainers carry out their practical work efficiently and record data accurately.

91 Overall, standards by Year 11 are above average and, for some pupils, higher. Pupils in the middle to highest sets have a detailed knowledge and understanding of science topics such as human physiology and the physics of electricity. Their investigative work is of a high standard and the best shows a level of sophistication well above average. They express themselves fluently, both orally and in their written work. Lower attaining pupils have sound knowledge but a more limited understanding of the science curriculum. Their investigative work is more simplistic and their evaluation is less sophisticated. Their written and verbal expression is less precise. Overall, the progress pupils make in Years 10 and 11 is good and for a significant number it is very good. Pupils benefit from regrouping and specialist teaching in Years 9 to 11, and their very good attitudes to work have a positive impact.

92 Throughout the school, pupils with special needs progress well. Their individual needs are monitored carefully, the curriculum and teaching are adapted appropriately and extra support is effective.

93 Teaching is good overall and this results in good learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Most is very good and a little is excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject material and this impacts positively on pupils' learning. Lessons are well planned and structured; time and resources are used very well and the pace of learning is good. Teachers begin most lessons with a lively starter activity that quickly reviews previous work, and conclude with a summary that is focused on learning. Questions are used skilfully, ensuring pupils think and contribute to the development of lessons, and the use of a variety of activities maintains their interest and motivation. ICT is used particularly well in many lessons to develop a clearer understanding. In one good Year 8 lesson, for example, animated diagrams clarified the structure and action of the heart very effectively before a video and dissection were used to develop a more in-depth appreciation of its functioning. In another very good Year 9 lesson, the use of a computer program enabled pupils to understand, more fully, the effect of changing temperatures on the enzyme-controlled breakdown of starch. Teachers' explanations are very clear and in almost all lessons pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and think for themselves. For example, from Year 7 upwards, pupils are expected to write up their own reports and evaluate their investigative work. Often, lessons include an element of fun that stimulates learning. For example, in an excellent Year 10 middle set lesson, pupils enjoyed acting as magnetic fields as the teacher skilfully and effectively developed the challenging concepts involved in the functioning of a generator. Classes are managed very well; there is a high expectation of good behaviour and the good discipline that ensues contributes to the efficient pace of working. Homework is set regularly and work is assessed on a day-to-day basis but marking does not tell pupils how to improve. Pupils have many opportunities to apply their numerical



skills. There is less than average technician time allocated to the department; technical support is very good and much valued by teachers.

94 Leadership and management of the department are good and some elements are very good. The head of department provides very strong leadership and has a clear vision of the way forward. During his unavoidable absence this academic year, the department has been managed well, minimising the effects on pupils. The teamwork in science is very commendable and is focused on raising standards. However, although there is much sharing of ideas, there is no formal system of monitoring and evaluation of teaching in place. Within the curriculum, there is good provision that meets the needs of pupils of all capabilities, but the schemes of work would benefit from the inclusion of further cultural issues. The time allocated to teaching in Years 7 and 8 is less than that recommended and this impacts on the teaching of investigative work. The subject's performance is monitored very well and the curriculum is organised very carefully to make very good use of the time available. Pupils' work is monitored thoroughly, and there are good systems for tracking pupils' progress. Formal assessment and support for target groups are good and the team puts assessment information to good use when reviewing the curriculum. Pupils in the upper school have a clear understanding of their targets, how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. The department rightly recognises the need to extend this good practice to Years 7 and 8. Resources in science are unsatisfactory and funding is low. Larger items of equipment are outdated and a lack of data-logging equipment is affecting curricular requirements. Laboratories are rather small, especially for practical lessons, but otherwise accommodation is good.

95 Improvement has been good since the last inspection. Standards in GCSE examinations have risen significantly. A dedicated ICT room has been established and there is now extensive use of ICT in teaching. There has been increased use of ICT to monitor and analyse pupils' progress more thoroughly, and target setting and feedback of information to pupils have improved. The recent refurbishment of two teaching rooms has provided extra laboratories with good ICT facilities for teaching.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good; teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and they demand a great deal of their pupils.
- Pupils learn very well within lessons and make good progress over their time in school.
- The high expectations lead to the attainment at GCSE being well above the national average.
- The good leadership and management of the subject lead to a strongly shared commitment and vision to continue to raise standards.
- The pupils show very good personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- The open plan classrooms are too small and conditions are noisy and cramped.
- ICT is not used enough in the Years 7 to 9 and is not meeting statutory requirements.
- Not enough boys choose to study art at examination level.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not formalised.

96 In the 2002 teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average. Both boys and girls exceeded national expectations. The pupils' results in GCSE examinations have been consistently high since the last inspection and the number of pupils gaining grades A\*-C has been well above the national average for the last three years. In 2002 all pupils who were entered for the examination gained a grade and over a quarter gained the top grades of A\* and A. Far more girls than boys studied art but they achieved at a similar level and both did slightly better in art and design than in their other subjects. Results are amongst the highest in the school.

97 Inspection evidence shows that by Year 9, attainment is well above average. Pupils use technical skills very well and show a very good developing knowledge of art and artists. In Year 9, pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of line and proportion when producing life drawings of moving figures. They confidently discuss the work of Henry Moore and interpret their drawings into wire sculptures reflecting his use of shape and form. All pupils showed a growing understanding of how to research a project and how to use the information to develop their own individual work. Higher attainers' folders reflects extra research such as looking at the work of Barbara Hepworth whilst lower attainers' work shows a good level of personal response. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Pupils arrive in the school with an average level of attainment. They learn quickly because the quality of teaching is frequently very good. In Year 7 the structured course gives pupils a sound understanding of formal elements such as the use of pattern and colour and this is built on in Year 8 where, for example, pupils study the art of Andy Goldsworthy and work on projects based on pattern in natural form. Teachers positively encourage the written evaluation and analysis of work and pupils' literacy skills develop well.

98 By Year 11, attainment is well above the national average. Many pupils reach high standards when researching whole-class themes and confidently use a range of materials and processes to express their creative ideas. Pupils take much more responsibility for their own work at this level. They carry out a range of experiments before selection of final ideas and study past and contemporary art whilst developing their own preferred style. During the course pupils quickly take on an increased demand for individuality. For example, a pupil had designed and produced a full size fantasy deckchair with the fabric design based on North American Indian art. Higher attainers following the graphics course produced a very high quality of professional promotional material arising from a wide range of stimuli. One pupil had not only produced a poster design and menus for a restaurant but had also produced a sophisticated model of the interior view. All pupils, whatever their prior attainment, achieve well. A strength of the department is the emphasis put on the pupils' personal response and this builds on the confidence of lower attaining pupils who respond well to projects such as 'Memories in a Box'. They frequently produce work of a similar standard to the rest of the class. Pupils use ICT well to extend work and competently manipulate and distort imagery when developing projects. Far fewer boys than girls choose to study art at this level.

99 The quality of teaching is very good overall. Consequently pupils improve and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding consistently throughout the school and learning is at least good and frequently very good. The teachers have a good relationship with pupils and the high expectations made of them create a positive learning environment. Lessons are very well planned to include a wide range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of attainment. Teachers manage classes very efficiently when working in a variety of media in noisy and cramped conditions. They have developed clear, accepted procedures that result in good use being made of time and resources. This ensures that pupils experience a range of approaches and make very good progress in developing their knowledge and technical skills. In the very best lessons, teachers give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils' interest.

100 Pupils respond well to the effective teaching and enjoy art and design, most are keen to learn, and attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their enthusiasm and energy are channelled constructively into learning. In discussion, teachers elaborate on points that appeal to pupils and build on aspects that motivate and interest them. Higher attainers respond well to the challenging questions whilst lower attaining pupils are given the support and encouragement to respond confidently. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and give a high level of individual support and advice which gives clear direction to the pupils on how they can improve their work. The marking of work is supported by detailed comments by the teachers but the pupils in Year 7 to 9 are not always clear of the level they have attained as there are no separate marks for effort and attainment. ICT is built into all project planning and taught well in Years 10 and 11 but it is not used enough in the Years 7 to 9 and is not yet meeting statutory requirements.

101 The small department is well managed by an acting head of department. Policies are clear and informative and give sound direction to the teachers who have a strongly shared commitment to raise standards. The informal monitoring and evaluation of teaching are very good but this good practice is not yet built into a formal structure. The department's involvement with the training of teachers and the use of artists in residence bring a range of skills in a variety of areas, which enhance the curriculum, and support learning. A strong caring ethos is promoted and pupils' personal development is very good. A high emphasis is put on the pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, social and citizenship development by building aspects into all projects. Assessment systems within the department are good but analysis of assessment data is still in its early stages and is currently underused. Accommodation is presently unsatisfactory. The department uses the space as well as possible but the rooms are too small for the open-plan design and conditions are overcrowded. One room has no running water. Although there are plans to improve this they are currently on hold due to budget restraints. Since the last inspection the department has continued to maintain high standards and art and design is a popular choice for examination courses.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- Leadership is very good.
- The process to identify and evaluate existing practice was very good.
- The introduction of citizenship across the curriculum has been very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is no planned evaluation of how effectively the subject has been implemented.
- There is no planned evaluation of the quality of teaching in the subject.
- Links with the community are underdeveloped.

102 The school took appropriate action, in good time, to provide for citizenship within the curriculum. A co-ordinator was appointed to lead the strategy, and he has undertaken his responsibilities in a meticulous manner. The subject is taught in all subjects, including PSHE, through extra-curricular activities, and within specified tutorial periods. The co-ordinator led a very thorough trawl of existing provision within subjects, and a map of comprehensive provision was collated. Appropriate resources were provided, and relevant members of staff attended in-service courses. Very good use is made of well-qualified visiting speakers. The assessment system used focuses upon the way in which pupils develop as citizens and

involves pupils in some self-evaluation. Planning for citizenship is now in the second phase of its development.

103 During the inspection, five discrete PSHE citizenship lessons were observed in Years 7 to 10 where citizenship topics were the main content. In addition, elements of citizenship were observed in other subjects.

104 In the lessons observed, standards were broadly as expected. Year 7 pupils have a sound knowledge of what to do when they come across someone with a sprained or fractured arm. They worked confidently, in two lessons, to apply arm slings to each other, and understood why the process has to be undertaken in a set way. In a mathematics lesson, Year 7 pupils applied mathematical principles on line and rotational symmetry to road signs, and knew what they stood for. Year 8 pupils have clear views about the problems arising from the United Kingdom becoming an ageing society, and they worked out the implications these problems will have for them in the future. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils know about the conservation of earth's resources, and have a respect for animal life. Through design and technology, pupils become well informed about the use made of recycled materials and renewable resources. In a discrete Year 10 citizenship lesson, pupils showed themselves to have a good understanding of the dangers of alcohol and tobacco abuse.

105 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and, in the case of the teacher demonstrating first-aid principles, excellent experience. Teachers have taken specific steps to prepare themselves for teaching aspects of the subject, and this preparation has been very thorough. Informative, challenging worksheets have been produced in many subjects. There is a good balance between theory and practice in lessons, and this, together with the attitudes of the pupils, contributes towards a very good quality of learning. In all lessons observed, the pupils were fascinated by, and involved with, the topic in hand. The very good, and often excellent, relationships between pupils and teachers, also contribute towards learning. Question and answer sessions ensure that all pupils are fully included in all activities. Visiting speakers are of a high quality and are respected. A former community policeman, for example, comes to the school regularly, and is welcomed by the pupils. He spoke with great success to Year 9 pupils about drug abuse.

106 Overall, pupils have very good attitudes to citizenship. They participate eagerly in lessons, and are interested and receptive. They demonstrate themselves to be self-contained, informed and balanced young people in class and around the school, and this leads to a very civilised school community.

107 The tutor periods are used very successfully to support the work undertaken in citizenship, and within subjects. In a Year 10 tutorial, for example, pupils preparing for work experience two weeks later were given excellent advice by their tutor about the way they should behave on that experience, and the sort of problems they might come across. Very good practical advice was given on how to deal with such problems. Community links, such as through the Year 7 Safe Schools Project, are developing. The school has comprehensive policies for teaching drugs education and sex education, and members of the community visit to enrich and enhance the education provided by teachers. Systems are in operation for heads of department to monitor how citizenship is taught within subjects; plans are being developed for an overall evaluation at whole-school level, which will reveal levels of success after one year.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are high and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good and sometime very good.

#### Areas for improvement.

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to study textiles in Years 7 to 9.
- Not enough pupils have the opportunity to study design and technology in Years 10 and 11.

108 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed that pupils' performance was well above average and had improved over recent years. The procedures in place for assessing pupils' work are good and systems for standardising the assessments make good use of available exemplar material. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were well above average when compared to the national standard. Pupils performed better than they did in most of their other subjects. The results for 2002 were better than those of the previous year.

109 In work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils join the school with average levels of attainment. They make very good progress and achieve levels above those predicted by their attainment on entry to the school. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they have knowledge of the essential nutritional value of foods and can cook simple dishes. When working with resistant materials, pupils have developed skills to cut, shape and join so that they can make a range of articles in different materials, including wood, metal and plastic. They use drawing techniques well so that they can communicate their design ideas effectively. Pupils have very good making skills. They understand the process of design and teachers provide planned opportunities for them to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum. The highest attaining pupils produce articles of good quality and express their ideas well. Lower attaining pupils can make items of average quality and communicate their ideas clearly. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make similar progress to their peers. In the areas of the subject they experience, pupils achieve well, but there are few opportunities to experience work with textiles.

110 Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Standards are high in electronics, resistant materials and food technology and pupils achieve well. They produce a design brief and develop and express their ideas in a way that results in a quality finished product in their chosen subject. Standards of manufacturing are high with pupils showing good practical skills. Some higher attaining pupils produce very high quality work, both in manufactured items and in the detailed and well-presented design folders. Where pupils use ICT, their quality of work improves. Pupils make good use of computer-aided design and manufacture. All pupils produce detailed supporting materials to indicate how they have achieved their final design. The lowest attaining pupils produce written evidence to indicate how they have planned and evaluated their design. Pupils are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination and as a result, they understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades. Pupils with special needs are given good support and make similar progress to other pupils.

111 Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are sometimes very good and this leads to very good learning. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage pupils. The higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are very good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. The teaching is planned well and leads to a coherent learning programme. Key learning points are systematically

reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. Teachers plan their lessons well and share learning objectives with pupils. The great majority of lessons start with links to previous work and finish with a summary of what has been achieved in the current lesson and how this will develop into further work. This is effective in giving pupils an understanding of their longer-term learning. There is an emphasis on literacy skills and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their own vocabulary. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs, and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Pupils with special education needs make satisfactory progress and the teachers provide extra support for learning. Teachers' work is made more effective by very good technician support. The department actively supports the teaching of citizenship and does this very well. Projects with an emphasis on sustainable technology are encouraged. The effects and implications of fair trade on different cultures and societies are part of the teaching programme.

112 Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging and motivating comments. The quality marking provides a commentary that shows pupils how to improve their work. Leadership and management are good. The two heads of department have a clear view of how design and technology should be developed. There is a clear direction for development and a good programme for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. The activities were relevant to pupils. The established assessment system is used to make predictions of grades at GCSE. The recording of assessment using National Curriculum levels linked to the schemes of work is used effectively to set targets for individual pupils. The processes used for assessment of pupils' attainment at age 14 are rigorous and assessment results are used effectively in planning and teaching. The department has good resources to teach aspects of ICT, control and computer-aided design and manufacture. The department has regular informal meetings and there are formal meetings to discuss issues to improve policy and standards in the subject. The quality of the accommodation is good but the number of rooms available limits coverage of the full range of design and technology activities and restricts access in Years 10 and 11 for a significant number of pupils. The significant investment in accommodation and facilities still leaves the school short of accommodation to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to follow design and technology or to experience all aspects of the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Teachers are committed to raising standards.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not achieve as well in geography as they do in other subjects within school.
- The highest attaining pupils are not challenged enough.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT.
- There is not enough time to cover the curriculum in sufficient depth in Years 7 to 9.

113 Attainment on entry at the age of 11 is broadly average but knowledge of the maps of the United Kingdom, Europe and the world is weak.

114 In the teachers' assessments of 14 year olds in 2002, attainment was broadly average and has improved over the last three years from being below average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results were well below average and have fallen significantly in the last three years. Boys attained better than girls but both attained less well in geography than in most other subjects. The attainment of pupils of lower prior attainment matched the national average, but there were fewer higher grades than would be expected. Pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, geography remains a popular subject chosen by well above average numbers of pupils, covering the full ability range.

115 Inspection evidence shows that the standards obtained by 14 year olds are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Boys and girls make equal progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they have the support of learning assistants, though where the predominant teaching is whole-class based this limits the support provided and in these situations pupils with special educational needs make at best satisfactory progress. Pupils of average and above average prior attainment usually make satisfactory progress, though sometimes higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils understand the purpose of different types of settlement and learn about the differences between northern and southern Italy. They can use technical vocabulary accurately in context which is an improvement since the last inspection.

116 By the age of 16 standards are below average and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. The achievement of the highest attainers is unsatisfactory in the fieldwork inspected because most studies inspected did not place Blackpool in relation to the North West or the British Isles. Diagrams, text and photographs were not well integrated and the analysis of data and conclusions drawn are not strong enough to gain all of the marks available. The absence of significant fieldwork before the age of 14 provides inadequate preparation for GCSE. In a lesson on the location of industry in Year 10 where most pupils learned well, the highest attainer was coasting at the end.

117 Teaching seen was satisfactory overall and there was some good teaching. However, teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson where tasks were inappropriate for challenging pupils who were unable to sustain concentration over the full lesson. There is a long-term structural weakness in teaching which does not address the needs of the highest attainers. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory.

118 The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Teachers make good use of literacy in their teaching and are exploring ways of using it further. They encourage pupils to write in a wide range of styles, for example some pupils write outstanding poetry in response to a moving video about earthquakes. Pupils make

satisfactory use of their mathematics skills in most lessons in Years 7 to 9, for example, in the use of direction, co-ordinates and climate graphs. However, numeracy work in the GCSE coursework is too simple and the highest attainers are not expected to use higher statistical analysis. Teachers do not use ICT enough because there is limited access to computers. There is much, mostly competent, use of ICT in coursework by pupils using computers at home, but not all pupils have them.

119 Planning of lessons is satisfactory and materials are carefully prepared. Teachers have high levels of expectation of good behaviour and there are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. The little poor behaviour observed arose where tasks were inappropriate and pupils of low prior attainment could not maintain their concentration. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally very good and this is a very good basis on which to build improved achievement.

120 Much teaching is whole-class based and in classes where pupils have a wide range of prior attainment, the pace of teaching and learning is adjusted to the slower workers, and this slows the quicker workers. Where teachers provide a good variety of activities, pupils work at their own level and pace and demonstrate that they are competent learners who organise themselves well, co-operate well in shared learning, manage their own work, think clearly, and make logical decisions, for example in a good lesson on the location of industry in Year 10. However, all pupils copy too many notes. This is unchallenging and whilst it provides a good basis for revision at GCSE, pupils are not expected to use what they know and understand to ask questions and solve problems. Good questioning checks knowledge and reviews understanding and sometimes above average pupils respond in extended talk, but at times the questioning does not encourage this.

121 Homework is set and marked and teachers place a high expectation on its completion. Teachers mark regularly but do not consistently show pupils how to improve. Progress has been made in using National Curriculum levels to measure attainment but teachers' knowledge of levels is not secure.

122 There is a chronic shortage of resources, particularly books for Year 8 and for GCSE courses. Teachers rely heavily on photocopied materials, the cost of which takes up too high a proportion of the department's budget. Apart from a new laptop for the use of teachers there are no computers in the department. Teachers have paid for additional training in the use of ICT but are unable to use their skills. Time allocation is satisfactory at GCSE but is insufficient before the age of 14 to cover the National Curriculum in sufficient depth.

123 Management and leadership of the subject are unsatisfactory because outcomes are unsatisfactory. There are no established methods of monitoring and evaluating the work of the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because many of the issues raised – the absence of field work before the age of 14, time constraints, teaching methods, resources for learning and the use of ICT – have not been resolved. Some of the necessary changes are beyond the control of the department. Teachers are dedicated and are committed to raising standards. The school has, belatedly, identified the subject as an area for improvement and has started to address the issues.

## **HISTORY**

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



### Strengths

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are very well behaved and work hard.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- Classroom relationships and support for pupils' personal development are very good.
- Good leadership and management are resulting in improved standards

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not linked well enough to National Curriculum levels.
- Assessment results are not used enough to track pupils' progress and set targets.
- Teaching is not monitored systematically enough.
- There is not enough time for pupils to learn in depth in Years 7 to 9.
- ICT is not used to widen pupils' learning experiences.

124 The results of the National Curriculum teachers' assessments taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 have been consistently above average since the last inspection, and current Year 9 pupils are achieving similar levels of attainment. GCSE results were broadly average in 2002, as they have been over the last three years, but the work of pupils currently in Year 11 shows a clear trend of improvement with more pupils working at above average levels. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Those with special educational needs, and the gifted and talented, make very good progress. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

125 Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics studied are good, and in the case of higher attaining pupils, it is often very good. Year 8 pupils, for instance, demonstrated good knowledge and understanding in their interpretation of historical evidence about Napoleon's Moscow Campaign. Rapid gains in Years 10 and 11 result in higher attaining pupils especially having a very good grasp of issues. This was shown particularly well by Year 10 pupils in their discussion of Roosevelt's personality and relationship with the American people at the time of the New Deal. They readily made comparisons with present day politicians from a well-informed basis. Similarly the written work of higher attaining Year 11 pupils showed a very good grasp of complex issues relating to the Arab/Israeli conflict.

126 There are instances when pupils' knowledge and understanding, while sound, are not deep and wide enough to enable them to analyse and set events in a wider historical context. This is particularly evident in some of the written work of average attaining Year 11 pupils which is too narrowly descriptive rather than seeking to compare, explain and analyse factors in a wider context. There are also times in lessons when pupils work at completing tasks with little understanding of the topic.

127 Pupils learn to place events in chronological order and develop empathy for historical personalities. They develop good skills in doing research and using historical evidence in an investigation. They select appropriate information, compare information from different sources and draw conclusions. Their projects are well organised, and ICT is often used well, by pupils at home, to enhance the presentation. Year 9 pupils have recently used both their research and ICT skills very well in producing attractive and well-informed historical guides to Fleetwood. Pupils are articulate in expressing their views orally, and write well-structured accounts. They use their numeracy skills confidently in calculation and the presentation of investigation findings.

128 Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Lessons are well planned, with a good match of the work to pupils' capabilities. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace,

with purposeful introductions, clear explanations and a variety of activities. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond very well, with good concentration. Teachers promote pair work which is closely monitored and guided. Pupils work well together. Their very good attitudes and classroom relationships contribute strongly to their learning. In the best lessons, teaching is highly interactive, as in a Year 9 lesson where the challenging presentation by the teacher stimulated a lively discussion comparing democracy and dictatorship. This resulted in learning at a very demanding level and rapid progress. There are times, however, when too much control by the teacher limits opportunities for pupils to take initiative and to learn in depth. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy skills. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

129 Most marking is thorough but there is some inconsistency in the quality of guidance. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly, including through searching questioning in lessons. But assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not linked securely enough to National Curriculum levels, and assessment results are not used systematically enough to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.

130 The curriculum is well planned and appropriate for the full ability range. Planning seeks to compensate for the shortage of time allocated in Years 7 to 9 but nevertheless, this places a significant constraint on the breadth and depth of learning. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a good emphasis on local history and visits to places of historical significance, but insufficiently by the use of ICT. Personal development is very well supported. Learning and research skills are very well supported by homework tasks.

131 Leadership and management are good. There has been good improvement in most of the issues identified in the last inspection, but not enough in the monitoring and support of teaching. Teachers work closely together. They receive informal advice and written guidance in schemes of work, but the support is not systematic enough. There is no formal monitoring of teaching systematically linked to teachers' professional development. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to share good practice and achieve greater consistency in teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Overall, the quality of provision for ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Provision for discrete ICT is good.
- Pupils have a sound understanding and achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together.

#### Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient technical support.

132 In the teachers' assessments of 14 year old pupils in 2002, attainment was in line with the national average and was better than in 2001. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 the percentage of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well above the national average and results were similar to the previous year. Not all pupils are given accreditation or National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 11.

133 Inspection evidence shows that standards are broadly average by the time pupils are 14. Pupils demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with processing text and images, presenting information and handling data. They can also access the Internet and use this to carry out research and download images. Overall, all pupils make good progress from when they enter the school.

134 By the time pupils are 16, standards are above average and pupils of all capabilities achieve well. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a wide range of software including desktop publishing, data bases, spreadsheets to simulate business practice, and the Internet for research. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. In business studies lessons, pupils use computers to simulate business practice. Computers are used in design and technology for computer-aided design, manufacture and control and in English to produce news articles. These subjects extend pupils' skills in the use of computers.

135 Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them. For the majority of pupils there are too few opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. Pupils with special education needs make similar progress to other pupils.

136 In specialist lessons the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned well and the objectives are shared with the pupils. The management of pupils is good. Teachers set challenging tasks matched to pupils' levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. Relationships are good and the skilled support given quickly builds pupils' confidence. Teachers introduce lessons effectively with links to previous work and they use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their skills are sufficiently developed. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words.

The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to become curious and ask questions and this develops pupils' ability to work independently. Teachers have a good understanding of the special needs of individual pupils and ensure that there is a good level of support to enable them to achieve their learning goals.

137 There has been an improvement in access to computers since the last inspection but the number of computers available is still below that expected nationally. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is unsatisfactory. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunch time and at other times, when pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.

138 The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of all staff. There is a scheme of work to assist teachers' planning and a department handbook to outline clearly the policies, aims and objectives of the department. The assessment of pupil attainment and progress is used effectively to inform teachers' planning. Accommodation is good: the size and number of rooms is adequate for the number of pupils being taught.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

139 Management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. There is no tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of ICT and no whole school cross-curricular policy. The school does not have a clear vision and direction which will lead to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements.

140 There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of ICT in other subjects.

141 The number of computers available is below what might be expected nationally; most of the equipment is up to date. The use of computers to support teaching in other subjects is unsatisfactory. There were few instances of computers being used in other subjects. Teachers were confident to use computers in business studies, English and design and technology lessons and this was seen to be effective and the standards achieved were satisfactory.

142 At present pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network. The opportunities for the consistent application and development of computers are not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated across the curriculum, however, to achieve full coherence and progression. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection of the numbers of computers available but the provision is still below the national average.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes which help them achieve well.
- Teaching is good overall and some is very good.
- The subject is well led and this contributes strongly to pupils' achievement.
- Personal development is supported very well.

### Area for improvement

- Marking is not always rigorous enough, particularly in Spanish.
- There is insufficient provision for the use of ICT to support learning.
- Book resources are insufficient in Years 7 to 9.

## French

143 French is taken by all pupils for the first three years. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2000 to 2002 indicate well above average levels of attainment, improving over the three years. GCSE results for the same three years were well above average. In 2002, almost a third of the pupils obtained grade A or A\*, and there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. All candidates, including some with special educational needs, obtained at least a grade F. Although the school did not require pupils to take a modern foreign language to GCSE level, over half of them did so. Pupils achieve well throughout their five years. They progress from average standards on entry to the school to above average standards in Year 9 and on to well above average standards by the end of their course.

144 By the end of Year 9, pupils have a wider vocabulary than is usually found, and with the benefit of new course materials are now using this to obtain information about developments in French society, which furthers their understanding of similar developments in England. Speaking and writing skills are above average. High attaining pupils write in past, present and future tenses. In Years 10 and 11 evidence of very high attainment was seen and also of very good achievement where an individual pupil had moved up from a previous low set to a likely grade at C or better. There is no low attainment, which reflects very good pupil morale.

145 Overall, teaching and learning are good. One lesson was satisfactory and two were very good. Most teachers teach two languages. Teachers plan lessons very well in order to make effective use of the very long double periods they have. Worksheets and other resource materials produced by teachers are very good. All of those who teach French speak it well and make good use of their spoken French in lessons. Teachers manage their pupils very well, developing good relationships, which allow exceptional lessons such as a French breakfast served to one Year 7 class still unfamiliar with such things. However, because there are insufficient books available in Years 7 to 9 for pupils to have their own copy, they are still too dependent on their teachers. In Years 10 and 11 examination entries are well matched to pupils' learning needs, because teachers assess carefully which skills should be taken at foundation level and which at higher level. There is good use of video recorded materials, but no opportunity for pupils' to access computers, which rules out use of specially written software and of the Internet. Teaching is totally inclusive and reflects well the school's Christian values of care and respect for others. Pupils learn about Christmas and Easter as they are observed in France.

146 Leadership and management in this whole curriculum area are very good. The curriculum area manager has a clear vision and sense of commitment which are at the root of the very high outcomes observed. Teachers' very good lesson planning is securely based on explicit policies and schemes of work to which all have contributed. This gives a strong

sense of ownership and clear objectives which pupils come to share. The lack of opportunities for the monitoring of teaching and learning is less critical than it might be because of the cohesive teamwork of the department. Day excursions to France are organised every year as well as study visits at longer intervals. However, financial constraints and conflicting priorities have limited the department's potential to move forward in using ICT to better effect.

## **German**

147 German is taught in Years 8 and 9 as an alternative second foreign language to Spanish and continues through to GCSE. At present 31 pupils in Year 10 and 13 in Year 11 take German. In Year 8 all but a small number take a second foreign language in addition to French.

148 No separate teacher assessments were available; at the time of the inspection non-statutory tests had just been completed. GCSE results in the past three years have been slightly below average, 2002 being an improvement on the two earlier years.

149 Two lessons were seen, both in Year 9, and were supplemented by other evidence from pupils' written work. Overall standards in Year 9 are average, and this is good achievement because it is achieved in a relatively short time. Almost all low attainers achieve well in small groups, though one or two pupils do not achieve adequately. All others can write up to half a page of text using present tense verbs. Evidence from written work and trial examinations indicates above average standards in Year 11.

150 Teaching is good, providing challenge, which puts pupils under pressure to achieve well. The impact of this on the lower attaining group was that there was little difference between them and the higher attaining class. In the smaller class there is more opportunity for speaking, which leads to a lively response. In both classes seen the pace is brisk. New vocabulary is rapidly assimilated and re-worked, for example to allow pupils to express opinions. Relationships are good, and this leads to good attitudes and a sense of enjoyment of learning.

151 German is well managed within this overall curriculum area. The subject leader has worked diligently to produce her own documentation and schemes of work. She is also subject to the same resource constraints as her colleagues.

152 Since the previous inspection modern foreign languages have shown good improvement. In French high standards have been maintained, and standards are rising in German.

## **Spanish**

153 Pupils in Year 9, after less than two years of starting Spanish, are already achieving above average results. This was borne out in recent standard tests in which well over half of those entered achieved the average grade or higher. Given their attainment when they joined the school, this represents good achievement for all pupils, and reflects the good teaching they receive. This applies to pupils with learning difficulties as much as to those with a gift for language, and to boys as well as to girls. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE Spanish examination was slightly below the national average. However, pupils achieved as well in Spanish as they did in their other subjects, and boys fared as well as girls, in contrast to the national picture.

154 Work seen during the inspection confirms this good achievement and above average standards. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are pushed hard by strong teaching and achieve

results that are better than those expected at their stage of learning. They write accurately about their home life and manipulate verbs to write about events in the past. A particular strength is the confidence with which many pupils speak and understand Spanish. A group of low attaining pupils, many of them with learning needs, spoke about their school subjects in Spanish and were able to express an opinion about them, and even justify that opinion. Their answers were well pronounced[N125]. Teaching is demanding, using Spanish almost all the time, but well tailored to pupils' pace of working so that they have plenty of chance to hear and practise the spoken language.

155 By Year 11, pupils reach above average standards, building on the good work they have done previously. It was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons, but pupils of higher attainment in Year 10 have very good understanding of Spanish spoken at speed and are already coping well with a difficult new tense. Their writing shows a good grasp of grammar and, at the highest level, a few pupils write descriptively and at length. Pupils of lower attainment struggle with writing accurately in a foreign language, but are capable of short pieces describing their home and town. Reading is a slightly neglected skill and pupils of all ages would benefit from more opportunities to read freely and at their own pace in the language.

156 Pupils learn well because teaching is good, sometimes very good. Teachers are competent linguists and in many lessons they use the language very skilfully so that pupils learn to listen carefully and to understand the language spoken at speed. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, the teacher used Spanish even when explaining complex grammar, and the pupils understood. Where teachers also allow plenty of chances to practise speaking through repetition and pair work, pupils learn to speak confidently and with good pronunciation. Teachers get on well with pupils, treat them respectfully as individuals and manage their behaviour sensitively. This creates a good context for learning and pupils respond accordingly by concentrating well and, in the large majority of cases, enjoying their lessons.

157 In a few respects teaching could be even better than it is. Teachers do not always insist enough that pupils use Spanish to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. Pupils of all ages would benefit from regular use of ICT and other engaging media, such as readers and magazines. These can inspire real interest in language learning and help make the best use of the double lessons which are too long for some pupils. The marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging, but is rarely linked to National Curriculum levels and does not make pupils aware enough of what they need to do to improve.

158 Pupils learn all the better because they behave very well in lessons and bring good attitudes to the classroom. Pupils of high attainment work with maturity and independence. Those with learning needs try hard and are keen to learn. All pupils co-operate well so that teachers can trust them to work productively in pairs or groups, or on their own. In this respect, and in the very civilised way in which teachers interact with pupils, teachers contribute well to pupils' moral and social development.

159 Accommodation is good and provides a dynamic and colourful environment for learning. Strong, supportive leadership and very efficient management have led to a thriving department where staff work well as a team and share ideas and resources. The department is effective in assessing pupils' performance and is beginning to track their progress and set them targets for improvement. Residential trips to Spain have brought strong cultural and linguistic benefits for the pupils who have taken part.

160 Since the previous inspection the department has made some important improvements. Teaching and learning have improved and standards have been raised as a result. Numbers choosing to continue Spanish beyond the age of 14 are on the increase. The

reservation in the previous report about the lack of opportunities for pupils to speak in Spanish has been turned into a strength.

161 Two areas, however, remain to be put right. Resources are still inadequate. There is no regular access to computers, and neither enough overhead projectors, nor textbooks for pupils to take home for revision and exercises. The modern foreign languages department as a whole does not yet share its best practice by observing teaching on a regular basis. Given its stable and committed staff and its openness to change and development, the department is well placed to make further improvements.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Good use is made of music technology, particularly for composition work in Years 10 and 11.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Very good provision has been made for the introduction of aspects of citizenship into schemes of work.
- The school band performs well in the school and the community, and brings credit to the school.

### Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of teaching music listening and appraising skills are unsatisfactory.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is underdeveloped.
- Homework is given infrequently, and does not contribute sufficiently to the quality of pupils' learning.
- Staffing, resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory, and create difficulties for the management of the department.

162 End of Year 9 teachers' assessments over the past three years have shown pupils' attainment to be above the national average, but with a much wider range of attainment in 2002 than previously. Two pupils took the GCSE examination in 2002; one pupil gained a grade B, and the other a grade E. In the previous two years, 12 pupils in each year gained results below the national average, and performed as predicted. Boys and girls perform equally well in lessons, and it is a credit to the department that it manages to attract a significant number of boys on to GCSE courses.

163 In the work seen during the inspection, standards were in line with the national average by the end of Year 9, though in Year 7 standards were below average. Pupils make good progress across Years 7 to 9. The majority of Year 7 pupils have a limited knowledge of music notation, and this restricts the progress they make on keyboards. Many cannot read the treble clef, do not understand key signatures and do not know the relationship of values of notes. Similarly, many pupils in Year 9 have limited awareness of notation, despite evidence that teachers systematically teach notation. Homework is not given frequently enough to reinforce work done in lessons and to help pupils link what is done in one lesson to what is done in the next lesson. By the end of Year 9, most pupils can accurately perform a 16-bar melody on keyboards, often performing difficult concepts such as syncopation effectively. They use their ears well to help them with this work. Higher attaining pupils can successfully add counter melodies and add major and minor chords to the melody. Across each year,



pupils have a good knowledge of aspects of music history, and analyse some challenging pieces of music. By the end of Year 9, for example, they have effectively studied Penderecki's *Threnody*.

164 Standards in the Year 10 lesson observed were in line with the national average. Four of the seven pupils are working at above average levels. The remaining pupils, who are less technically competent, are broadly average. Higher attaining pupils in this lesson worked well, and accurately, when scanning a poem, prior to writing a melody for it. Year 11 compositions, stored on computer, showed that many pupils have a secure understanding of form, can effectively use a range of major and minor chords, write very interesting counter melodies, and demonstrate considerable creativity in their approach to composition work. This quality of creative composition is an improvement since the last inspection.

165 Pupils have good attitudes to music in Years 7 to 9, and very good attitudes in Years 10 and 11. All are very well behaved, polite and respectful. They work in a highly focused way when using the music technology. Teachers choose appropriate music for them to work with, and this encourages pupils to take a close interest. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils concentrated well for an extended period when they were analysing aspects of Heavy Metal and similar music.

166 Teaching overall is satisfactory, with elements of good and occasionally poor teaching with Years 7 to 9 pupils. Lessons are generally well prepared, though resources are not always immediately available and set up when they start. The use of music technology is systematically taught. Some provision is made for higher attaining pupils to extend their skills through open-ended tasks in practical work. There are too few specific tasks for lower attaining and pupils with special needs. Lessons focusing upon listening skills and music appreciation can be very ineffective. These lessons start with too long an introduction, causing pupils to lose interest at an early stage. Too much information is given to them, often without musical examples, resulting in pupils losing interest, or quickly forgetting the details. Few opportunities are provided for them to do practical work in these lessons, which would create variety and maintain pupils' interest. Pupils have a poor quality of learning on these occasions.

167 The accommodation is unsatisfactory as there are no practice rooms for group work, or for visiting teachers to use, and this impedes the quality of pupils' learning. Access to resources is unsatisfactory. There is only enough technology to equip one of the two rooms, and pupils have to share two to a keyboard. This also impedes the quality of pupils' learning. Good use is made of computers, though the department only has one effective machine. Year 10 and 11 pupils use computers to compose and print their work very well, using appropriate specialist software. Teachers have a very good knowledge of how to use music technology. Assessment is infrequent, and does not involve any target setting. Pupils do not know at what levels they are working at in Years 7 to 9.

168 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The teaching of music notation has been integrated into schemes of work, though there is room for further improvement. Composition work is now often very creative. Extension work is provided for higher attaining pupils. Although numbers opting for GCSE courses were very low last year, they were satisfactory in the previous two years. The options arrangements in Years 10 and 11 contribute towards the more able musicians not opting to take music, as reflected in the trend in results since the last inspection.

169 Leadership and management are overall good. The department is not easy to manage, due to resource and accommodation problems, and to ongoing problems arising from the instability of staffing. One lesson started very late during the inspection, for example,

because the head of department had to repair music technology in the other teaching room, for one of the part-time music teachers to use. There is not a music technician to undertake such tasks. The second part-time teacher is not a music specialist, and the head of department spends much too much time preparing lesson notes for members of the department, and for supply and cover teachers. Very good provision has been made by the head of department to introduce aspects of citizenship into music lessons in all years. The department contributes positively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The school band plays a prominent part in the life of the school, and of the community, and brings credit to the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Some teaching is very good.
- There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers which support learning.
- Results at GCSE are good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is too little teaching time in Years 10 and 11 to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum.
- Assessment does not involve pupils sufficiently and is not linked to target setting.
- The highest attaining pupils are not consistently challenged.
- Lack of indoor facilities limits the range of activities that can be taught and prevents pupils achieving as highly as they could.
- Curriculum planning, restricted because of current accommodation difficulties, does not ensure that pupils always have opportunities to make appropriate progress in all activities.

170 In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, attainment was broadly average and considerably better than in the previous year. GCSE results for 2002 were above the national average for A\*-C grades and were just above the average grades for the rest of the school although there were no A\* grades. Results were better than in 2001.

171 By Year 9 the standards of the majority of pupils are average. Athletics was the only activity being taught during the inspection in Years 7 to 9. Given the below average standards observed in Year 7 there is good progress during pupils' first three years in the school although progress for boys is better than for girls and the standards for some girls in one field event were disappointingly low given that this was their third year learning the event. Most pupils are able to apply the appropriate techniques and skills to several athletics disciplines including sprinting, long jump and discus. A significant minority of higher attaining pupils were not given the opportunity to extend their skills. The capability of pupils by the end of Year 9 to observe and analyse performance is below expectation but where it does occur it is contributing to their improvement in performance. Single, short lessons for pupils are not providing sufficient time for appropriate development during that lesson.

172 By the end of Year 11 evidence from GCSE coursework and from a GCSE theory and practical lesson illustrates standards that are above the national average. A good understanding of the role of the media in sport and the above average ability of many of the pupils to analyse and interpret information from newspapers were evident in a GCSE theory lesson. In a practical lesson on developing stroke making in cricket, Year 10 pupils displayed good basic striking skills and a good range of shots. They made good progress in the development of attacking strokes and many pupils developed the ability to adapt their stroke

play to a variety of different situations. They were not, however, able to relate their progress or levels of attainment to GCSE levels. Standards for those pupils not taking GCSE in the one lesson observed were above the national average but these pupils were some of the highest attaining pupils in the year group. They had very good control and close passing skills in football and were able to make space to receive a ball under pressure. The time allocated for core physical education for these pupils is not sufficient to cover the curriculum in sufficient depth or breadth, and lack of indoor accommodation has restricted the range of activities covered. Inconsistencies in timetabling and planning restrict progress in some activities as it is often not possible for pupils to re-visit activities during Years 10 and 11. This is also a problem in Years 7 to 9.

173 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most pupils are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are generally attentive and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very positive and this is a significant factor in the progress made in most lessons. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach.

174 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in all year groups, was very good in one lesson and was never unsatisfactory. It was good or better in over half of the lessons observed. In the best lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies, and an appropriate sequence of activities, are also features of these lessons, and discipline and class management is good. In the lessons that were not so good, planning and lesson objectives were not specific or detailed enough and the range and type of activities were not appropriate, particularly with respect to extending the most able pupils. Assessment of performance by teachers in the best lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching but even in some of these lessons individual pupils are only rarely set clear targets for improvement. Observation and evaluation by pupils in lessons, to help improve performance, are not consistently applied though they were used very effectively in a girls' athletics lesson. The recording of assessment, using specific criteria linked to the National Curriculum, is developing but does not yet involve pupils in setting their own targets and is not contributing to their progress. Assessment of GCSE theory work is not providing enough information to help pupils improve, nor does it indicate clearly the progress they have made in relation to GCSE levels.

175 The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements during Years 7 to 9 as lack of indoor facilities has prevented boys from learning either gymnastics or dance. Insufficient time is allocated for Years 10 and 11 to cover the curriculum in sufficient depth or breadth. The provision of single periods in Years 7 to 9 is not sufficient as it does not provide enough time for development of the lesson. Schemes of work provide appropriate guidance in most respects although there is no specific guidance on developing the potential of the most capable pupils. The use of ICT is improving and is apparent in much of the theory work for GCSE pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis in most lessons on the importance of health-related fitness and pupils have a good understanding of the importance of fitness to a healthy life-style. There is a satisfactory range of activities after school and at lunchtime for pupils to extend and develop their skills. For boys they are particularly good.

176 Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall and the day-to-day organisation of the department is good. The head of department has maintained good standards and managed to sustain the commitment of both pupils and staff in very difficult circumstances over the last few years when there has been very little indoor accommodation. The impact of this has been mitigated to some extent through the efforts of

the head of department to develop good links with local sports clubs, leading to the use of their facilities. All members of the department are committed and are very good role models, and most are generous with their time. The departmental handbook contains most policies and procedures but there is no appropriate departmental development plan to identify priorities and provide a clear framework to ensure future improvement. Although teaching and learning in the department are now being monitored there are few opportunities for the department to share good practice and for this to affect the overall quality of teaching in different activities.

177 Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The time allocation for Years 10 and 11 is still inappropriate but teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is now consistently good and new very good indoor facilities are nearly complete.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

178 Standards of attainment at GCSE in 2002 were in line with standards achieved nationally.

179 Pupils have broadly average levels of skills and good confidence when discussing concepts involved in their work. For example, Year 10 pupils speak confidently about the work of the marketing department in a large company. Pupils debate the structure of communication systems in large organisations. Pupils have good skills in ICT and have a good understanding of their use in business. Pupils cover the key skills adequately. Pupils are confident when writing evaluations; this continues to be a strength of their skills. The standard of pupils' portfolio work is good. They are well organised, well structured and well presented.

180 Pupils achieve well. In the GCSE course, the value added to pupils' learning is good. Good standards of work are produced, and pupils develop their analytical thinking quite well and have enough opportunities to explore the more abstract concepts of the subject. Progress in lessons and through modules and projects is good overall; weaker pupils are actively supported to maintain these standards. Pupils' progress is especially good where they are actively involved in learning which encourages them to explore themes and make decisions for themselves.

181 Pupils' attitudes towards their work are good. They are attentive, respond well to questions, remain on task, maintain concentration and take pride in their finished work. Pupils listen attentively and take an active part in lessons and this enhances their progress.

182 Teaching is always good. Teachers are secure in their knowledge, and they plan their lessons effectively. They use time and other resources effectively and set clear targets. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies and are sufficiently adept at intervening with

additional supportive teaching points whilst allowing and encouraging pupils to learn independently.

183 The department has clear marking and assessment policies which involve formative, diagnostic and summative assessments. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work well to inform future planning and teaching. The department uses its own internal system effectively to verify its assessments.

184 The department is efficiently and effectively managed and this has resulted in a commitment to high achievement. The qualifications and experience of the staff match the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the students. The department has continued to build on the good features outlined in the last inspection report. Pupils make good use of the computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using ICT.