

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **BUILE HILL HIGH SCHOOL**

Salford

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105974

Headteacher: Gena Merrett

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 258588

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11)
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1038

School address:	Eccles Old Road Salford Lancashire
Postcode:	M6 8RD

Telephone number:	0161-7361773
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Peter Grimshaw

Date of previous inspection:	18 <sup>th</sup> January 1999
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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Buile Hill High School is set on a green field site, facing Buile Hill Park in Salford, but serves inner city areas of high deprivation. It is a community comprehensive secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11). It is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are 1,038 pupils on roll, 526 girls and 512 boys. The school is now significantly larger than at the time of the previous inspection, following its amalgamation with another local high school in 2001. It is currently over-subscribed. Most pupils live locally, but a substantial number travel to school by public transport. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups or whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is low. There are currently no pupils at an early stage of English language development. Employment rates in the area are below the national average. Unemployment is above average. At 36 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is high. Some 18 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is above average. At over 5 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full Statements of Special Educational Need is well above average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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8943	Margaret Manning	Lay inspector	
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	English Geography
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
17011	John Clawley	Team inspector	Science
17156	Ted Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Modern languages
17349	Paula Askew	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
23499	Howard Seymour	Team inspector	Citizenship History Music Personal, social and health education
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language
19601	Steve Taylor	Team inspector	Business education
8744	Russell Whiteley	Team inspector	Art and design
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Buile Hill High School is a steadily improving school and its **effectiveness** is **sound**. It provides **satisfactory value for money**. Although standards are below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they make sound progress. The good leadership of the school is well focused on providing good opportunities for all pupils to achieve and become involved in its life and work.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school encourages its pupils to have high aspirations for themselves as a result of its good arrangements for their personal and academic support, welfare and guidance.
- The very good, clear vision and purpose of the headteacher and key staff ensure high aspirations and are leading to steady improvement.
- Attendance rates are unsatisfactory and absences, particularly those condoned by parents, adversely affect the learning of a significant minority of pupils.
- Standards in national tests and examinations are low compared with national averages.
- Whilst supportive of pupils, most teachers are still developing ways of encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own independent learning.
- Marking and assessment by some teachers do not always help pupils to know how to improve.
- Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, and provision in art is excellent.
- The good development of an alternative curriculum for pupils through vocational and work-related courses through excellent links with other schools and colleges.

**Improvement** since the previous inspection, which was before the school amalgamation in 2001, has been **satisfactory**. There has been very good improvement in the range of vocational and work related courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and good improvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning to improve pupils' achievement. There has been satisfactory improvement in other areas, including teachers' personal expertise in ICT. Whilst gradually improving, attendance remains unsatisfactory. The school still has to work hard to encourage some parents, who condone their children's absences, to become more fully involved in their children's learning.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	E	E	E	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9*

Pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well below average. By the end of Year 11, standards have improved to below average in literacy and numeracy and to average in ICT. In work and lessons seen, **standards** by Years 9 and 11 are **below average** overall. Nevertheless, pupils' **achievement** is **satisfactory**. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and achieve well. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils. Achievement by Year 9 is good in mathematics and in history. However, it is unsatisfactory in religious education, design and technology and music. Achievement is satisfactory in other subjects. By Year 11, achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education and in design and technology, but it is good in history and in physical education and satisfactory in other subjects. Pupils do not yet receive sufficient opportunity to achieve well in citizenship throughout the school. However, standards are well above average in art with pupils' achievement being very good throughout all year groups.

Pupils' **personal development**, including their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**, is **satisfactory** overall. Their moral and social development is good. Pupils' **attitudes** to school and their **behaviour** are **satisfactory**. Pupils' **attendance** and **punctuality** are **unsatisfactory**.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall **quality of education provided** by the school is **satisfactory**. **Teaching and learning** are **satisfactory**. The **curriculum** is **good** and is enhanced by a good enrichment programme, which contributes well to the pupils' personal development. The vocational and work related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is a growing strength of the school. The quality of **support, advice and guidance** for pupils is **good**. The school's **partnership with parents** is **satisfactory**, but broader **links with the community** are **good** and links with other schools and colleges excellent.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall **leadership and governance** of the school are **good**. The direction and purpose given to the school by the headteacher and governing body are very good. The day-to-day **management** of the school is **satisfactory**. Senior management responsibilities are firmly established and the role of middle managers developing satisfactorily. Whole school planning is good and that of subject departments satisfactory overall. Key management staff are creating effective teams.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents think the school has a good reputation within the local community, they find the school approachable and consider links with the school to be good. Inspectors agree with the majority view. However, a few parents express concerns about pupils' behaviour and the way in which the school handles complaints. Pupils in all year groups say they like their school and are expected to work hard and do their best. Some older pupils were less positive in their views, but overall pupils feel trusted and consider Buile Hill High to be a good school. The majority of pupils appreciate and take part in the clubs and other activities provided for them at the end of each working day.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- raise pupils' standards in national tests and examinations;
- continue its very good work to raise levels of pupil attendance and punctuality to school and its good work with parents to involve them more in supporting their children's learning;
- develop a wider range of teaching methods to help pupils become more independent in their learning and less dependent upon their teachers;
- develop further the good provision of alternative courses for pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, as part of the school's planning to meet the needs of all pupils;
- ensure consistent assessment and marking systems are fully developed by all departments and used to enable all pupils to know more clearly how to improve;
- develop further the school's monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching in order to identify and share the good practice which exists within the school;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- improve provision for citizenship and fully meet the locally agreed syllabus requirements for religious education;
- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

**Standards of attainment<sup>1</sup>** by Years 9 and 11 are **below average**. Nevertheless, pupils' **achievement<sup>2</sup>** is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in national tests and examinations are not yet high enough compared with national averages by Years 9 and 11.
- Standards in art are well above average and pupils' achievement very good by Years 9 and 11.
- Poor attendance by a significant minority of pupils hinders their progress and achievement.
- Achievement is improving well for those pupils taking alternative vocational and work related courses.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well.
- Achievement by Years 9 and 11 is not good enough in a minority of subjects.

#### Commentary

1. In September 2001, pupil numbers at Buile Hill increased significantly when it took in pupils from another inner-city school which had been closed. The attainment and achievement of the new pupils was much lower than Buile Hill's traditional intake. Consequently, exam results at GCSE dipped significantly, reflecting not only the disruption resulting from the integration of 400 new pupils and 18 new staff, but also the underachievement of groups of boys. The poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils, some of whom have to take two bus rides to travel to school, has adversely affected their achievement.
2. Nevertheless, the school has very quickly assessed the situation and has been taking the action necessary. Consequently, standards and achievement are improving steadily. A good quality vocational and work related curriculum was introduced in September 2002. The new courses are raising achievement well as they meet better the needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are now able to study a good range of subjects, which encourage and motivate more of them to learn well.
3. The school sets itself realistic and suitably challenging targets. By Year 9 in 2003 it came very close to its targets for the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5<sup>3</sup> or above in English and in mathematics, but it fell below expectations in science. Science results were lower than expected as a consequence of staffing changes and the lack of specialist staff teaching in some groups. At the higher Level 6 and above the school exceeded its targets in mathematics and in information and communications technology (ICT), but fell short in English and in science.
4. Overall, potentially higher attaining, gifted or talented, pupils make satisfactory progress. The school's programme and approach to supporting such pupils is developing well. The school monitors and evaluates effectively the performance of its various minority groups of pupils. By Years 9 and 11 such analysis shows the pupils concerned making sound progress and often achieving well. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and support assistants and achieve well. Currently, there are no pupils at the school who are in the early stages of learning English, travellers or refugees. However, the school has sound policies for the support of such pupils and the experience to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

<sup>2</sup> Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

<sup>3</sup> The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.



5. In 2003 the school missed its target for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE. However, the inspection team accepts the school's reason for this being related to the disruption as a result of the school amalgamation, which affected this particular year group more than most. Nevertheless, although the school is now setting more realistic targets at A\* to C, it continues to have sound expectations of the pupils capable of gaining A\* to G passes. It is suitably challenging of those identified as potentially gaining the higher A\* and A passes in GCSE examinations.

### **Key Stage 3 (Pupils in Years 7 to 9)**

6. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average. Well over half, and sometimes nearer two-thirds, of the pupils have reading difficulties when they start at the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. However, pupils make good progress and by Year 9 their literacy and numeracy skills have improved to below average. Their competence in the use of ICT by Year 9 is average. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>4</sup> is being well managed at the school and is having a sound effect on improving standards and achievement.
7. Standards of attainment in the 2003 national tests were well below average overall in Year 9 when compared with all schools nationally. However, when compared with similar schools<sup>5</sup> attainment was above average. In the core subjects<sup>6</sup>, standards were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and in science compared with all schools. However, when compared with similar schools, attainment was well above average for English and mathematics and average for science. Results in teacher assessments for ICT were below average. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9. Although pupils' attainment at the start of Year 7 is low compared with other schools in the local authority area, the progress they make by Year 9 is above average compared with other Salford schools.

#### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003***

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.2 (30.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	31.9 (32.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	29.1 (29.8)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 210 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

8. In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was very good by Year 9 in art. It was good in mathematics and in history. Achievement was satisfactory in English, science, ICT, geography, modern languages, physical education and in personal, social and health education. It was unsatisfactory in religious education, design and technology and in music. Standards of attainment are well above average in art. They are average in ICT, geography, history, physical education and in personal, social and health education. They are below average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern languages and in music. They are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Due to the school's timetable, no citizenship lessons were seen during the inspection and insufficient work was available to make judgements relating to standards. However, timetable arrangements do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to achieve well enough in the subject.

<sup>4</sup> The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects.

<sup>5</sup> Results are also compared with those obtained by pupils in similar schools; that is those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

<sup>6</sup> The National Curriculum core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.



## Key Stage 4 (Pupils in Years 10 and 11)

9. GCSE results overall in 2003 were well below average for pupils gaining five or more A\* to C passes when compared with all schools nationally. However, when compared with similar schools they were average and well above average when compared with the same pupils' previous attainment<sup>7</sup> at the end of Year 9. Consequently, pupils have made good progress overall between Years 9 and 11. Except in art, few pupils gain higher A\* and A passes. However, the proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving one or more grade A\* to G passes is well above average compared with all schools, similar schools and the pupils' low prior attainment.

### Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	22 (27)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (80)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (88)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26.9 (34.7)	25.3 (34.7)

*There were 198 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

10. In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was very good by Year 11 in art. It was good in history and in physical education. Achievement was satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, modern languages, music, business education and in personal, social and health education. It was unsatisfactory in religious education and in design and technology. Standards of attainment are well above average in art. They are above average in physical education. Attainment is average in ICT, history and in personal, social and health education. It is below average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, modern languages, music and in business education. Attainment is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. As in Key Stage 3, it was not possible to make judgements relating to citizenship.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' **attitudes** to school and their **behaviour** are **satisfactory**. Their **personal development** is **satisfactory** as a result of the overall satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural values which the school promotes. **Attendance and punctuality** are **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school sets high expectations of pupils to behave well and works hard to bring this about.
- Pupils are given good support in establishing good moral values and good relationships.
- Pupils enjoy their school life and taking part in the activities the school provides.
- Attendance rates are unsatisfactory and adversely affect the achievement of a minority of pupils.
- The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good.

### Commentary

11. The school has a clear policy of encouraging pupils to behave well. It is applied well by staff in lessons with the result that most pupils know how they should behave. Any disruption is swiftly dealt with and recorded. Because of its good systems the school is able to check efficiently in which lessons unacceptable behaviour is likely to happen and why. Support is then provided

<sup>7</sup> Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

where it is most needed. Consequently, pupils can concentrate on their learning and only occasionally is learning affected because teachers' management of pupils is less strong.

12. The presence of the community policeman on site helps to reinforce strongly the good moral values which the school promotes. The senior staff are also good role models and by their firm but friendly manner show pupils in a positive way how they should behave and relate to others. The school invites people into the school to talk about such issues as the use of drugs. For example, a visiting policeman engaged the interest of the pupils very well and handled the subject of drug misuse very sensitively.
13. Whilst the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall, they are less aware of the broader cultural influences within contemporary British society. Their appreciation of their own cultural heritage is satisfactory. However, the school is keen to develop better pupils' multicultural awareness through an understanding of the cultural background of the ethnic groups of pupils within the school. For example, in assemblies during inspection week all year groups were asked to think about how they could help the fortunes of others in this week before the Chinese New Year. Pupils listened attentively and respectfully to the teacher and the pupils presenting the assembly.
14. The school operates well as a social community. Pupils in all year groups say they like their school. However, the views of some older pupils were less positive in their answers to the pupils' questionnaire. In spite of this, pupils like taking part in the clubs and activities which take place before and after school. Even in the very crowded canteen at break time they enjoy themselves and mix together well. Pupils on vocational courses off-site show particularly good attitudes in response to the very good facilities provided.
15. The school has a very strong inclusion team, which provides comprehensive support for pupils with special educational needs. These needs range from learning, behavioural and emotional to the reintegration of pupils returning to school after exclusion. Strong commitment to inclusion and very good support by the team significantly reduce the numbers of pupils who have to be excluded from school. However, the poor attendance record of some special needs pupils is still adversely affecting their progress.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) – 2002-2003*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.9	School data:	3.9
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

16. In the last academic year, overall attendance rates rose by 3 per cent and this represents good improvement. However, despite the best efforts of the school, levels of unauthorised absence remain well above average and a significant cause for concern. The majority of pupils attend well and levels of authorised absence are average. The school rigorously applies guidelines for the identification of unauthorised absence as part of a collaborative strategy with the local education authority to tackle condoned absence. The school has very good systems for monitoring pupils' attendance. Dedicated staff rigorously and rapidly follow up non-attendance of pupils and there is very good collaboration with outside agencies which work with families in the community. The school has good systems for setting attendance targets at whole school, tutor group and individual pupil levels. These are complemented well by rewards for good attendance. The persistent lateness of a minority of pupils at the start of the day remains a significant cause for concern. The school recognises this and has developed a number of good and helpful programmes to resolve the problem.

## Exclusions

17. Permanent exclusion levels are the lowest in the borough and commendably reflect the school's strong commitment to inclusion. Levels of fixed term exclusions are high but dominated by a small group of persistent offenders who receive extensive support from the school and external support services. The school actively supports the continuing re-integration of these persistent offenders as part of its commitment to meet the needs of all its pupils.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	981	157	2
White – any other White background	7	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	15	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	9	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall **quality of education provided** by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The use of assessment is satisfactory and improving. The curriculum is good and is well enhanced by a good enrichment programme, which also contributes well to the pupils' personal development. The vocational and work related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is a growing strength of the school. The quality of support, advice and guidance for pupils is good overall. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, but broader links with the community are good and links with other schools and colleges excellent.

### Teaching and learning

**Teaching and learning** are both **satisfactory** overall throughout Years 7 to 11. The quality of **assessment** is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good work being undertaken by the school's learning and teaching group to help identify and share good practice.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good in art.
- The enthusiasm of the best teachers challenges pupils and enables them to achieve well.
- New systems are making teachers' assessments more accurate.
- There is a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching and learning in some lessons and particularly in some areas of design and technology.
- Pupils' planners are not used effectively enough to support learning and homework.

### Commentary: Teaching and learning

18. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are very good in art. They are good in mathematics, history and in physical education. They are satisfactory overall in English, science, ICT, religious

education, geography, modern languages and in personal, social and health education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in music and in design and technology. Due to the school's timetable, no citizenship lessons were seen during the inspection.

19. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good in art. They are good in ICT, history and in physical education. Teaching is good in English and in geography and learning satisfactory in both subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in mathematics, science, religious education, modern languages, music, business education and in personal, social and health education. They are unsatisfactory overall in design and technology, but teaching and learning are good in food technology. As in Years 7 to 9, no citizenship lessons were seen.
20. In the best lessons, there are major strengths which reflect good practice within the school across a range of subjects. In such lessons, learning is well supported because teachers' planning is thorough and lesson objectives clearly shared with pupils. Pupils are clear as to what is expected of them and this helps them understand well how to improve. Teachers' questioning is challenging, requiring pupils to think for themselves. In the very best lessons, such challenge is accompanied by good humour and a creative approach, which stimulates pupils' interest and imagination. The enthusiasm of teachers not only ensures a good pace in lessons but also enables pupils to achieve well because their feelings of worth and self-esteem in learning are raised. Consequently, pupils are confident that they can learn successfully and make good progress. Examples of such very good and sometimes excellent teaching were seen in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, history, health and social care, music, physical education, vocational courses and in personal, social and health education lessons.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 112 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (3%)	25 (22%)	37 (33%)	39 (35%)	7 (6%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

21. Although relatively few in number, examples of unsatisfactory teaching and learning were seen in mathematics, science, design and technology, music, expressive arts and in religious education. Here, teachers' planning is weaker and pupils insufficiently involved in lessons. There is a lack of 'buzz' and pace to the learning, which results in unsatisfactory achievement. This is because the teachers concerned talk at the pupils too much, do not challenge them well enough and do not have sufficiently high expectations of them. The pupils do not learn well enough because, for example, basic skills are insufficiently well developed or they are simply not given enough to do. With a minority of teachers, the marking of work is not helpful or sharp enough to enable pupils to understand fully what they have to do to improve.
22. The school has a relatively new but active learning and teaching group. This involves a good cross-section of staff from all levels of responsibility and experience. Good progress is now being made in monitoring teaching and learning. This includes useful, practical surveys and consultations with pupils to help teachers understand better how the pupils learn. This is being effective in starting to raise teachers' awareness of the ways in which they can help pupils to become more independent and more involved in learning. Asking important questions of the pupils such as "*Tell me about yourself as a learner*", promotes good levels of personal reflection and awareness by both staff and pupils. Consequently, good practice is being identified and more effectively shared.

#### **Commentary: Assessment**

23. The school has introduced a satisfactory and comprehensive system for the improvement of assessment procedures in order to raise the achievement of all pupils. Thoroughgoing systems are in place for monitoring assessment practices and which also track pupils' progress. All

departments mark, set subject targets and assess work satisfactorily in relation to National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria. To help set common standards, teachers share examples of their marking with each other. Subsequent discussions between teachers about pupils' work result in teachers more accurately predicting pupils' grades and levels of attainment.

24. Pupils have individual targets, which are reviewed termly. In most subjects, pupils know what their targets are and what they need to do to improve. However, in some subjects they are unclear as to what the next step is in order to bring this improvement about. This lack of clarity results from ineffective marking of work by some teachers and their setting of targets which are insufficiently specific for individual pupils. Each pupil has a planner in which to record homework and targets. However, when homework is set it is often not recorded in the planner by either whole classes or individual pupils. This is a result of an inconsistent approach by teachers to the setting of homework to support learning. Consequently, pupils' planners, designed to record homework and targets, are then ineffective due to inconsistent and irregular use.

## **The curriculum**

Overall, the school's **curriculum** is **good**. A good programme of enrichment enhances the taught curriculum. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and provision for out-of-hours study support is good in most subjects. The school's **resources** are **satisfactory** overall. Staffing and learning resources are sufficient, although accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Curriculum programmes for pupils in Years 10 and 11, in particular the good alternative curriculum project.
- The very good curriculum for pupils with special educational needs.
- Good programmes of extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' achievement and personal development well, particularly in the arts and sport.
- Timetable arrangements and curriculum design restrict achievement in modern languages, physical education and in citizenship.
- The good quality of display enhances pupils' learning well.
- The accommodation itself is inadequate, restricts learning in some subjects and does not allow sufficiently for disabled access.

### **Commentary: Curriculum**

25. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of the majority of pupils. It is much improved since the previous inspection as statutory requirements are now met for music, design and technology and in specialist ICT. However, current timetabling arrangements for citizenship throughout the school, mainly within personal, social and health education, do not yet allow sufficient time for the subject or for pupils to achieve well enough. Much good, innovative provision has been developed for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Learning opportunities are well planned to ensure pupils' progress and to support their achievement, particularly through the good alternative curriculum project in Years 10 and 11.
26. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is very good in art, where there are creative schemes of work and very good opportunities for independent learning. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory in modern languages in Years 8 and 9 because the arrangements for teaching a second language are adversely affecting pupils' progress in both French and Spanish. In mathematics in Year 7 the lack of some specialist teaching is adversely affecting pupils' achievement. In citizenship, throughout Years 7 to 11, timetabling arrangements are lowering pupils' achievement. However, the provision for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school is very good, with extensive use of reading recovery programmes. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils requiring additional help with their learning.
27. The alternative curriculum project is making a significant contribution to the good quality of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. This innovative feature makes the curriculum more interesting,

relevant and suitable for pupils. It is successful in helping to raise attendance in Years 10 and 11 and improving these pupils' attitudes to learning.

28. As a result of the good work of the school's inclusion team and the special educational needs co-ordinator, all teachers in the school are aware of the precise needs of pupils with special educational needs. Several departments have learning support assistants specifically assigned to them and make good use of this additional expertise. Where learning support is available, it is very well deployed and effectively used. However, there are some lessons where there is insufficient support, most notably in mathematics, music and ICT. This means that many special educational needs pupils make unsatisfactory progress in music and ICT. All extra-curricular activities are available to all with special educational needs and many take full advantage of these opportunities. On four evenings each week clubs are provided to help these pupils with their homework.

#### **Commentary: Curriculum enrichment**

29. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which extends and enriches the curriculum and contributes well to pupils' personal development. Most subjects provide good support for pupils outside the school day, for example through a French club and coursework revision classes in ICT. Opportunities are excellent in art, with regular twilight sessions, an artist in residence and pupils' displays of work in local nurseries. Pupils participate in a good range of activities in music, physical education and drama. There are also foreign exchange and theatre visits, which effectively promote pupils' cultural and personal development. The breakfast club is well attended each day. The club and its various activities are successful in helping to get boys in particular into school before lessons begin. The school organises its enrichment activities well and carefully tracks the effect of extra-curricular activities and study support on the pupils' development.

#### **Commentary: Accommodation and resources**

30. A particular weakness in the school's accommodation is in the lack of social areas for pupils. There are many more pupils in school than at the previous inspection, so movement around the school is a problem. This is particularly so between lessons and at break times as some pupils have to use exterior footpaths because of overcrowding in corridors. This causes particular problems for the pupils and staff in wet or inclement weather. Subjects such as music and to some extent art are restricted in the teaching they provide because of the unsatisfactory quality of their accommodation. The library is too small to support enough independent project work but is made as attractive as space allows. The quality of display is good, supports pupils' learning well and celebrates their achievement. The school benefits enormously from extensive, impressive, very high quality art display on corridors and elsewhere around the school.
31. The school has a designated mobile classroom block for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. This is well maintained and the school makes optimum use of the facility. However, it is separated from the main school and the learning support unit is inadequate in size and suitability. Although not currently a problem, there are difficulties of access for any physically disabled pupils or their parents who may require, for example, wheelchair access.
32. The school uses well its additional funding well to provide resources which enhance the learning of pupils with special educational needs or who are gifted or talented. Extensive support is offered to pupils with special educational needs through the learning support centre and numerous learning mentors to help pupils raise their achievement. There are sufficient staff who are well qualified to ensure the satisfactory teaching of the National Curriculum.



## Care, guidance and support

The **care, welfare, health and safety** of pupils are **good**. There is **good** provision for pupils' **support, advice and guidance**. **Pupils are well involved** through the school's seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good support and care for pupils who experience personal problems or difficulties with their work or behaviour.
- The school puts policy into practice well in its encouragement of pupils to become fully involved in its life and work.
- There are very good arrangements for the induction of pupils from primary schools.
- All pupils get good support as a consequence of regular review days.
- In many classes, form time activities are not used sufficiently well to support pupils.

### Commentary

33. A strength of the school is the good support and care it gives to its pupils. This is possible because of the wide range of mentors and other members of staff, who have very specific roles in looking after pupils' needs. Good use is made of funding from national initiatives such as 'Excellence in Cities' to provide very good educational and learning support programmes for pupils. The school is very careful to record and analyse pupils' personal development so that suitably specific support can be given when necessary. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils. Staff are well aware of who to contact in school if they feel a pupil is in need of protection. Governors also play an active part in supporting individual pupils who are underachieving and at the same time they give praise to those who are doing well.
34. Care for pupils with special educational needs is meticulous. It is very well organised and administered. Individual needs are very carefully documented by the special educational needs co-ordinator, supported by the inclusion team, and records kept fully up to date. There is compassionate care of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. This ensures that small groups of pupils are tutored well and that individual attention is provided. There are, for example, over 40 different reading support groups. Consequently, the great majority of pupils with special educational needs who attend school regularly make good progress with reading and numeracy during Years 7 to 9. Sound strategies are in place to enhance the care of pupils who are either gifted or talented and all teachers receive clear guidelines about these pupils.
35. Staff take the greatest care to make the transfer of pupils from primary school a supportive process, knowing well that this can be a difficult time for them. As a result of staff visits to primary schools, the transfer arrangements for new pupils are very good. These beneficial visits involve learning support and special educational needs staff, so the correct help can be given to children with problems. Children who are more vulnerable have their own induction day to help them get accustomed to the new surroundings. The school places such importance on the new pupils settling in that it conducts a survey of their views after six weeks so that it can improve the process for future years.
36. The school holds three review days every year when parents and pupils can talk to form tutors about the pupils' progress. These reviews contain a straightforward record of how well the pupil is doing in each subject and whether behaviour and attendance are good enough. These are useful opportunities for all concerned to consider how well the pupils are doing and what can help them improve.
37. Time is wasted in many tutor groups in the morning because, although there is a planned timetable of activities, it is too general to help tutors use it productively. In addition, many tutors do not reinforce very well the use of pupils' planners at this time, so pupils themselves do not value them sufficiently. The planners are very well designed but, in many cases, pupils are not

using them to organise their own work. Furthermore, parents are unsure what homework their children should be doing or when it should be completed.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The **links** that the school makes **with parents** are **satisfactory**. Those **with the community** are **good** and those **with other schools and colleges** are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The excellent management of the very strong links with other schools and colleges.
- The school has developed well its community links.
- The very good promotion of art is raising very well the school's profile in the community.
- The increasing involvement of parents through the introduction of review days.
- Not all parents support their children at school sufficiently well.

### **Commentary**

38. The school has built up strongly the support of a wide range of businesses, clubs and other organisations within the community to support its work and its plans for the future. This is seen at its best in art and design. Through the creative partnership programme, pupils' work is displayed to advantage in galleries and restaurants. Collaborative artwork is carried out with other colleges and centres. Time is set aside for a member of the school's staff to teach in the feeder primary schools and their pupils are also brought into school for a stimulating Primary Art Challenge. There are many links with well-known local people, such as artists, actors from the television and footballers, who willingly contribute to the school in a variety of ways, helping it to raise much needed funds.
39. The good alternative curriculum offered by the school is made possible through the very strong association it has with other colleges and centres. The management of these links is an excellent example of how it can be done. It is a great benefit to the pupils in raising their self-esteem as they are treated in the same way as full-time students. Consequently, the pupils are prepared very well for the world of work. Parents are supportive of their children on these courses.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

##### **The school is an excellent example of how well the links with other schools and colleges can be managed.**

Communications between the different establishments are excellent. Staff are in formal contact on the days when pupils are attending the colleges and the centre. Reports on pupils' attendance are faxed to the school. Informally, there are regular phone calls and visits to check on pupils' progress and potential problems. Pupils are required to show good attendance before being allowed onto the courses. Some college and school staff teach alongside each other on vocational courses so that the very best practice is shared. Management team meetings are held, together with other users of the facilities, at regular intervals at each site. Most importantly, the school has built up excellent relationships with staff at the different establishments. This, together with the suitability of the courses offered, means that all involved share the same high expectations of the pupils. Pupils respond very well and become committed to taking part in these courses, which meet their needs so very well.

40. Parents are invited to the school's review days for pupils and through this opportunity gain a good overview from form tutors of how well their children are progressing. It is also an ideal opportunity for parents, tutors and pupils to discuss any problems of attendance or behaviour. More traditional parents' evenings are still held and these are beneficial. However, parents' attendance is much better at the review days than the parents' evenings. Overall, parents' involvement in the work of the school to support their children is not strong.
41. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Parents are encouraged to become fully involved in reviews of their children's progress and in the development of their individual education plans. However, relatively few parents take full advantage of the good opportunities the school offers them.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The **leadership and governance** of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and the school's leadership group is good. The **management** of the school is **satisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effective leadership of the school by the headteacher, leadership group and governing body.
- There is a clear and practical vision for the future development of the school.
- Governors and senior management are well focused on raising standards and pupils' achievement.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.
- Effective systems enable senior staff to carefully monitor teaching and learning.
- There is effective financial management and control of the school budget.

### Commentary

42. The clarity of vision and sense of purpose engendered by the headteacher is very good. The headteacher and governing body have high aspirations for the school and together help shape its direction and further improvement very well. The headteacher has established a strong, supportive management team to lead on the implementation of the key strategies for raising standards. There is good strategic thinking and planning by the school's leadership group. The leadership and departmental management of the school's learning support team and the art department also provide very good examples of model practice at middle management level, which are now being shared across the school.
43. Senior managers have well defined roles and responsibilities and they are well informed. Management structures are satisfactorily established, based on an effective policy of developing the role of middle managers with a focus on raising standards. Line managers provide good support to middle managers. They satisfactorily monitor the implementation of whole school policies and development through the work of departments. Middle managers are fully involved in promoting school initiatives and practical action to further support pupils' learning and to raise standards and achievement. All teaching staff have clearly defined responsibilities. Staff development and training are well established and linked directly to the development planning and priorities of the school. The establishment of the school's learning and teaching group is helping senior staff and subject leaders to monitor the school's performance more effectively.
44. A member of the senior management team and the co-ordinator for learning needs lead the school's inclusion team very capably and very well. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps meticulous records and pupils' progress and attainment are very carefully monitored. There is a designated co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils and much of the additional support for these pupils currently comes from good extra-curricular provision. A very well informed governor is active in support of the inclusion unit.
45. The governing body performs its functions well and is fully involved in the school's development. Consequently, the governors understand its strengths and weaknesses very well. They have a significant influence in leading and supporting developments with a clear focus on raising standards and caring for pupils. The governing body is well organised and improves its own performance well through governor training and related courses. Governors provide very good support and challenge for school leaders. They satisfactorily fulfil their duty to make sure the school meets its statutory requirements and consult well with the school's senior management in doing so.

## Financial information

46. The financial affairs of the school are managed and controlled well. Governors are kept fully informed of the financial situation of the school on a regular basis. The school currently has a financial deficit. This has resulted from unexpected changes in its income from local and national sources. The governors have taken very seriously their responsibility to balance the school's budget and minimise any effect upon the learning and achievement of the pupils. Consequently, satisfactory agreements are in place with the local authority to clear this deficit over a period of five years. The principles of best value are applied rigorously and resources are used well to support the pupils' learning.

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,023,105
Total expenditure	2,965,343
Expenditure per pupil	2,879

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	(50,711)
Balance carried forward to the next	(89,482)

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teachers of English are knowledgeable and dedicated.
- The irregular attendance of a significant minority of pupils and the poor attitudes of some boys adversely affect their achievement.
- Supported pupils make very good progress.
- Many pupils are too dependent on teachers' help and guidance.

#### **Commentary: English**

47. Pupils' attainment in English by the end of Year 9 is below average. However, pupils enter the school with well below average standards and so have made good progress. An effective reading 'catch up' programme, involving close co-operation between teachers, support and school library staff helps well the many pupils with reading problems. Pupils have literacy difficulties both orally and in writing. Many pupils lack confidence in speaking in formal situations. The exception is in drama, where pupils confidently take part in unscripted improvisations.
48. GCSE results have been below average for several years and were low in 2003. The exception was in drama, where all pupils achieved an A\* to G grade. Inspection evidence shows that work completed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is improving, although standards are still below average. This is because the more highly motivated pupils produce good work, whereas there is a significant minority whose irregular attendance and lack of commitment result in work of a low quality. Many pupils do not produce the more detailed written explanations, which earn higher marks.
49. Achievement of pupils is satisfactory by Years 9 and 11 and those with less advanced literacy skills make good progress, especially in lessons where classroom assistants are present. When pupils try hard they profit well from the good teaching and enjoy their lessons. The school encourages pupils to follow GCSE courses but for many irregular attendance, limited completion of coursework and lack of confidence hold back progress made in earlier years.
50. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are committed to raising the attainment of pupils and use a wide range of activities to maintain their interest. Working relationships are good. Good subject knowledge, detailed lesson planning and the efforts made to encourage reluctant learners are strengths of the department. In the best lessons, teachers explain the skills needed rather than just the work to be covered and learning is more effective because pupils focus on developing the quality of their work. In the lessons where teaching and learning are good, teachers plan carefully and provide a range of interesting and challenging tasks, which engage pupils' interest. Learning is satisfactory overall. However, in a significant minority of lessons, especially in Years 9 to 11, inattentive pupils and immature behaviour, particularly that of boys, distracts others and undermines otherwise good teaching. The pace of these lessons is slowed and high quality discussion and sustained work are too limited. Satisfactory use of worksheets supports the many pupils with below average writing skills, but their use can limit spontaneity and slow the pace of lessons. However, teachers recognise that many pupils become over-reliant on their help and do not develop sufficiently independent learning skills.
51. Pupils' work is marked regularly with systematic correction of spelling and grammar. The quality of teachers' written comments is inconsistent in Years 7 and 8. However, whilst most marking tells pupils of the strengths in their work, many pupils do not use this information to help their

learning. Assessment information is collected carefully but is not yet used sufficiently well to set individual targets for pupils or track their progress.

52. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a clear determination to achieve improvement that is shared with all teachers. However, the monitoring of teaching and marking has not been effective enough in reducing inconsistencies. Satisfactory progress has been made on improving teaching styles, but there are only limited opportunities outside of department meetings for teachers to share good practice. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Commentary: Drama**

53. During the inspection, two drama lessons were sampled, one in Year 8 and the other in Year 9. Attainment was below average in both lessons. Teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory in Year 8 and good in Year 9. In the Year 8 lesson, pupils understood the task satisfactorily and worked together co-operatively in performance. However, they were working to the teacher's suggestions for development rather than being encouraged to explore the scenario using their own creative imagination. The Year 9 lesson was good because the teacher was confident enough to allow the pupils their independence and this also made a good contribution to the pupils' social and personal development.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

54. Although literacy skills are below average, the use of language and development of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Many pupils enter the school with well below average speaking, reading and writing skills. The school is committed to a detailed, effective support programme, so pupils make good progress. Good examples of the promotion of literacy skills were seen in art, drama, English, history and physical education. However, the approach is inconsistent across the school. High quality listening and speaking and sustained writing are still too limited in a minority of subjects. However, teachers' emphasis on important vocabulary relating to their subject is helping pupils to use it satisfactorily when speaking and in writing. Good displays in classrooms and corridors present and explain specialist words in many subjects. The library staff support enthusiastically the school's initiatives on reading development. Pupils are encouraged to and many do become involved in reading and writing activities such as those linked with the Salford Children's Book Award and World Book Day.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below national expectations.
- The good and thoughtful quality of the leadership of the department is securing improvement.
- Teachers plan well and consequently pupils understand clearly what is required of them.
- Good assessment by teachers helps pupil to know how to improve.
- The inadequate use of ICT is limiting learning and depressing pupils' attainment.
- The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 does not allow some pupils to attain their full potential.

### **Commentary**

55. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below average in French and Spanish. Only a small proportion of pupils gained the higher A\* to C grades. GCSE performance has not improved over the past few years. Teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average.
56. Standards of work seen are below average by the end of Year 9. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are average, though reading and writing skills are lower. However, this represents satisfactory achievement, given that literacy levels upon entry to the school are well below average. The achievement of lower attainers is good. Standards by the end of Year 11 are

below average, but this represents satisfactory achievement given the standards at the beginning of Year 10 of the pupils opting for the subject. Nevertheless, the achievement of higher attainers is unsatisfactory because of limitations to learning and teaching strategies and also due to the insufficient use of ICT. The lowest attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 show good achievement given their low linguistic standards at the start of the course.

57. Teaching and learning in French and Spanish are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is firmly based on thorough, extensive planning with clear learning objectives which are consistently shared with pupils. The best teaching ensures that pupils learn and practise new language effectively through carefully planned activities which engage, enthuse and challenge them. Although best practice in the department is shared, examples of lessons were observed where a lack of pace and too little independent work limited pupils' learning. Frequent and regular assessments and the use of samples of pupils' work to set standards help teachers to plan well to meet the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, these are used effectively to give feedback to pupils and parents on review days. This is a good feature of the department.
58. Leadership and management by the head of department, who has been in post for just over a year, are good and gradually securing improvements. Leadership is characterised by a thoughtful, reflective approach to improvement, an awareness of innovation and support for staff who are committed to raising pupils' levels of achievement. He is a good role model in influencing both pupils and staff to have high aspirations and expectations. There are now good systems for monitoring teaching and an emphasis on teachers reviewing their own methods. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils study French, but in Years 8 and 9 pupils of all abilities are offered the additional opportunity to take Spanish. However, the school is currently reviewing these arrangements because of the low levels of attainment by the end of Year 9. Improvement since the school's amalgamation has been good, since the department is meeting the challenges posed with determination, clarity of purpose and resolve for further improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11 are not high enough.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well by the end of Year 9.
- Leadership is supportive and management well organised.
- Teachers make good use of resources to help make learning interesting for the pupils.
- The progress some pupils make in Year 7 is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

59. Results in National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well below average in 2003. However, this represents satisfactory achievement from low standards on entry in Year 7. In recent years, although pupils' results have been below average, they represent good progress for many. Pupils perform better in mathematics than in English and science. GCSE results for pupils at the end of Year 11 were well below average in 2003. This represents satisfactory achievement since Year 9, but is a dip from recent performance before 2002.
60. Attainment in the current Year 9 is below average. However, this represents good achievement from entry in Year 7 and, for many, very good achievement from the end of Year 7. This is because some of the non-specialist teaching in Year 7 is routine and, as a consequence, pupils' progress sometimes unsatisfactory. However, pupils subsequently make good progress in Year 8 and even better progress in Year 9.
61. Standards of attainment in Year 11 are below average. Pupils' absence is a serious problem and adversely affects progress and achievement. Mathematics is taught in sets in half-year groups. Whilst the school's expectations of each half-year group are identical, the achievement



of one group has been affected by staff changes outside the school's control. Consequently, some pupils are not scheduled to be entered for the highest level of the examination in 2004. This is a professional decision by the school in order to give the pupils concerned their best chance at intermediate level. Nevertheless, across the year group, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and is often good for pupils with special educational needs because of the extra support given.

62. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Year 9, teaching is good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Good use is made of resources such as the interactive white board and overhead transparencies to make clear, attractive presentations. Teachers challenge pupils to think hard, using interesting starter activities to engage pupils' attention. There is very good support from teaching assistants, learning mentors and the local education authority co-ordinator for mathematics. However, teaching is less consistent in Year 7, mainly because the non-specialists are not always able to enthuse pupils. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Teachers work hard for their pupils, assess their progress accurately and are usually successful in helping pupils to behave and learn satisfactorily. However, the time taken in helping pupils returning from absence and the challenging behaviour of some girls sometimes detract from the overall quality of teaching and learning for the majority of pupils.
63. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an excellent teacher who is well organised and extremely supportive of the department. Through the department's planning there is now a good understanding of what is required to secure further improvements. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

#### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has a very good policy for teaching mathematics across the curriculum, which includes clear written guidance for teachers in the use of data and how to represent it. Important mathematical skills are identified for pupils as they progress through the school, together with suggestions for each subject as to how they might develop mathematical skills. Whilst standards of numeracy are below average they are sufficient to enable satisfactory progress within all subjects. There is, however, less data handling than is usually seen in geography. The use of mathematics in art is impressive, with pupils using proportion to help sketch the human face and making good use of symmetry in rotational work. In business education the use of numeracy has a positive effect on work in finance and data handling. GCSE pupils in physical education represent data effectively in project work. However, there is little mathematics used in English or religious education and the use of mathematics is not yet monitored across all subjects.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in national tests and GCSE examinations are too low.
- Pupils' independent learning skills are not developing rapidly enough.
- Non-teaching assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use praise well to motivate pupils.
- Pupils receive insufficient specific feedback as to how they can improve.
- The department is not functioning as a fully self-sufficient part of the school.

#### **Commentary**

65. When pupils join the school in Year 7 their standards of attainment in science are well below average. In 2003, the results of the Year 9 national tests in science were well below average, but in line with the results of similar schools. However, the performance of some classes of pupils was adversely affected by long-term staffing problems and staff absence. The achievement of

current Year 9 pupils is satisfactory, although standards achieved by most remain below average.

66. In 2003, A\* to C passes gained in GCSE double award science were well below average. However, pupils' overall performance in double award science was in line with that in other subjects. Results in GCSE single award science were also well below average for pupils obtaining A\* to C and A\* to G grades. The unsatisfactory attendance of a minority of pupils resulted in the proportion of those pupils not obtaining GCSE grades being exceptionally high. However, inspection evidence shows achievement is now satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. For example, in experimental work pupils' skills improve more rapidly than in Years 7 to 9 with higher attaining pupils producing good GCSE coursework. Higher attainers develop good knowledge and understanding of key ideas but most pupils have difficulty in linking ideas and explaining their thinking.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, which underpins their effective use of questions and enables pupils to consolidate their factual knowledge. However, teachers make insufficient use of questions and investigations which challenge pupils to predict, justify, explain and evaluate their thinking. As a result, pupils' understanding of key concepts and independent learning skills are not developing sufficiently rapidly. Non-teaching assistants are used very well to support pupils with special educational needs who consequently make satisfactory progress. Teachers are beginning to implement the National Key Stage 3 Strategy effectively in Years 7 to 9, which is having a positive effect upon teaching and learning. Teachers insist on high levels of behaviour and use praise effectively to motivate and encourage pupils to do their best. Consequently, most pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. However, a minority of pupils are less well motivated. This results in some minor misbehaviour, effectively dealt with by teachers who all rigorously apply the school's positive behaviour policy.
68. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The analysis of test and examination results has improved and target setting is developing satisfactorily. Pupils are aware of the National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades they are seeking to achieve. However, they are less clear about what steps they need to take to meet their individual targets. Whilst most written work is regularly checked and annotated, teachers' comments do not always provide enough specific advice on how pupils can improve their work. The use of ICT has improved and is being used increasingly well to motivate pupils and support their learning.
69. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, but currently dependent on an extensive programme of external support from advisers and consultants. The strengths and weaknesses of many aspects of the subject are accurately known and improvement programmes are targeted well. The subject team's commitment to inclusion for all groups of pupils is strong. Since the time of amalgamation in 2001 there has been satisfactory improvement, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' attainment in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 is not high enough.
- There has been very good improvement in ICT resources since the previous inspection.
- There is very good support for gifted or talented pupils.
- Good assessment by teachers is supporting pupils' learning well.
- Good leadership of the department is well focused on raising pupils' achievement.
- Teaching strategies for the development of independent learning are not fully established.

### **Commentary**

70. The department has a strong team of ICT teachers, who have good subject expertise. Since the previous inspection there has been a complete change of staff within the department, including the appointment in 2001 of an ICT co-ordinator with responsibility for both the subject and ICT across the curriculum.
71. Pupils' standards of attainment in ICT when they join the school are improving year-on-year, but the majority are below average. In 2003 the results of teacher assessments in Year 9 were below average. In work and lessons seen, attainment in Years 8 and 9 is average. Achievement is satisfactory. This improvement results from the school's full implementation of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, including increased teaching time for the subject. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are now satisfactory.
72. In 2002 a GCSE examination course in applied ICT was introduced for all Years 10 and 11 pupils. The first GCSE entry will be in 2004. Standards of work seen and course work assessments show average attainment and satisfactory, but improving, achievement. Teaching and learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are good. This is due to the good planning and use of resources by teachers. Very clear objectives are shared with pupils and this helps to support good gains in learning. Nevertheless, there is, as yet, insufficient emphasis through the teaching on the development of pupils' independent learning skills. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and make good progress, as do gifted and talented pupils. The latter benefit from gaining additional nationally recognised accreditation in ICT and from visits which enhance their knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT in the wider world.
73. Management and leadership of the department are good. Good monitoring and assessment systems have been developed for tracking pupils' progress. Individual targets are set in order to raise pupils' achievement and improve their skills, so pupils use ICT effectively to support their learning in other subjects. There is a good scheme for evaluating teaching and learning and sharing good practice within the department, which contributes much to raising pupils' achievement. Since the previous inspection the department has made very good progress. Time allocation for teaching ICT in Years 7 to 9 has been increased and all pupils in Years 10 and 11 now follow an ICT course.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

74. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in all subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, resources have improved to enable the better use of ICT in other subjects. Pupils have very good access to computers after school, both in the school computer suites and the City Learning Centre, which is on the school site. This facility is well used by Years 10 and 11 pupils for GCSE coursework. Computers are particularly well used in art, mathematics and within vocational subjects. The ICT co-ordinator has worked hard with all departments in helping teachers to develop planning for the support of pupils' learning through the use of ICT. However, this process is not yet complete in all subjects and the monitoring of teaching and learning through the use of ICT across the curriculum is not yet fully developed.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The strong and effective leadership of the head of department.
- The good teaching helps pupils to develop well as historians in their own right.
- The effective use of very good resources and displays.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use ICT in history.

## **Commentary**

75. Teacher assessments show that standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are average. Work seen during the inspection confirms this. From a low base on entry, this represents good achievement for most pupils. Pupils acquire a satisfactory level of knowledge and their study skills develop well. They learn to make sound judgements on the basis of historical evidence and documentation. Some activities allow pupils to work using ICT but, at present, these are not regular enough. However, the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is planned for fully in the department's new scheme of work.
76. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. The work seen from the current Years 10 and 11 is improving because very effective teaching is helping pupils in the development of study skills and the secure acquisition of subject knowledge. Consequently, attainment by Year 11 is average and achievement is good.
77. The standards of teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. Teaching is most effective where pupils are encouraged to work and think like historians. Pupils' learning is good because the quality of their thinking is constantly challenged and lessons are taught with imagination, variety and a well-judged sense of pace. Consequently, pupils behave well and respond positively to the teacher's enthusiasm. Behaviour and attitudes are less good from some Year 7 pupils when teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high. Considerable effort has been put into the production of resources and these are well used to support pupils' learning. Displays of pupils' work and subject specific vocabulary are of a high standard and contribute well to raising pupils' achievement.
78. Leadership and management in the subject are very good and have brought about good improvements since the previous inspection. Subject planning and documentation show a high level of professionalism, which, together with the example set of challenging, enlightened teaching, are raising standards in the subject. However, although pupils gain some enrichment outside the classroom through visits, fieldwork and local history, these are not yet having a great impact on pupils' learning and experience.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in GCSE examinations are not high enough.
- Standards, especially in Years 9 and 10, are improving.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps them in the careful planning of lessons.
- Teaching and marking in Years 7 and 8 are inconsistent, but pupils in Years 9 and 11 are given valuable written advice.
- Pupils' opportunities to develop skills in extended writing are too limited.
- Activities to help develop pupils' writing skills are too infrequent.

## **Commentary**

79. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are average but are below in Year 11. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average. The school's analysis of its results shows that this was the effect of a small number of poorly motivated boys. However, work seen, especially in Year 10, shows that pupils' motivation and standards are improving. Teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. Work seen on the inspection confirms this. Progress and achievement are satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with limited geographical skills. Some pupils make very good progress in Year 7 and, overall, progress and achievement are good by Year 9. Geography is becoming increasingly popular, especially with lower attaining boys, who make satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. Achievement by pupils in GCSE groups is satisfactory, but those whose attendance is regular achieve well.

80. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, this involves careful planning, good subject knowledge and a range of activities which maintain pupils' interest during fast-paced lessons. Pupils are encouraged well to focus on key issues and teachers both emphasise important points and check understanding. Pupils are provided with carefully designed work sheets, which guide them satisfactorily through the planned learning. However, such worksheets do not encourage the extended writing required to enable fuller answers which gain extra marks in examinations. There are good fieldwork activities in Years 9 and 11. Projects completed in Year 9 help to develop successfully the pupils' ICT desktop publishing skills. Teachers make careful use of specialist geographical terms, which are reinforced by classroom displays. Whilst pupils define geographical terms accurately, they do not use them sufficiently in writing or speaking. Pupils' work is accurately graded according to National Curriculum levels, but individual progress targets are not set. Accordingly, pupils know their performance levels but do not know what to do to improve their geographical skills. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of all pupils and the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs from classroom assistants is good.
81. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of department has a clear vision for improvement and provides a good role model for subject teaching. The popularity of the subject, particularly among boys, is beginning to improve. Textbooks are modern, in good condition and provide for pupils with different levels of reading and literacy skills. However, the library is often not available for independent geographical work in lesson time. The size and shape of many rooms reduces the quality of group work. Teaching approaches and marking in Year 7 are inconsistent because the non-specialist teachers are insufficiently monitored or supported. The scheme of work does not plan sufficiently well for the use of ICT in some year groups. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. However, as yet accurate assessments in Years 8 and 9 are not being used sufficiently well to encourage pupils to work more independently.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low and pupils' achievement unsatisfactory by Years 9 and 11.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for the teaching of the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- Good working relationships between teachers and pupils create a good atmosphere in lessons.
- There are too few activities involving pupils in independent work and research.
- The marking of pupils' work is not used well enough to consistently help them to improve.
- Too little use is made of visits and visitors to enrich learning for all pupils.

### Commentary

82. Since the previous inspection, efforts have been made to improve the amount of time allocated to religious education. Pupils' studies are based on the locally agreed syllabus, but older pupils do not follow a GCSE course. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 now receive just the minimum time recommended in the agreed syllabus, but this is not so for Years 10 and 11, where pupils receive less than half the recommended time. Although there were plans to hold a 'Faith Day' last year to provide additional time for older pupils, this did not take place, nor has this year's plan been finalised. The overall result is that standards are below average and pupils' achievement by Years 9 and 11 is unsatisfactory. There is too little time to teach the full syllabus.
83. Teaching and learning within the limited time available for the subject are satisfactory. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned with good resources and clear objectives communicated with pupils which engage them in their learning. Good working relationships and good behaviour management help set a positive tone for lessons which focus pupils effectively on their work. However, too little use is made of the setting arrangements from Year 8 upwards

to give work which is more challenging to higher attaining pupils. Analysis of pupils' work shows that it is often copied from textbooks or worksheets. Pupils have too few chances to work independently or research topics individually. Discussions with higher attaining pupils in Year 8 showed that they had only a sketchy memory of past topics.

84. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. When it is marked carefully, there are regular, helpful recommendations for improvement. However, when it is not, teachers mainly use ticks and points about presentation. These are not effective enough in helping pupils to see how they can improve their work. Assessment is carried out regularly at the end of topics but this is not used effectively in setting challenging work for pupils. This means some pupils do not learn quickly enough, which contributes to the unsatisfactory achievement. Too little use is made of visits and visitors to bring the subject alive for pupils. This means pupils miss chances for first-hand experience, asking questions and to observe for themselves. Although there are some plans for visits these are for a very small minority of gifted pupils, using special funding. A few lessons make useful links to citizenship issues and personal, social and health education.
85. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are still not being fully met, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Overall judgements on leadership and management of the subject have not been made due to the unavoidable absence of the head of department. However, there is satisfactory monitoring of the department by senior management. Planning is satisfactory for modules of work for each year group which conform with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Nevertheless, the management of assessment is unsatisfactory.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and well below at GCSE level.
- In Years 7 to 9, teachers lack the technological knowledge and understanding to extend and challenge pupils.
- Pupils have insufficient experience of the design elements in their work.
- Teaching and learning are good in food technology and pupils find the work more interesting.
- The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory and not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of the pupils.
- Good practice is insufficiently shared across the department to raise standards.

#### **Commentary**

86. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, pupils' attainment was below average. Standards were average for boys but well below average for girls. Pupils do not gain a good enough experience of design elements alongside the development of their practical skills. In most lessons seen, standards were below average and both achievement and progress were unsatisfactory for all pupils. However, achievement and progress are satisfactory in food technology lessons. Nevertheless, pupils are not performing at a higher level because there is a lack of technological challenge in the work. This is due to weaknesses in the teaching of structures and mechanisms, product evaluation and the use of computer aided design and manufacturing processes.
87. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average for food technology, graphics and resistant materials. The results for electronics were average. Analysis of coursework shows a fundamental weakness in research and the development of design ideas. Pupils are not challenged to extend their design thinking and are not provided with the resource material needed to stimulate creativity. Frequent absence is a problem with a significant number of

pupils. This adversely affects the continuity of their learning and the standards they subsequently attain. There is little use of ICT and computer aided design and manufacture to enhance the quality of pupils' work and raise their standards.

88. The overall quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, achievement is unsatisfactory or poor because of low expectations and the lack of challenge set by teachers. However, in food technology lessons, where the teaching and learning are good, the work is more interesting and demanding and pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. Overall, behaviour in design and technology lessons is good because teachers have a good rapport with pupils. Teachers know well the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and ensure satisfactory progress is made in their learning.
89. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory because it has yet to become firmly established with a focus on raising standards. The management of the department is satisfactory and acceptable progress has been made in planning schemes of work, establishing essential policies and setting up a common assessment structure. Teachers are now starting to work together satisfactorily as a team and important issues have been identified for development. However, where there is good practice within the department, this is not always recognised or used to help improve learning and teaching and to raise standards. Teaching areas are well maintained and well organised. However, in the workshops there is insufficient appropriate space available for designing activities, which adversely affects the quality of learning in design work. In resistant materials there are insufficient resources to support research and design activities. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. However, satisfactory management structures are now in place and there is a common approach to assessment. Nevertheless, there is still a fundamental weakness in research and the development of design ideas.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **excellent**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above the national average and the subject is a strength of the school.
- Very good leadership by the head of department results in very high expectations by staff and by pupils.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which both enthuses and excites pupils.
- Pupils' work is consistently very good, creative and highly individual.
- Assessment is used very successfully to help pupils improve.
- The mobile classrooms are inadequate for the larger classes.

#### **Commentary**

90. Overall, pupils' achievement in art is very good. Pupils make very good progress from Years 7 to 9. In 2003, at the end of Year 9, attainment in teacher assessments was well above average. Standards attained in GCSE in 2003 were well above average for grades A\* to C. Girls only slightly outperformed boys. The percentage of pupils gaining higher A\* and A grades was above the national average. Overall, art was one of the most successful subjects in the school with pupils gaining on average over two grades higher than in other subjects taken at the same time.
91. Attainment and achievement are high because by Year 11 pupils produce highly creative and individual pieces of work. Pupils display a mature grasp of techniques and are confident and bold in their work. Their preparation in sketchbooks is stunning and, as a result of this experimentation, they produce vibrant, exciting work in a wide variety of media and styles. By Year 9, pupils annotate their work confidently, using accurate art vocabulary. Many of their skills are developed through quality work based sympathetically on the work of established artists.

92. Teaching and learning are very good. Independent learning and experimentation is encouraged but underpinned by a strong emphasis on the development of skills. The very good subject knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of the teachers are communicated very effectively to the pupils, which fosters their commitment to art. High levels of challenge are set for pupils of all abilities and feedback in the classroom is sensitive and supportive. Assessment, including pupils' evaluation of their own work, is used very successfully to inform them of their progress and set targets for future development.
93. The art department is very well led and managed by an experienced head of department. The schemes of work are creatively designed, challenging and cater for both lower attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented in the subject. Monitoring of staff, including the head of department, is undertaken regularly. The two adjoining art rooms in the main building allow the sharing of good practice in teaching and allow pupils to benefit very well from the specialist skills of the teachers. There are excellent and plentiful displays of work in the art areas, which are used very well by staff in their teaching and to inspire the pupils. The exhibitions around the school add creatively to the environment and help to raise the profile of the art department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. For example, there is now a full time technician in support and book resources have greatly improved. There is good use of ICT to support the work and learning of the pupils. Nevertheless, the two mobile classrooms used for some art teaching are inadequate for the larger classes.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards remain below average by the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' key music skills and their subject knowledge, including work in ICT, are under-developed in Years 7 to 9.
- There are good opportunities for musical enrichment outside lessons.
- Assessment and marking are not sufficiently helpful for pupils to know how to improve.
- Accommodation is inadequate, restricting the range of pupils' learning.

### Commentary

94. Teacher assessments in 2003 show that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Work seen during the inspection was also below average and pupils' achievement by Year 9 unsatisfactory. Although pupils now receive sufficient lesson time for the subject, they fail to make sufficient progress. A significant contributory cause is pupils' poor attitude and behaviour in some classes, girls being particularly difficult. As a result, subject knowledge and practical skills are not sufficiently well developed. However, where teaching is strong and well targeted, pupils work purposefully and make satisfactory progress.
95. The 2003 GCSE results in expressive arts were well below average, with the highest gained being grade C. However, a new course in music was introduced in 2002 and the first group of pupils is preparing to take the examination in summer 2004. Although attainment in Year 11 is below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There is particular improvement in Year 10 where elementary skills in notation, melody writing and the handling of chords are developing well.
96. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In the most successful lessons the content is thoughtfully planned and the pupils' learning effectively reviewed. In some lessons, however, there is not enough variety of activity or pace of learning to ensure satisfactory progress. The underachievement of younger pupils results from weaknesses such as their lack of understanding of rhythm or inadequate performance skills. As



a result of such weaknesses, pupils' musical development is restricted. Work involving ICT is not developed well enough. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. This is because there is no cumulative record which clearly reflects the pupils' progress during the first three years. Most marking lacks sufficiently detailed comments to help pupils to know how to improve.

97. There is a good range of enrichment activities available, although some are still at an early stage of development. The amount of instrumental tuition is average for the size of the school and covers a wide variety of instruments. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory, but day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory. There has been unsatisfactory improvement overall since the previous inspection because standards remain below average and pupils' progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9, remains unsatisfactory. Insufficient progress has been made in the overall development of assessment in the subject. However, there have been some satisfactory improvements in the allocation of time to the subject, the introduction of a GCSE course and arrangements for assessment in Years 10 and 11. However, concerns remain relating to the insufficient use of ICT, the adequacy of accommodation and the achievement of pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching enables all groups of pupils to learn well.
- Leadership and management are good and the department functions well as a team.
- Only a minimum allocation of curriculum time is allowed for the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- The department is successful in celebrating pupils' achievements, stimulating pupils' interest in the subject.
- There is a good range of sporting activities outside of lessons.

#### **Commentary**

98. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show that pupils' attainment was below average overall. It was average for girls but well below average for boys. In lessons seen, Year 9 boys' and girls' attainment was average and their achievement satisfactory. Boys' progress well in soccer and rugby. They show satisfactory improvement in basic skills. However, Year 8 boys have only very basic gymnastic skills. Girls perform particularly well in dance. They have a good sense of rhythm and plan their sequences well. By Year 9 some girls take leading roles, planning and choreographing the work and directing large groups of pupils.
99. GCSE results at A\* to C were below average in 2003. This was a decline compared with results in previous years. All boys entered gained a pass grade, but none achieved a higher A\* or A grade. One girl gained an A\*. In work and lessons seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment in Years 10 and 11 was above average and their achievement good. Practical skills are good, but are clearly better for pupils taking the GCSE course. Pupils not on the examination course receive only one period each week, which is an absolute minimum. Pupils achieve particularly well in dance, rugby and soccer. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in physical education.
100. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. Lessons are well prepared, with learning objectives carefully selected by teachers and always shared with pupils. Working relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and, as a result, pupils are well motivated, enthusiastic and determined to succeed. In most lessons, teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Written coursework is well monitored, being marked promptly and often with helpful comments and advice. There are only a few examples of pupils using ICT to produce

coursework and ICT is not being used extensively enough to support learning or to contribute to the development of pupils' ICT skills.

101. Leadership and management are good and are reflected in good standards of policy documentation, schemes of work, lesson notes and overall good teamwork within the department. Assessment is thorough. Pupils understand the levels at which they perform and those to which they should be aspiring. There are many very good displays to provide information for pupils and also to celebrate their achievements. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Changing rooms and showers have been refurbished and gymnasias fitted with new, improved floors. Extra-curricular provision is good. Many boys and girls regularly take part in a range of competitive sports and some successfully represent the school at regional and county levels. Currently two pupils, one boy and one girl, represent England at swimming and cycling.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business education**

Provision in business education is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Unsatisfactory attendance in Year 11 is adversely affecting standards and progress and the progress of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources well to add interest to lessons.
- Teaching does not cater for the needs of all pupils in groups where there is wide range of ability.
- The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- Marking does not always give clear enough guidance to help pupils improve.
- Teaching is good in classes where pupils are grouped according to their ability.

#### **Commentary**

102. Standards in business education were well below average in the GCSE examinations in 2003, which is a decline since 2002 when the results were average. Five pupils who failed to sit the examination adversely affected the results in 2003. The inspection findings are that the standards of the current Year 11 pupils are below average. Standards overall are being adversely affected by the very high levels of absence in some classes, particularly amongst boys. Although girls achieve satisfactorily, boys' achievement is poor. The subject matter is not entirely suited to the learning styles of some of the boys and this further contributes to their underachievement.

103. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where teaching is good it involves well-structured, carefully planned lessons which use a range of stimulating materials and resources. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to create interesting worksheets and colourful computer-generated presentations. The lessons are well paced to keep the interest of the pupils. Pupils often make very good use of the computers, which are readily available in all the business studies teaching areas. Teachers have high expectations of pupils who are generally well behaved and have positive attitudes to their work. However, teaching is less effective when the work is not matched to pupils' ability. In mixed ability classes the work is neither suited to the high attainers nor those for whom reading is difficult. Enthusiastic, committed but inexperienced teachers undertake most of the teaching and so far have not fully developed some of the skills necessary for teaching mixed-ability groups. In these circumstances pupils in general and boys in particular either do not attend lessons regularly or sometimes behave in a deliberately challenging way. Although class work and coursework are marked regularly and include encouraging comments, there is not enough explanation given to pupils about the strengths or weaknesses of their work and how it can be improved.

104. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because the head of department does not teach business education and has little management time to either monitor or support the teachers. As a result, teachers are given inadequate guidance as to how to ensure the work is matched to pupils' needs. Planning does not include assessment or success criteria for use by teachers. At present, the teachers do not have the help of a learning assistant to provide essential support for those pupils with special educational needs and consequently such pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

105. At the time of the previous inspection business education was a strength of the school. Since the amalgamation the status of the subject has declined and it is not included in the school's subject development plans. Teachers of ICT teach business education in specialist computer rooms, which have excellent displays of ICT but not of business education. Although a more suitable vocationally orientated course is planned, the existing course is not yet leading to an improvement in either standards or achievement because teaching is not sufficiently well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

### **SAMPLED SUBJECTS: Other vocational and work related courses**

During the inspection a number of vocational and work related courses were sampled. Overall, the school's provision in such courses is **good**.

#### **Commentary: Health and social care**

106. One Year 11 lesson in GCSE health and social care was sampled. Standards of attainment were average. Teaching was very good. Learning, achievement and pupils' attitudes were all good. This was a good lesson because the teacher had high expectations of the pupils and challenged them well. Very good pastoral as well as academic support was given to the pupils and this helped their learning well. Good working relationships between teacher and pupils enabled very good group discussion about issues of homelessness. This debate made a significant contribution to the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### **Commentary: Manufacturing**

107. One Year 10 lesson in GCSE manufacturing was sampled. There was satisfactory team teaching between a teacher from the school and another from a local college. Learning, achievement and pupils' attitudes were satisfactory, but standards of attainment were below average. Whilst pupils made satisfactory technical use of new computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment and a strip-heater to manipulate thermoplastic sheets, the quality of the products produced was unsatisfactory. This was because of the pupils' below average levels of skill and their inability to evaluate their work to ensure good enough quality control.

#### **Commentary: Leisure and tourism**

108. One Year 10 lesson in leisure and tourism was sampled. Standards were average. Teaching, learning, achievement and pupils' attitudes were all good. This was a good lesson in a newly established course. The teacher motivated the pupils well and there was good access to the Internet for the pupils to undertake research work. Pupils worked well together in pairs and working relationships with their teacher were good. Consequently, good progress was made in researching the various tourism facilities available in the local area.

#### **Commentary: Work experience and occupational courses**

109. As a result of the school's excellent links with local colleges, provision for the occupational and work related courses provided for pupils is very good. The school's management of these courses is excellent. During the inspection a work placement at a local garage was visited and a course for Year 10 in hair and beauty observed. Year 10 and 11 courses in motor vehicle studies and in building occupations such as painting and decorating, carpentry and joinery, and in trowel occupations were sampled. Although standards of attainment are below average, the relevance of the courses to the individual needs of the pupils is very good. Teaching and pupils'

attitudes to such courses are mainly excellent. Consequently, learning and pupils' achievement are very good. Lessons were characterised by the highly professional approach of teachers and pupils, as well as very good attention to health and safety and working practices. The school's approach to the development of an alternative curriculum is providing opportunities and experience of high quality for its pupils.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good planning and course materials support well the non-specialist teachers.
- The work of the staff teaching the course is not yet monitored sufficiently well.

#### **Commentary**

110. Pupils' achievement in personal, social and health education is satisfactory by Years 9 and 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lesson planning is good and what is taught is made relevant to the pupils. Some particularly successful use of ICT was seen in a Year 8 lesson on bullying. Here, good use was made of the facilities offered by the City Learning Centre to explore the Internet and plan the production of an anti-bullying poster. Consequently, pupils were well motivated and enabled to achieve successfully. By contrast, a Year 10 lesson on the preparation of the pupils' personal profiles was less successful. Here, the routine nature of the task failed to challenge the pupils, a few of whom demonstrated unsatisfactory attitudes to the work. Overall, the teaching of personal, social and health education makes sound use of a variety of teaching styles and methods. When it is suitable, visitors such as a police officer and a nurse contribute well to the lessons.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. A strong belief in the value of the course is clearly evident. This is reflected in the sound contribution it makes to the personal development of the pupils and the good quality of support and guidance given to pupils by the school. The production of detailed teaching materials for each year group is a valuable resource for the non-specialist staff involved in teaching the course. This helps to achieve a satisfactory degree of consistency in the teaching of all year groups. However, as yet, there is insufficient formal monitoring of the work of the large number of staff involved in teaching the subject.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good commitment of the co-ordinator to improving teaching and learning in the subject.
- Arrangements for teaching the subject are unwieldy and problematical.
- Assessment and monitoring procedures are not being followed effectively.

#### **Commentary**

112. During to the school's timetable, no citizenship lessons were seen during the inspection. Insufficient pupils' work was made available to enable secure judgements to be made on the standards of attainment and the quality of teaching in the subject. The work seen from pupils was at best sketchy and often involved little input in response to worksheets and handouts. Workbooks and logbooks for pupils in all years contained minimal entries. The scrutiny of work showed an over-reliance on worksheets. Pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunity to achieve well in citizenship.

113. Nevertheless, leadership of the subject by the new head of department is satisfactory. There is now a good commitment to citizenship by the school and a will to provide a course which fully meets National Curriculum requirements. The co-ordinator has worked very hard and produced good course materials. However, management of the subject by the school is unsatisfactory. This is because there are complicated arrangements for teaching citizenship through personal, social and health education, other subjects, the foundation programme in Year 7 and a three-day course in Year 10. This is not providing a sufficiently cohesive course with a clearly demonstrable time allocation. The provision is therefore patchy and unwieldy and current monitoring and assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

## **Careers education and guidance**

Provision in careers education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is energetic in developing an extensive range of partnerships with specialist agencies to support careers education.
- Input from local further education colleges to the careers programme is of high quality.
- The monitoring of careers teaching is not fully developed.

### **Commentary**

114. Over the past two years, there has been a slight improvement in the percentage of pupils going on to full time education and training when they leave at the end of Year 11. There has also been an increase in those going into employment, particularly through an improved take-up of modern apprenticeships. The school's partnership with the Connexions service is developing well and helping to secure these improvements. However, low aspirations continue to be an issue with more able pupils, especially girls. The percentage of pupils who did not enter further education or employment has fallen slightly but is still well above the national average. The school is well focused in identifying and prioritising pupils for support from the Connexions service because of their poor attendance, emotional and behavioural issues and poor literacy skills.

115. The teaching of careers education is satisfactory with schemes of work in place and a system for reviewing their relevance to the pupils. The quality of support and advice given to pupils is good. The input from and partnership with local colleges is of very high quality. A careers adviser is available for pupils two evenings a week in the library and provides sound support on careers related issues. The head of department provides further support through a weekly evening careers club, particularly for Year 11 pupils. The school makes good use of external agencies, including visiting theatre groups, to offer as much support as possible to pupils. There is a clearly designated careers section in the school library and attractive use of display in the careers room. There is satisfactory use of current careers software both in the school library and the City Learning Centre.

116. Leadership and management of careers are satisfactory overall. The head of careers education has only been in post since September 2003, barely a term. She is an experienced teacher of personal and social education, who is knowledgeable and very enthusiastic. However, the monitoring of careers teaching has yet to be formalised and the school's evaluation of the impact of careers education upon pupils' learning is embryonic. There is, as yet, no involvement of the careers co-ordinator in the school's alternative curriculum project or input from her into the school's tutorial programme.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its previous inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>4</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*