

INSPECTION REPORT

HAZEL GROVE HIGH SCHOOL

Hazel Grove, Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106137

Headteacher: Mr David Hazeldine

Lead inspector: Mr D Morton

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 26th February 2004

Inspection number: 258655

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 students:	11 to 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1367
School address:	Jackson's Lane Hazel Grove Stockport Cheshire
Postcode:	SK7 5JX
Telephone number:	0161 456 4888
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Val Cottam MBE
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hazel Grove is larger than most secondary schools and has 1367 students on its roll. It is a mixed comprehensive school with students aged 11 to 16. It is situated on the southern fringe of Stockport, Greater Manchester, and receives students from a number of primary schools, in particular six local schools. Students are mainly from white British backgrounds, although six per cent of students come from a number of small minority ethnic groupings. The percentage of students with a mother tongue other than English is low and believed to be around three per cent. Of these, none is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of students who join or leave the school at other than the usual times, 4.6 per cent, is average.

The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs, 14.2 per cent, and those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, 2.8 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. There is also a unit, the Resource Base, providing for 15 students with severe, profound or multiple learning needs. The social background of students is broadly similar to that of the country as a whole. Standards of students on entry to the school in Year 7 are average overall.

The school achieved the School Curriculum Award [1997].

The school has Investor in People status [2001].

The school has won the School Achievement Award [2002 and 2003].

The school was awarded ARTWORKS in 2004.

The school has been awarded Specialist Technology College status [w/e September 2004]

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13154	D Morton	Lead inspector	Drama
11072	S Elomari	Lay inspector	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs
33219	S Green	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8756	P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Science
2049	D Klemm	Team inspector	English
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music
8329	G Salter-Smith	Team inspector	Physical education
32329	A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
31191	D Sylph	Team inspector	History
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
10564	J Tomlinson	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
13189	P Walton	Team inspector	Design and technology
8645	D Ward	Team inspector	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hazel Grove High School is an effective school and, under its new leadership, has the capacity to improve further on the good features currently evident. It is successful in making sure that all the opportunities it provides are available to all students. It gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good relationships create a good climate for learning.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- The sharing of the very best practice in teaching and learning, in order to raise standards further, is not undertaken with sufficient systematic leadership or vision of purpose.
- The care, support and guidance provided for students are very good.
- Not enough time in Years 10 and 11 is given to citizenship, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) to meet fully the requirements of the prescribed courses.
- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good in modern foreign languages.
- The range of extra-curricular activities available to students is very good.
- Too many lessons do not start on time.

Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 have been sustained at just above average levels and teaching overall continues to be good. However, there has not been sufficient improvement in the proportion of very good or better teaching. Leadership and management at senior level have sustained the school through a turbulent two-year period. Issues identified at the previous inspection have been resolved except for improving punctuality at the start of lessons. This is still not good enough. The appearance of the school grounds is vastly improved and the outside environment now provides an attractive climate for social and academic learning. There is evidence that the school has the capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement overall is good and standards of work seen are above average.

Results in 2003 national tests were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, these results were average. Nonetheless, the school achieved its reasonable targets except in English where the target was narrowly missed. Results in GCSE examinations were average overall, although the average points score for each subject was narrowly above the national average. The best results were in French, business studies and English literature. Least successful subjects were geography, drama and German.

Current standards are above average. Achievement overall is good. In some subjects, for example in geography and ICT, standards do not always reflect the potential of students. Standards seen in English, mathematics and science are above average and those in ICT are average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 but girls do better than boys in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs do well.

Students' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, although not enough opportunities are provided for spiritual development. Cultural development is satisfactory. Students' good attitudes to learning make a positive contribution

to their good achievement. Behaviour is generally good and students take care of the attractive school environment. Rates of attendance are very good but punctuality to lessons is poor.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good and there is a good climate for learning. Overall, teaching is good, and in keeping with the quality found nationally. As a result of the good teaching, students' achievement is good and standards are above average. However, the proportion of very good or excellent teaching falls significantly short of that found nationally; this is one reason why a significant minority of all students in some subjects do not achieve to their full potential. The curriculum has a number of good features, notably in Years 10 and 11. The overall provision, however, is unsatisfactory because not enough time is allocated to citizenship, religious education and ICT for the full requirements of these subjects to be taught. There is a very good and popular range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides a very high standard of care for all its students. It guides and supports them very well. Links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of key staff are satisfactory. Governance is good. These judgements take account of the level of development and improvement since the previous inspection. Over this period, not enough has been done systematically to inspire the highest possible quality of teaching. In addition, the school has just experienced two difficult years at headteacher level. During this latter period, the leadership group did a good job in maintaining momentum in the school and sustaining staff morale. A deputy headteacher, twice serving as acting headteacher during this period, was successful in preserving the school's equilibrium and took a very effective lead in ensuring a successful bid for specialist school status and drafting a new school improvement plan. Governors were very supportive during this difficult period. A new headteacher has been in post for 30 days; he has quickly grasped key areas for development and improvement.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school, believe it is forward-looking and always trying to get better. Students, too, value the care the school provides and the relationships they have with staff. They consider the teaching is mostly good and challenging. Most regret the small minority that disrupts some lessons and the very small number that needlessly damage the fabric of the building.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- arrange to share examples of very good and excellent teaching to which all teachers aspire,
- ensure that enough time is given to citizenship, religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11 so that students receive their entitlement in these subjects, and that the timetable is constructed to avoid time being wasted at the start of lessons;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements in citizenship and religious education in Years 10 and 11
- take steps to equip all teachers with the skills to use ICT to support learning in all subjects,
- ensure that all students experience an act of collective worship each day.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 11. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and average in ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good in modern foreign languages.
- GCSE results in 2003 were above average.
- The achievement of students using the Resource Base is good.
- Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were no better than average, even when compared with schools with a similar standard at the start of Year 7.

Commentary

1. Results in the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 were the worst for some time and do not reflect the quality of work seen during the inspection. In previous years, results have been above or well above average, although in 2002 results in mathematics were not as good as those in English and did not compare favourably with schools with similar starting points. Results in 2003 were no better than average and only satisfactory value was added during Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics and science. However, current standards seen during the inspection are above average. Good teaching has led to good achievement. There is little difference in results achieved by boys and girls at the end of Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.9 (37.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.1 (35.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.3 (34.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 270 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Students start in Year 7 with standards that are average. Although there are higher attaining students in each year, overall there are more students whose attainment hovers around the national average on entry. Good teaching ensures that standards rise to above average in English, mathematics, and science; compared with the starting points of students and this represents good achievement. In modern foreign languages, standards are well above average because of very good teaching, and are above average in art and design, history, music and religious education. Overall students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9.
3. Students start in Year 10 with results that, overall, were above average in tests in 2001 in English, mathematics and science. GCSE results in 2003 for the best eight subjects of these students were above average overall. This represents satisfactory achievement in the examinations. In GCSE examinations, girls perform marginally better than boys.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (53)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (87)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (92)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	37.0 (34.9)	34.6 (34.7)

There were 268 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 more or less match the examination results, although in modern foreign languages the work seen is well above average, whilst that in geography, history and ICT is no better than average. ICT suffers through lack of sufficient time, as does citizenship and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, therefore, whilst achievement overall is good, not all subjects last year attained results in the GCSE examination that might be expected given the starting point of students. GCSE results are improving at a rate above that found nationally but not steeply enough given the attainment of students on entry to Year 10. Comparisons with similar schools indicate that Hazel Grove could attain higher results in GCSE examinations.

Summary of achievement by subject in work seen during the inspection:

Judgement	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Very good	Modern foreign languages	Modern foreign languages, drama
Good	English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, history, drama, music and religious education	English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education
Satisfactory	Geography, ICT, physical education, citizenship	Science, geography,
Unsatisfactory		Citizenship, religious education

- This table clearly shows that achievement is solidly good in work seen during the inspection. This reflects teaching that is also consistently good. For achievement to be very good, there needs to be a higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching than was seen during the inspection.
- The achievement of girls and boys is similar in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 girls outperform boys but not by as wide a margin as found nationally. The small proportion of students from minority ethnic groups perform in line with all other students.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress overall. Their progress in individual subjects is identical to that made by other students. They performed well in the GCSE examinations in 2003.
- Overall, students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well in response to good teaching and the very good attitudes they bring to their work. In some lessons, for example French, students work with mainstream partners who explain to them their set tasks and simplify them if necessary.
- Students who are identified as gifted and talented achieve as well as other students. The school has introduced policies to help these students achieve their potential, although these policies have not been embedded for a sufficient period of time to yet significantly raise the

standards of higher attainers in most subjects. Nonetheless, the gifted and talented students have opportunities to receive extension tasks and activities and, in the best lessons, challenging teaching enables them to achieve well, especially in drama, English, modern foreign languages and science.

10. Most subjects provide good support for developing literacy skills generally, although not enough is done in some to help those lower attainers with the weakest skills of literacy. Thus, whilst the majority of students cope with the literacy demands of most subjects, there is a minority that struggles. Numeracy skills are strong and each department is linked to a specialist mathematics teacher to ensure that the mathematical needs of the subject are met. ICT is not used sufficiently in some subjects to enhance learning, although the provision of hardware meets the national average.
11. The school set itself challenging yet realistic targets for 2003. These were more or less met in Year 9 tests: English was two per cent short of target, mathematics target was beaten by one per cent and the science by four per cent. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the percentage of students achieving five or more of the higher grades A* to C, 56 per cent, missed the target by three per cent. However, the target of 92 per cent for five or more A* to G was beaten, with the school recording 98 per cent attaining this result. Overall, using average total GCSE points score, the target was beaten by 3.5 points.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school provides well for students' personal development and as a result the attitudes and behaviour of students are **good**. Attendance is very good, but punctuality to lessons is poor. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy coming to school; attendance is very good.
- Relationships in school are very good.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good and, in consequence, students achieve well.
- Students develop their moral and social values well.
- Teachers miss opportunities to enhance students' spiritual development in lessons.
- Too many lessons do not start on time.
- The occasional unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of students, usually boys, disrupts lessons and frustrates those students who are keen to learn.

Commentary

12. Students enjoy coming to school and, as a result of the good climate for learning, they flourish and mature. They bring good attitudes to their work and, therefore, learn effectively. Throughout school, the very good relationships help to develop students' confidence, self-esteem and aspirations. Year 11 students speak fluently about how much they enjoy school and participate in some of its decision-making through valued membership of the school council. Success in modern foreign languages, for example, is partly due to the way in which they work well together in practical tasks such as role-play and other effective pair and group work. The small proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and other students mix well. Students respond to opportunities to work independently whether on research or in trying to solve problems in design and technology before asking for help. Students of different levels of skill work well together in physical education.
13. In formal discussions with students before and during the inspection it is clear that most value the efforts made by staff on their behalf. They see teachers as a means of helpful support when things are difficult, not as people likely to disparage them. Relationships are very good

and advanced significantly through a range of enriching extra-curricular activities. These attitudes and approaches to learning are reflected in behaviour that is almost always positive. The few examples of disruptive behaviour by a minority of students are usually the result of teaching that fails to engage their interest. Movement about the school is orderly, but there is a tendency to dawdle during long walks between lessons.

14. Behaviour is good overall. In their questionnaire returns, students reported that a few of their classmates behave in a minor disruptive way in lessons and that there was some bullying in the school. Occasional incidents of bullying do occur, but the school has good procedures to try to prevent incidents and deals appropriately with these situations whenever any are reported. In discussions, students say that incidents of minor behavioural difficulties are dealt with well by the best teachers by making the work interesting. Poor behaviour in lessons is usually because students are bored. Around the school and at lunchtime, behaviour is also usually good. Inspectors did not see any serious examples of poor behaviour.
15. Students respond well to responsibility, whether it is serving as a receptionist or acting as a representative on the school council. They co-operate well in lessons when required to work with others. Year 11 students in drama devise frameworks for final presentations with good nature in the cut and thrust of giving and sharing ideas. They co-operate well in agreeing extra rehearsal times. This reflects one of the key tenets of the school's ethos: every child counts and must have the opportunity to participate in all that the school has to offer. The way support assistants are used in classes is designed to make sure that all students learn effectively. Even those who misbehave are accommodated for within school, because they are a part of the school – exclusion would be a contradiction of the school's philosophy except in the most severe circumstances. The percentage of exclusions is below average.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1283	105	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	5	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	7	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	16	7	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	12	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	0	0

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

16. The very good provision for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as raising the educational achievement of these students, contributes significantly to their growing self-esteem and confidence in relating to others. The placing of these students within

mainstream education is beneficial, particularly in terms of the breadth of their experiences and their relationships with peers who may attain more highly and be more mature. These relationships are especially evident in the lunchtime Buddy Group that is held in the Resource Base, where stories and games are shared and where there are opportunities to care for one another. Students also enjoy other aspects of the main school, such as attendance at the school musical 'West Side Story'. They enjoy school visits, including a stay at a centre for outdoor pursuits in the Lake District.

17. The school develops students into well-rounded individuals who are equipped to face life and its challenges when they leave. The work of the school council is an example where students take their responsibilities seriously. It helps them gain an understanding of how democracy and society work to get things done.
18. The school is successful in helping students understand right from wrong and in working together in good social circumstances. Students develop social skills when they consider the notion of the 'customer' in business education. The teamwork involved in producing 'West Side Story' is a prime example of social learning. It is also an example of cultural learning – one of many across art, music and drama – including the clash of two racial cultures and the problems that disharmony can bring. There is a breadth of enrichment activities available to students and the take-up from students is very good. Art and design shines out as a beacon of good practice by its all-inclusive approach to the diversity of cultures seen through art. English, too, looks at poetry from other cultures and sometimes touches on spiritual issues, such as the nature of evil as seen in 'Of Mice and Men'. However, there are too few opportunities, apart from in a number of good assemblies, for students' spiritual sides to be developed. Subject teachers do not seek to see the spiritual in their curriculum areas enough, such as those aspects of subjects that transcend our everyday experience.

Attendance

19. Attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and is now well above the national average. The level of unauthorised absence is broadly similar to that found nationally. The school's analysis and monitoring of attendance is very thorough and any concerns are identified and acted upon at an early stage.
20. Punctuality to lessons was criticised at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, the school has introduced a five-minute warning bell before morning registration and after break and lunchtime and has reduced the number of changeovers by changing from a seven-period day to a six-period one. However, an unacceptably high proportion of lessons still begin later than necessary. Students do not have a sense of urgency when moving between classrooms and teachers are not rigorous in insisting on a prompt start to lessons. In some instances, teachers are, themselves, late, which sets a bad example. The significant amount of time lost in this way means that students do not receive their full entitlement of teaching.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.2	School data :	0.09
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides its students with an **effective education**. Teaching is good leading to effective learning and good achievement. The curriculum provision is unsatisfactory overall since not enough time is spent on citizenship, religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11 to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum. Provision for students' care and welfare are very good and links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. Teachers use assessment effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers effectively use government initiatives in Years 7 to 9 when planning lessons.
- Teaching is very good in modern foreign languages.
- Assessment is well used in lessons and for monitoring students' achievement.
- Teaching and learning assistants work very effectively as a team.
- Teaching and learning are good in nearly three out of four lessons; as a result, students achieve well.
- Good planning ensures that students with special educational needs and those in the Resource Base are taught well.
- Some subjects do not do enough to improve literacy skills.
- The proportion of very good or excellent teaching is not as high as that found nationally.
- Too often, work is not matched to students' learning needs.

Commentary

21. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, with equal proportions of good or better teaching found in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. This is similar to the overall quality of teaching found at the previous inspection although, at that time, teaching was not as good in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and 11. In 1998, there was about the same proportion of very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 as now, but in Years 10 and 11 in 1998 there was significantly more very good teaching than found in this inspection. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching at present is significantly lower than that found nationally. There has been only a very small minority of unsatisfactory teaching during both inspections, and less now [2 per cent against 5 per cent] even though 50 more lessons were observed during this inspection.
22. Teachers know their subjects well. In the best teaching this knowledge and teachers' enthusiasm for their subject are used to challenge students and to get them to work hard and with a sense of purpose. This leads to consistently good achievement. Teaching in French is especially good in these respects. Learning of the language is very effective since teachers know their subject well, are enthralled by it and use a variety of speaking activities that engage students' interests in using the language in practice. The good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is reinforced by effective use of assessment and helpful marking that helps students to improve on their previous best. The best lessons have a lively start that captures the interest of students and end with students identifying how successful their learning has been. Even more significant is the way teachers, where teaching is at its best, intervene in the central part of the lesson to extend learning, challenge, support those finding work difficult and ensure that all students are engaged in worthwhile tasks. When this works well, it has been carefully planned, taking into account the differing learning needs of individuals or groups in the class. For example, in a science lesson in Year 10 about selective breeding and genetic engineering, an enthusiastic teacher had prepared materials well so that students could prepare a presentation. The teacher encouraged students to use their previous learning and link it with research, proceeding at a fast pace to achieve their objectives. They were challenged by the teaching every step of the way, but succeeded in having a short preparation

ready by the end of the lesson. Boys and girls were equally involved throughout and students were respectful of each other's efforts in this class, where attainment overall was about average.

23. Students learn well in English because consistently good teaching challenges them to think about how they use language. Not all subjects see the value of this emphasis, but it is a necessary one if the skills of literacy of the middle and lower attainers are to improve. The successful implementation of government initiatives, especially in literacy, in Years 7 to 9 has helped more in some subjects than others. Where it is successful, teachers of a subject will insist on accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling during the middle part of a lesson and often check on the spelling of key technical words during the final summary session at the end of a lesson. Teachers usually plan work well to provide a good variety of interesting and relevant learning activities. Teachers ensure that learning occurs at a brisk pace with few opportunities for students to become bored. Some of these initiatives are finding their way into Years 10 and 11 and lessons are usually good as a result of this.
24. The best teaching is characterised by its energy, the use of variety in presentation and good use of resources, such as those of lighting and sound in drama. Needs of individual students are considered at the planning stage. Most of all, in the best lessons, students know what they are aiming to learn and that they will be tested on that learning at the end of the lesson. Some teachers placed less value on this pattern, saying that they ran out of time at the end of the lesson; in fact this is the result of ineffective planning, although in some subjects the 50-minute lesson is too short for teachers.
25. Less successful lessons, whilst satisfactory, lack the qualities described in good or better lessons. Expectations are not high enough or unrealistic, pace flags, students are asked to work on inappropriate or undemanding tasks and teachers talk too much. Teachers do not value the final part of the lesson where learning is evaluated. Management knows what it wants of teachers, but just as very good or excellent practice is rarely shared, there is little evidence that less successful teachers are helped in the daily craft of teaching. There is often a lack of clarity in defining what students are to learn in the lesson and emphasis instead on what activities they will undertake. It is not clear that the school has thought enough about the way students learn and how teaching should reflect this. Teachers talk about assessment for learning, but it does not translate into how they set up learning situations moment-by-moment in lessons. There is a tendency for 'improving learning and teaching' to be a theoretical discussion or paper exercise rather than applied sharing on the floor of the classroom. Not enough thought is given to matching activities specifically to students' learning needs.
26. Some teachers *teach* too much. That is, they do not encourage students sufficiently to fend for themselves and research independently. Students should be made to think for themselves more.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 171 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (3.5%)	29 (16.9%)	90 (52.6%)	44 (25.7%)	2 (1.2%)	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.

27. The quality of teaching and learning of students with special educational needs is good. The learning support department provides good quality and helpful information about students with special educational needs to every teacher. Consequently, teachers are aware of students' needs and provide work of suitable challenge. In some subjects, resources are suitably adapted. For example, in music a student was seen using a specially colour-coded keyboard. The support that students receive from learning support assistants is always at least effective and is often very effective. Although the learning support assistants are suitably deployed, there

are not enough of them. Lessons were observed where the absence of support had an adverse effect upon the quality of learning.

28. The quality of teaching and learning of students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties is good; some lessons have very good features. Students benefit by being taught by a trained special educationalist and by subject specialists. They also receive regular and good learning support from a team of trained and experienced assistants. Close co-operation amongst all staff ensures that lessons are pitched at a level appropriate to the students' learning needs. Teaching methods are also adapted for them, as, for example, in a science lesson in which a student was encouraged to repeat his practical experiment – releasing and burning hydrogen – as an alternative to 'writing up' the experiment. Learning is good largely because teachers and learning support assistants ensure that students are fully engaged in their tasks throughout lessons. Students enjoy the consistent and positive interaction between themselves and the learning assistants.
29. Teachers generally take account of the differing learning needs of students when planning lessons. For example, recent work in identifying 20 per cent of students as relatively gifted and talented has led the best teachers to ensure that these students are challenged and their curriculum enriched. However, higher attainers, generally, do not always have sufficient demands made of them so that they achieve their fullest potential. More teachers are more effective in meeting the learning needs of the average and below average learners. A small minority of teachers does not sufficiently match the work they set to the differing learning needs of students.

Assessment

Provision for assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers mark work regularly and provide students with helpful written feedback on their work.
- Most subjects use assessment data to inform their planning and to set targets for individual students and groups.
- The use of assessment for learning during lessons and, as a result of lessons, is usually good, but teachers do not always make sure that their work is planned to meet the differing learning needs of students.

Commentary

30. The school is data rich. A deputy headteacher has led significant work in providing a range of data from a student's point of entry to the school to an analysis of performance as the student leaves after GCSE examinations. All subjects are expected to use this to aid their planning and most do so effectively. At best, key pieces of work are assessed or test results monitored and used to keep a track of how well an individual is doing in relation to targets and expectations. Not all departments make as much use of this rich data as they should and some barely seem aware of it.
31. Periodically, students discuss their progress against their targets with their teachers. As a result, students know more about their standards and whether they are on target to achieve their potential. It also sometimes helps them to be more aware of what they need to do to improve and of the ways in which they work best. Assessment and recording of the work and progress of students with special educational needs and those with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, provide a good model. Teachers and learning assistants play a full part in this procedure. Records are formative and are used well to set future targets.

32. The progress towards the targets on their individual education plans of students with special educational needs is reviewed regularly and suitable new targets are negotiated. Annual reviews are held of the progress of students with special educational needs in accordance with the Code of Practice. There is, however, no system for tracking the overall progress of these students or of analysing data, such as GCSE results, to identify possible strengths and weaknesses in provision.
33. Day-to-day, constructive marking of written work and good oral assessment in lessons help teachers to assess and meet the needs of different students as a lesson proceeds. Assessment is done *with* the learners and not *at* them or *of* them. Students are encouraged to be active partners in the assessment process. During the inspection, the best supportive assessment for learning in lessons was seen in art and design, design and technology, drama, English, history, ICT, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. Assessment for learning is less effective in geography and citizenship.

The curriculum

Though designed to meet individual students' needs well, the curriculum is **unsatisfactory** because statutory requirements to teach religious education and citizenship in Years 10 and 11 and ICT are not met in full. The enrichment of the curriculum is very good. Accommodation and resources are adequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements to teach religious education and citizenship in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met because of the short time allocated in the planned curriculum in which to teach these subjects.
- The statutory requirement to teach ICT across all subjects is not met in full, partly because of lack of access to equipment.
- The development of government initiatives to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 has had a positive effect, especially in raising standards of lower attaining students in English and mathematics.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good, though access to part of the building and mainstream teaching in modern foreign languages is restricted for students with mobility difficulties.
- Timetable decisions, the nature of the buildings and lack of effort by some staff and students mean that punctuality is poor and time is lost at the start of many lessons.
- Many students benefit from extra-curricular activities in physical education, art and design, drama and music and most subjects provide additional support for students outside school hours.
- Most students take an accredited course in a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11.
- A good breadth of accredited courses in design and technology subjects meets individual students' needs well in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

34. In Years 7 to 9 the planned curriculum meets individual needs satisfactorily and, with the exception of the need to teach ICT in all subjects, meets statutory requirements. The school has developed initiatives to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 well. The development of work across subjects to raise students' standards in literacy and numeracy has been well organised and effective and so all students, including those of lower attainment, are achieving well. Additional classes and support for students entering the school with weak basic skills is successful in helping these students to catch up.
35. In Years 10 and 11, there is not enough time allocated in the planned curriculum to enable the full programmes of study in citizenship and ICT and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education to be taught in the depth required and, consequently, students' achievement in these

areas is unsatisfactory. Lack of access to computers in a number of subjects means that ICT cannot be used to support learning easily. A strong feature of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the unusually high percentage of each year group that takes an examination course in a modern foreign language.

36. Students receive good careers education and guidance from Year 8 onwards and so they are able to make informed decisions about their own futures. The school is developing a satisfactory range of vocational courses and routes through from the age of 14 to 19. The school's success in gaining specialist school of technology status has had a positive effect on the range of courses offered to students in design and technology, especially in Years 10 and 11, where all students follow an accredited course. Vocational opportunities are included, for example in manufacturing, and so students' individual needs are well met.
37. The school's very good programme of additional activities and enrichment helps many students to do well. Students with specific gifts and talents, especially in physical education, drama and music, achieve particularly well as a result of additional coaching and opportunities to play and perform to a high level. Many students benefit from the additional support they receive in revision classes, helping them to succeed in examinations.
38. Most students have good access to the range of courses on offer to them. However, difficulties in access to the modern foreign language rooms means that around ten students with mobility difficulties do not have access to mainstream specialist language teaching.
39. The timetable takes insufficient account of the difficulties posed by the building. For example, the separate time for registration in the afternoon causes delay in arriving at period 5. The register could be taken electronically in period 5. The school has failed to improve punctuality since the previous inspection and the amount of time lost over the five years of a student's school life is too great to continue to ignore.
40. There is good provision for students with special educational needs. There are some withdrawal lessons for those whose standards of literacy are particularly weak. In these, teaching is good and students achieve well. Most students with special needs make good progress in small classes for English and mathematics. In Years 10 and 11 there is a suitable vocational course which provides effectively for students who need an alternative to the traditional curriculum.
41. Students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties have good provision and access to a special unit – the Resource Base. This caters for nine students in Years 7 to 9, and four students in Year 10. Students are taught mainly in mainstream classes, but where it is judged to be necessary, some have particular lessons, for example in language and numeracy, within the Base. The Resource Base provides a secure and happy educational, social and therapeutic environment.
42. The well-equipped drama studios are outstandingly good. The specialist provision for music, with three teaching areas and five practice rooms, is also very good and a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The science laboratories represent satisfactory provision but they are insufficient to house all the groups timetabled together. The condition of the artificial surfaces and hard areas are unsatisfactory. The surrounding netting is a health and safety risk.
43. Resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory. Resources in music are good. Those in English and modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory, with a shortage of up-to-date books and computers. Science resources are satisfactory overall with good laboratory equipment but insufficient books and access to ICT facilities. Design and technology has now lost its computer suite. All other subjects have an adequate supply of books and satisfactory access to computers. The school's library has improved considerably since the previous inspection: it

is well used by students and is now an effective learning resource centre to support the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Students receive very good support, advice and guidance throughout their time in school. Students are fully involved, mainly through the school council, in the life and development of their school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are effective systems in place to ensure that students receive very good support and guidance throughout their time in school.
- The school provides a very safe, caring environment in which students feel secure.
- Students' learning is very well monitored so that appropriate help and support can be provided to enable them to do their best.
- The school seeks, values and acts on students' views so that they make a very strong contribution to the life and improvement of their school.
- The arrangements to support students when they join the school are good.

Commentary

44. The school has very good systems in place to support, advise and guide students throughout their time in school. Form tutors play a central role in the monitoring of students' academic progress as well as their personal development. This role has been strengthened since the previous inspection but students also benefit from a wide range of other strategies and support. For example, those who find it difficult to control their behaviour have access to anger management and counselling. All students have a good programme of careers education and guidance, and in Year 11 benefit from well-organised work experience. However, the careers library, criticised in the previous inspection, remains too small and is not readily accessible. The wide range of options means that students receive well-focused support, guidance and advice so that they make good progress.
45. The school is successful in providing a safe, caring environment in which all students can focus on learning. Students feel safe in school because they know teachers and other staff care for their safety and welfare very well. Procedures for child protection fully comply with legal requirements. All members of staff know these procedures. Very good systems ensure that health and safety requirements are met. Arrangements for first aid are good. Students trust teachers and other staff, knowing that they have their best interests at heart. They appreciate that it is safe to share any problems they may have because they will be taken seriously.
46. Form tutors and other pastoral staff are involved in monitoring the academic progress of students through regular individual reviews and mentoring. Students know their targets and are clear about how to achieve them. They speak highly of the support they receive from teachers. Form tutors, in particular, have a very clear overview of their students. This is used to identify areas of need so that help can be provided in the most appropriate way. The aim is to remove any barriers to learning to enable students to achieve their full potential. Students appreciate that they will receive appropriate support and care so that they can achieve their best in the classroom. The support may focus on ways to improve their behaviour, attendance or punctuality or to deal with a personal problem. The very clear systems mean that students' problems are identified and resolved quickly so that their learning is not adversely affected.
47. Very good care is provided for students with special educational needs. A teacher who is particularly qualified in emotional literacy, supports students whose problems need such

specialist care. This is done both by one-to-one counselling and by support in the classroom. Other students with a variety of needs gain support from individual sessions with a suitably qualified teacher where the objective might be, for example, to gain in confidence as much as to promote academic progress. Very good support is provided by the Pupil Referral Unit, known as "Trust". This is where students are referred after they have exhausted all other procedures aimed at improving their behaviour. It works on a positive ethos where the intention is firmly focused on helping students to improve sufficiently to return to their full timetable. At the same time, close liaison with subject teachers ensures that students maintain their academic learning satisfactorily. Results show that "Trust" is effective in helping students to improve the inter-personal skills that lie at the root of their problem.

48. Students are very well involved in the daily life and development of their school. The year and school councils encourage students to put forward their ideas for improving the school. The council is an articulate and thoughtful group, confident that its views contribute significantly to improving school life. Councillors take a justifiable pride in their achievements, such as providing lockers and extra seating around the school and helping to reduce the amount of litter. The council invites staff and outside bodies, such as the bus companies and canteen staff, to discuss issues of concern with them. This has resulted in a range of improvements, for example, to the canteen service and the grounds. Students have a wide range of responsibilities. Year 8 students take turns to act as receptionists. Students in Year 10 mentor new students and are involved in a paired reading scheme. Year 10 volunteers are about to be trained as learning coaches to work through a series of "Learning Challenges" with younger students.
49. The induction programme is well organised and enables students to settle into school quickly. There is a strong programme of visits from staff to the primary schools to meet students in Years 5 and 6. These students have a good range of opportunities to visit their new school so that when they enter Year 7 they are confident. Year 10 students act as mentors linked to Year 7 form groups. They provide help and support students well while they settle into the routines of their new school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a **good** partnership with parents. It has good links with other schools and the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided to parents about school life and their child's work and progress is very good.
- Parents support the school well.
- The school works well with other local schools and colleges to improve the opportunities on offer to students.
- The school keeps a high profile in the local community through the community newsletter and links with the community are well used to enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

50. The school ensures that parents are very well informed. The prospectus, curriculum information and newsletters give parents the information they need about the school, its routines and expectations. The information on special educational needs in the annual report of governors to parents is particularly detailed and useful. Parents have two formal opportunities each year to meet with teachers to discuss the progress their child is making. The first of these is with the form tutor who provides an overview of progress. At the other, parents are able to meet with subject teachers. A summary report is sent home each term, with a full annual report in the summer. Reports are of good quality overall, but there are many examples of very good practice. Comments are clearly written and focus on the strengths and areas for improvement in each subject. Summary reports follow a clear format so that parents can see at a glance how well their child is doing. Staff contact parents at an early stage if concerns arise about their child's attitude to work, behaviour or attendance.
51. Parents are supportive of the school and speak well of it. They help the school by ensuring that their children attend regularly, by checking and signing the journal and in matters of discipline. The parent teacher association organises a range of successful social and fund raising events that help to bring the school community together. The considerable sums of money raised are spent in consultation with the school and make a significant contribution to school life. The school has recently been successful in its bid for specialist technology status and the parents supported this to the tune of twenty-five thousand pounds.
52. The school has good links with other local schools and colleges that extend students' learning. Strong links are established with the local primary schools and are used well to ease the transition from primary to secondary education, particularly in mathematics and science. The school works closely with local colleges. A number of students undertake college courses as part of their curriculum in Years 10 and 11, sometimes linked to extended work experience placements. This successfully motivates students who might otherwise lose interest in education.
53. The community newsletter is a particular strength, reaching over thirteen thousand homes as well as libraries and primary schools. This celebrates the school's achievements very well and is successful in raising the profile of the school in the community. The school has established a range of useful links with the community that are used to broaden students' experiences and enrich the curriculum. For example, students in Years 7 and 8 benefit from attending Stockport County Football Club's ICT centre. Older students studying health and social care or business studies have the opportunity to visit and work with local hospitals, nurseries and businesses. A range of visitors, including the police, Justices of the Peace and Samaritans, contribute to the programme of personal and social education. The school works well with a wide range of outside agencies, including the education welfare service and City Pride, to support students. The specialist school bid attracted sponsorship from a number of local businesses.
54. The school works fully in accordance with the Code of Practice in ensuring that parents are involved in decisions regarding students with special educational needs. Parents of students with a Statement of Special Educational Need are always invited to annual reviews and most attend.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Governance is good, although there are areas of the curriculum that do not meet statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership at every level is committed and successful in creating a very inclusive school.

- The acting headteacher, supported by the leadership group, has successfully steered the school through a challenging period; this has included a successful bid for specialist school status.
- Governors are well informed and provide good, critical support to the school.
- Not enough is done to share the good practice where teaching and achievement are very good or excellent.
- Heads of department and pastoral teams are effective and are beginning to appreciate that they share many of the same responsibilities.
- The leadership group and governing body do not fulfil the statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship, enough time in Years 10 and 11 to adequately meet National Curriculum requirements for citizenship and ICT, and the requirements of the agreed syllabus for religious education.
- The new headteacher has quickly grasped many strengths and areas for improvement and has a clear view of immediate and longer-term needs.
- Financial management is good.

Commentary

Leadership

55. Leaders and governors insist that Hazel Grove should be a school in which every student has the means of enjoying everything the school has to offer. It is a guiding principle that underpins everything undertaken by leadership, governance and management. During the inspection, discussions with students, especially those in Year 11 who have experienced the school over nearly five years, confirm that these ideals are present in day-to-day practice.
56. A key aspect of giving opportunities to all students rests in the quality of teaching and learning. The senior leadership group has paid a lot of attention to this since the previous inspection. Working parties have been set up and the issues have played a central part of improvement planning and the discussions of the leadership group year by year. A significant innovation has been the setting up of quality assurance procedures. Departments have been subjected to thorough scrutiny of their own attempts to be effective and up to date. The effectiveness of their checking on students' achievement and how effectively they acquire knowledge, understanding and skills has been central. Examination results have been analysed each year and new targets set. Another important development has been the appointment of a learning co-ordinator with the specific brief of helping staff appreciate the many different, effective ways in which people learn and the differences in which boys learn effectively compared with girls. A success of this strategy has been the narrowing of the difference between boys' and girls' results in tests and examinations.
57. There has, however, been an important omission in the effort to improve generally good teaching and learning, to that which are more often very good or excellent. A lot of the drive has been through discussion and working parties, largely theoretically based. Much that is good in the school has been enhanced as a result of this. Leadership, though, has not inspired change in the classroom practice of teachers through the creation of a shared vision of the very good teaching and learning that actually exists in the school. Too many very good teachers are working day-by-day without their qualities being seen in action by their colleagues. There are not enough opportunities within and across departments to observe very good teaching and learn from it. The very best teachers go out of their way to learn from each other. In drama, for example, the two key teachers have brought two Year 11 groups together and teach them collaboratively. One outcome of this is that they pick up each other's good practices and help get rid of weaker elements in their teaching. Leadership at all levels lacks the vision to appreciate that it is worth the effort to facilitate supportive, generous and humble sharing of what is good in the teaching of the school. This can only be truly effective when it is done on the classroom floor with students – where what starts as sitting and watching leads to teachers joining in each other's work, even when the lesson is outside their own specialism. It is not expected that this will happen every day, but at present it hardly happens at all. There is

no system for each department to develop a programme of sharing through some use of non-contact periods and the use of collaborative planning and teaching.

58. Although the leadership of the school has been significantly disrupted over the last two years it has nevertheless succeeded in moving forward. In particular, the bid for specialist school status, which has been a major focus, has been successful. It is commendable that teachers and other staff have not been demoralised by the changes in leadership but have continued to focus on school improvement. The whole-school and departmental improvement plans are evidence of this. The role played by one of the deputy headteachers, whilst acting headteacher, has been crucial to this success.
59. The newly appointed headteacher has made a good start. He already has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He has the support of staff and a high profile around the school. He is quickly becoming known as he gets to know the school. He is sensitive to the needs of the school and its staff. He is deeply committed to the success of the school and his vision for its future development acknowledges the school's current strengths. The school is well placed to continue to improve and has the capacity to succeed.

Governance

60. The governing body is very supportive of the school and remains very committed despite the difficulties of the last two years. In fact, key governors played an important part in maintaining an equilibrium during this period. Governors have a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are, therefore, well able to help the school improve. Governors are rightly proud of the strengths of the school and, particularly, the good harmony of different groups amongst staff and students. Governors show a keen interest in the all-round development, as well as striving for academic success, of all students. They gave good support to the school's successful bid to become a specialist technology college. However, the governors are not currently meeting statutory requirements for the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
61. Governors maintain a good balance in their roles of supporting the school and monitoring its performance. Sometimes, however, their commitment to the school causes them, whilst acknowledging areas in need of improvement, still to see the school as better than it is. Hazel Grove is a good school that has not been trying hard enough to become a very good school. Governors have the capacity to support and make demands on management to make 'very good' a reality. Already, they set relevant and effective performance targets for the headteacher.

Management

62. One of the strengths of the school is that day-to-day procedures run smoothly. Although management has not resolved the matter of punctuality at the change of lessons, the orderly atmosphere of the school, behaviour management and a sense of purpose are established. Managers receive effective support from administrative staff and other non-teaching staff. Whilst some of the interior of the school is in need of modernisation and upgrading, the grounds are a credit to the staff who have transformed the appearance of the school since the previous inspection. The gardening and sculptured features in the grounds are appreciated by students.
63. Much work has been accomplished in providing the school with a rich range of students' performance data. Tests and examinations results are analysed carefully to track the performance of groups of students and individuals and their improvement from one stage to the next. Assessment information is also used effectively to analyse the success of departments and their individual staff.

64. The school has established a thorough system of performance management. This is contributing to the notion of a constantly improving school. Induction of newly qualified staff and others new to the school is good and valued by those who experience it. However, there is a need to seek other ways beyond performance management to help teachers be better still at what they do. Many subjects are very well led. Middle managers are very effective and have built strong teams within their departments. Effective use of assessment is a strength within their work. The weakness is the monitoring of teaching in a systematic way across the school and the lack of systems to disseminate good practice to all members of staff. For this to improve, more visionary leadership by senior management is required. If the school is to achieve its fullest potential, more frequent evidence of very good and excellent teaching should be found. Currently, there are exemplars in the school – in drama, English, modern foreign languages and science – but the qualities within these subjects are rarely known, let alone shared, beyond their own departments
65. The management of provision for students with special educational needs is good. Students benefit from the effective communication system between the learning support department and subject teachers. Learning support assistants are suitably deployed but there are not enough of them. All legal requirements regarding students with a Statement of Special Educational Need are met. There is a link governor, and governors have taken many steps to improve access for physically handicapped students. However, at present, some students do not study modern foreign languages because of access difficulties.
66. The Resource Base for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties is very well led and managed by its specialist teacher. The level of students' integration into mainstream classes is carefully considered. All students are enabled to follow a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum as a result of careful and thoughtful planning that is initiated by the Resource Base leader. Duties of support assistants are clearly defined and communication with subject teachers is of high quality. Individual education plans are prepared with appropriate detail, reviewed regularly and used well by all staff. Students' progress files include clear information about their particular learning difficulties as well as regular reports on their educational progress. These reports provide valid evidence of achievement. However, systems for analysing and presentation of data need to be refined in order to enable the school to report on students' progress with greater precision and confidence.
67. There are two very strong pastoral teams made up of form tutors, heads of year and heads of key stage. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 there are well established and very effective systems in place to monitor and promote good behaviour and attendance. Students who do not behave or attend well benefit from a range of support provision that can be targeted well to their individual needs. The active involvement of form tutors and other pastoral staff in monitoring and mentoring academic progress is a real strength and an improvement since the previous inspection. However, the development of a coherent, single academic and pastoral system is not sufficiently strong within the leadership group since some key post-holders are not members of the group, when others with similar responsibilities are included.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,064,049	Balance from previous year	74,246
Total expenditure	3,871,953	Balance carried forward to the next	154,873
Expenditure per student	2,786		

68. The school has recently appointed a business manager. He and his colleague have a good grasp of the range of financial systems in place in the school. In a short period they have brought coherence to school systems, have responded fully to recommendations made by recent audit procedures and all expenditure is monitored carefully. There is a recognition that systems and decisions should serve the priorities of the school improvement plan. Practices to guard against mis-use are in place.
69. Governors keep a watchful eye on expenditure and expect the school to take full advantage of systems of best value. Budgetary planning is good. Governors receive good guidance from the business manager. They seek to evaluate the effects of their spending on students' learning. The school spends moneys received for specific purposes, such as special educational needs, in accordance with requirements. The business manager, too, is keen that best value should be part of everyday practice – he is currently seeking best value for the purchase of a whole-site CCTV camera system. These same principles should be applied more fully to staff deployment and time-tabling in order to overcome the poor punctuality at the start of lessons and providing sufficient time for all requirements of legislation to be met in the curriculum design of the school.
70. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of students and the current quality of education and achievement, the school provides good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in their work.
- Most students work hard and learn well. They have positive attitudes to the subject.
- Some teaching is excellent and it is never less than satisfactory.
- There are limited opportunities for students to use ICT in classes.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory	

Commentary

71. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results in 2003 were at the national average and in the previous two years were well above average. Over the last three years, students have made more improvement in English than in most schools nationally. At GCSE in 2003 results in English language were above the national average and were especially strong in English literature with more boys achieving the highest grade than girls.
72. On entry to the school standards are average. In Years 7 to 9 students develop good speaking and listening skills and enjoy working in pairs. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are better than those found nationally and the content of writing is good although more attention should be paid to encouraging more personal and imaginative writing. Students can read texts and understand the meaning of them although reading out loud is less well developed and many students need to be encouraged to read more widely. In Years 10 and 11 high attainers write at length with considerable flair and sensitivity. Middle attainers improve their reading skills and lower attaining students improve the accuracy of their written work. Girls achieve higher standards than boys but this is less so than in most schools. The small number of students from minority ethnic groups achieve well and students with special educational needs make good progress
73. Throughout the school students achieve well because teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often very good and excellent. In an outstanding Year 8 poetry lesson all the students responded enthusiastically because the pace of learning was brisk with a variety of learning activities. The students were articulate and the quality of their writing was well above average. Boys, in particular, responded very well to the tight structure of the lesson, based on the initiatives suggested for teaching literacy. Teachers plan their lessons well and prepare good learning materials. Students usually respond very well although a few boys in Year 11 were

inattentive in a lesson where the pace of learning was initially slow. In an excellent Year 11 lesson with low-attaining students, the teacher set high expectations for the group and gave detailed feedback to the students on the progress they were making with their writing. They all worked hard and with interest throughout the lesson. Teachers mark work thoroughly and comments are detailed and constructive. Targets are set for improvement although some of these need to be more specific to overcome weaknesses in writing.

74. The head of department provides good leadership and management for the department. The work of a large group of teachers is co-ordinated well and she has a clear view of future developments. Individual units of work are well planned although more opportunities for students to use ICT for drafting and presenting work, and to read more extensively are priorities for future development. There is a need for more systematic monitoring of teaching in order to disseminate the excellent teaching practices observed during the week. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Attainment throughout the school has been maintained and the national initiative for teaching English has been successfully incorporated into the scheme of work

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. Standards of literacy are above average. Teachers in most, but not all, departments have responded well to the government initiatives and in many subjects teachers help students to understand the key words of their subject and provide frameworks for their writing. In science, teachers correct spelling mistakes and encourage personal responses when students are writing about experiments. In modern foreign languages, students are encouraged to explore how language changes over time. Oral work is promoted actively in religious education and design and technology. There are good opportunities for students to read extensively in history. Lower attainers, however, do not always get the help they need.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and improving.
- Teaching and learning are very good and enable students to achieve very well.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good and teachers work very effectively as a team.
- Assessment is used well to involve students in their own learning but could be further developed to challenge higher-attaining students in mixed ability groups to use the language in more demanding ways.
- Opportunities for students to use the languages themselves informally and for real purposes are underdeveloped.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

76. Standards of work seen are well above average and improving in both French and German. This represents very good achievement. Students have a very good understanding of grammar rules and apply them successfully and accurately to express their ideas in speech and in writing. They write at length and in detail using a very good range of vocabulary and structures to describe events in the past, present and future. From Year 8 onwards, in French in particular, average and higher-attaining develop their writing skills very effectively, linking sentences using a variety of structures to compare and contrast ideas and to express their opinions. Lower-attaining students communicate effectively but more simply, constructing sentences following a model or adapting set phrases to suit their needs. Listening and reading skills are very well developed. Students respond confidently to questions and instructions in French and German and identify detail from short texts. In a Year 10 German lesson, for example, average and higher-attaining students identified the main points and specific detail from a magazine article containing a large proportion of unfamiliar language, by inferring meaning from context and using their knowledge of the language to work out the meaning of some compound nouns. Students participate confidently in dialogues and describe events in response to questioning and visual cues but are less confident in responding spontaneously.
77. Standards attained in GCSE examinations are above average in both French and German. However, all students are entered for examinations and all achieve a grade at GCSE. This is not the case nationally so that any comparison with national figures is unreliable.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have an excellent command of the languages they teach and use them very effectively to conduct activities. Students therefore benefit from excellent role models and listening skills are very well developed. Objectives are clear and shared with students. Students are regularly required to evaluate each other's performance. This is very effective in raising standards. Presentations are very clear so that students rapidly understand new language and identify, explain and apply patterns themselves. Opportunities are regularly taken to develop students' literacy; for example in a Year 10 German lesson, students were encouraged to look for cognates to help with their understanding of a magazine article. Relationships are very good and teachers create a very supportive atmosphere for learning in their classrooms; as a result students are not afraid of making mistakes and are confident in their ability as linguists. Oral practice is often restricted to rehearsal of prepared dialogues. Not enough opportunities are provided for more flexible conversations. In some lessons students progress directly from practising a new structure to writing; opportunities for them to develop speaking and listening skills are sometimes missed and in French in particular this encourages dependence upon written notes and affects pronunciation, and therefore confidence.
79. Students' attitudes are very positive and it is clear that they enjoy their learning. They respond particularly enthusiastically to games and are keen to participate in oral work. They rise to the

challenge of identifying and explaining grammar rules and take the responsibility of evaluating each other's performance very seriously.

80. Planning is clearly focused upon raising standards and the department's action taken to raise standards and to develop teaching and learning strategies has been very effective. Assessment is used imaginatively to involve students' in tracking and planning their own progress and to support lower attaining students, but could be used more effectively in lesson planning to challenge higher attaining students.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership of a cohesive team of specialist teachers is demonstrated by a good curriculum and improving standards.
- Teaching is well planned and methods carefully adapted to meet the needs of different groups of students
- Systems for assessing students' work, setting targets and monitoring progress are good, and are a key factor in improving standards.
- ICT is not used consistently enough by all students as a tool for learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

81. Students' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 is average. The cumulative impact of consistently good teaching, combined with well-behaved, hard working students shows in the above average standards reached in Year 9 and in Year 11. The Year 9 national test results have risen steadily since the previous inspection, and are usually above national averages. In 2003, the improvement was not as great as that found nationally, and standards were in line with national averages. Test and examination results in 2003 were in line with those of similar schools. In 2003 there were more students attaining level 8 than in previous years. In Year 11, results have risen since the previous inspection but not as quickly as in Year 9. Nearly all students attained a grade at A* to G, a higher than national percentage. In 2003, a higher percentage than nationally gained A* or A grades in the GCSE examination.
82. There is no significant difference in the attainment or achievement of boys and girls. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
83. Teaching groups are formed on the basis of similar prior attainment, which helps teachers to target their work effectively. Students respond well to this, as tasks for each class are hard but not too difficult. For example, in high-attaining classes, teachers expect students to work with complex algebraic functions. These demand a high level of concentration and abstract thinking from students. In a lower attaining Year 9 group the teacher used everyday examples to help

students to understand and learn effectively. All teachers get students to explain the reasoning behind their choice of methods, gauging how well students are able to apply their mathematical skills and whether some topics need revisiting. This emphasis on assessment is a key factor in rising standards. Most teaching is good and takes account of the differing learning needs of individual students. This is a significant reason why students do well in mathematics.

84. A wide range of extra-curricular activities helps students to improve their work. Examples are after-school revision classes, an Easter revision day and mathematics clubs at lunchtimes.
85. Teachers use ICT well, for example, demonstrating the impact of geometrical transformations on different shapes. Problems with access have restricted students' consistent use of ICT to help them learn, for example, how to record and interpret numerical data. However, a new computer suite should soon be in use.
86. The very good leadership of the head of the department is shown in curriculum planning. There are clear pathways for all groups of students. These give a good grounding in all parts of mathematics and ensure that decisions as to GCSE tier of entry are not made too early. For example, more Years 10 and 11 students than before are now studying at a level that can lead to at least a GCSE grade C. Courses for the highest attainers in Year 11 are under review, and the department is developing links with the sixth form college to help this process.
87. The head of department uses assessment information effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses, track any underachievement and to set targets for improvement. She monitors the work of the department well. Staff form a cohesive team. This is demonstrated through their input to the recent self-review of the mathematics department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. Students' mathematical skills are good. Students receive a good grounding in mathematics lessons and are able to apply these techniques to work in other subjects. Mathematics teachers are linked to specific departments, to dovetail their numeracy work with methods/terms used in mathematics. As part of this, mathematics teachers have run workshops on skills used in other subjects, such as percentages. Students in business education can interpret breakeven charts. In science students can carry out necessary calculations, such as in velocity and acceleration. They can use and interpret graphs, for example in acid/alkali or distance/time questions. Students' numeracy skills are above average and contribute to their progress in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good leading to good learning and achievement.
- The teachers work as a team and are committed to raising standards.
- Resources for ICT are unsatisfactory and textbooks are insufficiently up to date.
- The attitude and behaviour of some boys in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are good.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Satisfactory

Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory	

Commentary

89. National tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were slightly down on those of 2002, but the trend over the last three years is upwards. Results over three years are above the national averages and this represents good achievement. The application of government initiatives has now resulted in the standards seen in Year 9 being still above national averages.
90. GCSE results in 2003 were above national averages with the boys attaining higher results than the girls. These results were affected by the prolonged absence of a member of staff and the need for supply teachers for two Year 11 groups. Over the last three years the results of boys and girls have been similar and have maintained approximately the same level of success. This represents satisfactory achievement for the students. The proportion of A* and A grades in 2003 was high, representing good achievement for the higher-attaining students and the proportion of A* to G grades is also high. The achievement of the students in the middle grades is also affected by the unsatisfactory attitude and behaviour of a small group of boys in both Years 10 and 11. Some teaching fails to manage this behaviour effectively in the way lessons are planned and activities used, seeing it as a problem that solely rests with students and not one to consider when planning lessons.
91. By Year 9, higher attaining students are able to follow a scientific argument, ask appropriate questions and to apply Mathematics to their science. Lower-attaining students understand the basic concepts but find difficulty in concentrating for any length of time. By Year 11, higher attaining students are able and very willing to present and develop their ideas in discussion and can present their ideas with confidence and conviction. Lower attaining students find the production of written work difficult but are able to understand the principles of scientific investigations and follow the meaning of aspects of science, particularly when related to themselves and their lives. The lack of ICT facilities in the science department hinders the application of these skills to science and also their use for independent research. The library provision in the school is good and the department makes effective use of this to develop research skills. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they are taught in smaller groups, supported by suitable material and sometimes helped by learning support assistants.
92. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well prepared, teachers' knowledge is good and teachers often use it to give interesting background to the work to increase its relevance for the students. There were no unsatisfactory lessons but there were examples of well prepared and taught lessons failing to achieve the full learning potential because of the poor attitude of a minority of students in Years 10 and 11. The attitude of most students towards their studies was good and this was particularly true of the students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are hindered by the existence of some very large groups which greatly restricts the opportunities for individual practical work.
93. The leadership and management of the department are good with the head of department setting a high standard of commitment shared by her colleagues. Students' work is marked regularly with some helpful suggestions for improvement. The work in exercise books is not graded but the regular end-of-topic tests in the department ensure that both the teachers and students are well aware of their level of attainment at any time. The provision of specific short-term targets for students is well organised for the development of practical skills but still needs further development in the other areas of study. The accommodation in the department is satisfactory in quality but not in quantity and there are lessons held outside laboratories: this

restricts the teaching of the curriculum to some students. The work of the teachers is well supported by the work of three part-time technicians but, with nine laboratories and twelve teachers to service, the technician time is not adequate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

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- The subject is well taught, particularly with regard to teachers' planning and the encouragement given to students.
- The department is well led by a committed head of department who has a clear vision for raising achievement.
- The subject benefits from effective management of people, curricular resources and marking.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for ICT – particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good Good Satisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

94. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with the national average. The current standards of work observed in Year 11 are better than the GCSE results in 2003. This results from improved management and teaching. The students' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is better as a result of a more comprehensive and rigorous system of marking and attention to individual students' needs on the discrete ICT course.
95. In all years, teaching is good. The reason that standards and achievement are not yet good is because there is insufficient curriculum time allocated to ICT. This results in a narrowness of approach to teaching and learning and a lack of time to stretch higher attaining students. The teachers plan their lessons very well and provide very good encouragement for all the students. All lessons observed showed clear evidence of positive praise for the students. For example, lessons often ended with the words "I am really pleased with what you have done today." In Years 10 and 11, effective use is made of marking and all students are aware of what they must do to improve. The students' attitudes to ICT are good. They listen attentively, help each other and are keen to learn. With more curriculum time and enhanced technician support the ICT department would plan more varied learning experiences to engage and motivate all the students more.
96. Clearly labelled worksheets provided a good structure for learning for students although there was often a lack of challenge for the higher attaining students. In the best lessons, the teacher works with a small group of these students on a specific task while the rest of the class engaged in a different task. In the least effective lessons all students were set the same simple task, like carrying out searches on their database. This does not provide the sufficient

challenge for the higher attainers found in the best lessons where teachers plan their time to extend the work of all groups within the class.

97. Leadership is good. The new head of department has a clear vision to raise standards in the short term. He provides ongoing support to other members of the department despite the problems of classrooms being in different buildings. The department has worked hard to put together a coherent and progressive scheme of work and marking policy in a short space of time. There is a programme of lesson observations but this is insufficiently formalised.
98. The department has experienced a period of significant change since the previous inspection with a new head of department from September 2003. It is now beginning to improve again. With staffing stability and continued good leadership and teaching, the capacity to improve is very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

99. The provision of ICT across the school is satisfactory with a good ratio of machines to students. The ratio of 1 machine to every 5 students is in line with the national average. Students at the school have access to all aspects of the National Curriculum through ICT, mathematics and design and technology. Although there is provision for systems and control work in design and technology, this provision needs to be extended. The school is not currently meeting statutory requirements for ICT in geography, history and science. However, there are new clusters of machines which will resolve this issue.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers are experienced specialists and this helps to extend the learning of students.
- There are good relationships between staff and students.
- There are good fieldwork opportunities for students.
- The GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently developed to ensure a consistent approach across the department.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to make good use of ICT in lessons to extend their learning through research, data-logging and analysis.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	average	average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	satisfactory	satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	good	good
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	satisfactory
Quality of learning	satisfactory	satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	satisfactory	
Management of the department	satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	satisfactory	

Commentary

100. The attainment of students across the school is average. Although in 2003 the GCSE results were below the national average, in previous years results had been higher. The students choosing to study geography in Years 10 and 11 vary in attainment from year to year and this is reflected in the examination results. However, a significant proportion of students does not perform as well as predicted. This is partly linked with the fact that GCSE groups are mainly boys; teaching does not take sufficient account of how boys learn. Few girls choose to study geography beyond Year 9. The standards of work seen during the inspection were average because there were too few opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and assessment is not consistent across the department.
101. Relationships are good. The majority of students have good attitudes to their work but show little urgency to move at a faster pace. In a Year 9 lesson on comparing Japan and Kenya, higher attaining students concentrated on the work but did not move at a fast enough pace and did not complete much of the work set.
102. Teachers are hard working and mark the work regularly but confused reasoning is not always noted. Although teachers have begun to use National Curriculum levels to evaluate attainment this is not well developed and many students do not know how well they are doing. The use of self-evaluation techniques by students is a good development but it is too early to evaluate its effect on learning. The inclusion of fieldwork in the schemes of work is good. These visits help to develop the skills of observation, measuring and recording. There are too few opportunities for students to use ICT to develop their studies. The department has only recently acquired a number of computers but has no interactive whiteboard or computer-linked weather station for data-logging.
103. In Years 7 to 9, students describe the places they have studied and make good use of sketch maps. They learn many new words but this is not consolidated because of the lack of a consistent approach to developing their literacy skills. Most Year 9 students found it easy to draw scatter-graphs but were unable to explain their use or interpret their graphs. They are not always confident about some basic geographical ideas such as location. The Year 9 group describing the location of Japan had to be prompted about using latitude and longitude and compass directions.
104. In Years 10 and 11 standards, whilst average, are not as high as they should be for some students. Some under-achieve because of their approach to the examination. There are examples of incomplete learning, misreading the questions and vague answers. The department has introduced a number of strategies to deal with this. The higher attaining students demonstrate their skills in well-produced fieldwork. These students are able to apply urban models to local settlements and to evaluate their work. Lower-attaining students carry out the data collection competently but find it difficult to handle some of the complex ideas or to reach appropriate conclusions. In Years 10 and 11, the expertise of teachers of geography makes telling demands of students' learning.

105. The department has a good team approach and the management is satisfactory. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to improve teaching and raise standards.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good learning and achievement by students.
- Good assessment helps students to improve their work.
- Positive attitudes to the subject and good relationships both support learning.
- There is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching, learning and performance data to help raise standards further.
- Examination results are above average but there is some under-performance at GCSE.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	above average	average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	good	good
Attitudes of students to their work	good	good
Quality of teaching	good	good
Quality of learning	good	good
Quality of curriculum leadership	good satisfactory satisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

106. There are a number of consistent strengths in teaching and learning. Planning is good and teachers set clear objectives for each lesson to ensure that all students make good progress in their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, achievement is good. By Year 9, students' written work and their use and evaluation of historical sources are above average. Teachers present the subject well, in language which students can understand. They often use imaginative teaching methods: in two Year 7 classes, students used role-play on the Norman Conquest and on the feudal system. In a very good Year 9 lesson, students chose a wide variety of ways to present their research findings on conditions in the trenches in the First World War. Students are regularly challenged to think for themselves. Teachers manage their classes well and have high expectations, so behaviour is good. They use homework very effectively to extend and reinforce what has been learned in class. Students receive all their homework assignments for each unit of work in advance and they have an element of choice in this work. Individual education plans for students with special educational needs are not used to best effect, since teachers do not sufficiently plan their work to meet the differing learning needs of all students. Students use ICT regularly in their homework tasks but not in class, though they are competent in the relevant skills. The quality of reproduction in classroom materials is often poor and does not encourage careful work or high standards.

107. Teachers mark and assess students' work regularly and thoroughly. They give detailed feedback to individuals so that students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve.

108. Students' attitudes to the subject are positive overall, and often very positive. Relationships between students and their teachers are good and there is a positive atmosphere for learning. There are good opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively and students work well together.
109. The head of department provides a good model of professional practice and good leadership in developing the curriculum and teaching. The department is an effective team. However, there is not enough formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and insufficient use of the department's good data on students' performance to identify any under-achievement at an early stage. The head of department's pre-occupation with problems of long-term staff absence in the last two years has hindered monitoring.
110. GCSE examination results were above average in 2003, with boys performing better than girls. Results have improved in each of the last three years. However, most students did not do as well in the history examinations as in their other subjects. The head of department has identified where in the examination papers they under-performed and has planned curriculum changes to resolve this. The current Year 11 group is smaller and of lower attainment overall but their achievement in lessons and in GCSE coursework is good and they reach average standards. Standards are higher in the current Year 10. Examination results and the standard of work by Year 9 have both improved since the previous inspection. Where available, in-class support for students with special educational needs is effective. The department has only just begun to make use of its new ICT resources in lessons. Students' poor punctuality remains a problem.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school fails to meet its statutory duty to provide enough time for the core course in Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results are well above average and students do better than in their other subjects.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well because of good teaching.
- The department is very well led and well managed.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Below average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Unsatisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good	Not enough evidence
Quality of learning	Good	Not enough evidence
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Good Unsatisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

111. At the beginning of Year 7, students gain good knowledge and understanding of features common to most religions such as symbols and places of worship. By Year 9, they are extending their understanding well by considering problems such as suffering and evil in the

light of religious faiths. They not only know the facts about major world religions but also how to apply what they learn to their own lives.

112. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average and students did significantly better in religious studies than in their other subjects. Standards of work on the present GCSE course are of a similar very good standard but this applies to only 15 students in Year 11 and none in Year 10. Over 95 per cent of students in Years 10 and 11 follow a core course which combines religious education with personal, social and health education, and citizenship. Time allocation for religious education is too low and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are not met. The school is not fulfilling its statutory duty. Students on this course study some social issues and examine the Christian perspective but there is no systematic study of any other religion.
113. In Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE course, all the teaching is carried out by subject specialists. There is a clear expectation that students will work hard and this is seen, for example, in the good care that they take over their written work. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace and students are given a variety of tasks. Thus they remain interested. Methods are often imaginative. In one lesson, students had to answer to their name in the register by calling out the name of their favourite place. The teacher used this to move smoothly to a topic about the importance of places of worship to believers. Some lessons are less successful, however, because the teacher relies too heavily on the text book. A strong feature of the department is that students are encouraged to become independent learners by finding out information for themselves. However, time is lost when students or teachers have to travel from distant parts of the school and the lesson does not start on time. Teaching and learning on the GCSE course are very good. Lessons benefit greatly from the very good relationships between the teacher and the students. Consequently there is a lot of enjoyment at the same time as a constant focus on quality learning. It was not possible to see any lessons in the core course.
114. The department tracks the progress of students well by using a national system of levels. To add to the usefulness of this system, it has devised its own test to measure how much understanding of religion students have when they enter the school. Progress is measured at the end of each term and teachers keep accurate records. However, teachers do not use this system when marking work done in class or homework. Thus they lose the chance to show students what they need to do to reach the next level.
115. Although limited by the unsatisfactory time allocation, the head of department has an excellent vision and is fully focused on raising standards. He is a very good role model to other teachers and to students. Schemes of work are of good quality and are suitably detailed. Homework is well planned. The system of checking teaching and learning has not succeeded fully in raising all standards to the level of the best. Since the previous inspection a GCSE course has been introduced and the staffing situation is now better. There is still not enough time allocated for most students in Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and as a result learning and achievement are also good.
- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- Students know what to do to improve as a direct result of the good assessment methods in use.
- The relationship between students and teachers makes for a productive environment.
- Students have positive attitudes to work. They are well motivated. This has a positive effect on their learning.
- ICT resources are inadequate.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	average	above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	good	good
Attitudes of students to their work	good	good
Quality of teaching	good	good
Quality of learning	good	good
Quality of curriculum leadership	very good very good satisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

116. Achievement in design and technology is good overall. The standard of current work seen in Year 9 is average. Students enter the school in Year 7 with different experiences of design and technology; their levels of attainment overall are slightly below average in this subject. By the age of 14, they make consistent, well-paced progress. They have good organisational skills in food technology: in graphic products they successfully rise to the challenge of designing to meet client needs. In all subject strands, they show confidence and skill in communicating their design ideas by writing, drawing and labelling techniques.
117. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students are challenged by the demanding nature of the problems in the different subjects. Higher-attaining students respond positively and produce good design responses. Students think carefully about their work. Very good research skills in systems and control, and good generation of ideas in food technology encourage students' high standards. All students think about and evaluate what they are doing and how they can improve their future work. As a result, achievement is good.
118. The very effective and constructive assessment methods used by teachers help students understand what they must do to improve. Lessons are effectively planned. The intention to teach students basic skills is firmly rooted in planning in Years 7 to 9. Learning objectives are clear. They are threaded throughout the session and constantly raised by the teacher. Students respond positively. In a Year 7 class, for example, when considering healthy eating guidelines, students were constantly challenged to think what constitutes healthy eating. As the lesson progresses they begin to understand the importance of what was asked of them. Consequently they become more confident in their group discussions and learned well.
119. Similarly in Year 9 in graphic products, teaching is constantly challenging. For higher attaining students the skills of designing for others is extended. All have to think very hard. Some are

discomforted by the demands of having to interpret the design requirements of clients. As a result of the imaginative teaching and very good planning, students achieve well. Learning is good and students are excited with this different but effective approach to design.

120. There are high expectations of all students. Relationships are good between students and teachers. In Years 10 and 11, for example, this provides a productive environment in which students confidently show their skills in manufacturing. In a Year 10 lesson for example, manufacturing skills are progressively improved as students think about the mistakes they make. As a result they know how to modify their work. Students are very well motivated, make good progress and achieve well. Similarly, in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, students work safely, precisely and pay attention to ensuring very good finishing techniques. Consequently achievement is good.
121. GCSE examination results dipped slightly in 2003 but were still above the national average. Girls did not do as well as boys. However standards of all students in lessons are similar. The effectiveness of the assessment procedures is a particular aid to further raising achievement and standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is raising standards significantly.
- The comprehensive assessment system that includes tracking students' achievement ensures that all students achieve their potential.
- Strong community links have given talented students the opportunity to be successful in national competitions.
- Formal monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficient.
- ICT is infrequently used to extend learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Good	Good
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Good Very good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

122. Seventy per cent of students gained the higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2003 which is above the national average. The percentage achieving the highest grades A*-A also exceeded the national average. The lessons seen with students in Year 11 before they started their examination confirm that standards remain high. Middle and high-attaining students are able to develop individual ideas on a set theme and incorporate influences from important movements in art or of particular artists. Students' work utilises a wide variety of media and

materials and shows that they can effectively manipulate line, shape, colour and composition. Sketch books are annotated and used most effectively and technical language develops well.

123. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement because of the progress made in response to the challenging teaching seen. This includes students with special educational needs who also achieve well. These standards are reached because students are supported well and apply themselves purposefully. All students demonstrate competence in understanding the Cubist approaches to portraiture. The students produce line drawings that lead to large-scale pictures made in paint and collage in the style seen in Picasso's 'Guernica'.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good and very good in Year 10. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the three-part lesson. An introduction that includes lesson objectives motivates students for the practical part of the lesson. At the end of the lesson a review of what has been achieved engages students in their learning and leads them to work independently at home. Power Point presentations engage students especially. This has a positive effect on their learning about how to analyse artwork and make personal responses. When tasks do not challenge sufficiently, or are lacking pace, some students behave in an unacceptable way. The use of the highly effective technical support enhances the quality of teaching significantly. The full potential of ICT as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Assessment, in all its guises, is ensuring that all students achieve their full potential. Assessment has also informed the very good curriculum development.
125. Management of art and design is good. Leadership is very good. Measures taken since the previous inspection have driven current standards above the national average. The teaching of techniques, the use of formal elements and the analysis of contextual matters have all improved. The quality of teaching observational drawing has made the greatest contribution to raising standards overall. Departmental meetings are used well to constantly review the progress the department is making. The culture of constantly trying to improve teaching would be enhanced further by sharing good practice through more lesson observation and support.
126. Displays around the school set high standards. Extra-curricular activities, visits to galleries and contact with artists-in-residence have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. A group of talented students was involved in making a film in conjunction with the Cornerhouse Gallery in Manchester. The outcome was of such high quality that it won a £2000 prize for the school in the prestigious, national ARTSWORK competition in 2003.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers of drama have very good specialist expertise in the art and craft of the subject.
- Older students are good at taking responsibility for their own learning in drama.
- Most work in Years 10 and 11 is above average.
- The resources of two outstanding drama spaces are well used to enhance dramatic expression.
- Non-specialist teachers need more guidance and support to improve their practice.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Very good

Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

Commentary

127. Drama studios are places ‘where anything can happen’ – where imagination can thrive and issues can be explored through dramatic action. In this school two excellent drama spaces saw a Year 9 girl cut, with great care, a two-dimensional handbag out of newspaper and use it with effect as part of a costume exploring how people create ‘an image’. A group of Year 11 students with a clear grasp of dramatic conventions, used ritual to express a feeling of communal grief, another group skilfully controlled movement for the symbolic execution of a serial killer in an electric chair. Sometimes in the drama space, the teacher manages the drama by taking a role herself with Year 8 as a marshall controlling the public following some terrible disaster which served as a stimulus for students’ own sequence of tableaux of disasters of their own choice, man-made or natural, in which their respect for the impact showed great sensitivity. In Year 10, students showed how freeze-frames can stylise and compress thoughts and feelings into a focused moment, for example, about an hypocrisy in society - drama as a mirror of society in preparation for a study of the plays of Edward Bond.
128. Much of the work of the department has a sophistication that challenges the students. Students identified as gifted and talented play a demanding part in lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11. The quality of the work reflects the expertise of the drama teachers. They understand the subtleties of the subject well. They also use the resources of the studios effectively to heighten the dramatic experience – without fuss or hindrance bringing in lighting effects and music to enhance moments in the students’ drama. Teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, is often very good, and sometimes excellent, and makes challenging demands of students. Those with learning difficulties are given sensitive, unobtrusive support. Lessons are packed with purposeful activity. Questioning and probing by the teacher supports students with different learning needs. Teachers are constantly assessing how effective the learning is during the lesson and intervening when necessary to extend it further. Successful work is celebrated and students feel a sense of satisfaction at the end of most lessons. This is because they know they have achieved well and have had an opportunity to take control of their own learning. In Years 7 to 9 some teaching is insecure owing to the lack of specialist expertise of some teachers. The management of the department does not include enough ways of supporting these teachers.
129. Despite a dip in the examination results in 2003, the quality of work seen in lessons is generally reflected in GCSE examination results that are usually around or above the national average. There is scope to leap ahead of the average in examinations and the team of teachers is now sufficiently settled to show this capacity for improvement. They learn from each other, plan collaboratively and seek to improve their practice by sharing it when it is successful and analysing it together when it does not work so well. The timetable needs to ensure that the best use is made of this expertise and the department must support non-specialist teachers when they are needed as part of the drama teaching provision.
130. Extra-curricular provision is extensive with a range of drama clubs meeting at lunchtimes and after school. At the time of the inspection, students, many staff and governors were talking of the excellence of a very recent full-scale production of ‘West Side Story’.
131. Drama was seen as a strength of the school at the previous inspection. The present team of drama teachers has sustained a tradition of such quality in the subject.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching and learning.
- Extra-curricular activities and frequent performances provide very good opportunities for students' personal development.
- The accommodation has improved considerably since the previous inspection and that and good use of computers enhances students' learning.
- The assessment procedure needs to be clarified so that students and teachers use a common framework.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good Satisfactory Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

132. The head of department is new to the school this year. He inherits a good department and one that has improved well since the previous inspection. Standards are higher and results are improving, although entries at GCSE are too small to make valid national comparisons.
133. Students work hard in music lessons with considerable interest from the word go. They know what they are expected to achieve in well organised and planned lessons because the teachers tell them clearly. Teachers start the lessons with a lively activity designed to stimulate concentration. Frequently this is a short, sharp spell of rhythm work. Students understand and can read rhythmic notation well because they use the names of drinks to help with the patterns. Students relate these well to music notation and many in the higher years no longer need the words as props. There is plenty of practical work to do including composition, playing instruments and singing.
134. Sometimes there are too many activities in lessons to allow students' musical skills to develop effectively. This was particularly so in a Year 11 lesson, when students really needed more time and individual direction on how to improvise. Students sing with mixed success; girls are tuneful, boys not so much. They need more time to improve the quality. Students play the keyboards and other instruments well however.
135. Two teachers take two different approaches to helping students acquire designated musical skills. In one approach, they frequently rehearse and play as a class. Students hear how the music goes. They enjoy being part of such a good class sound and this motivates them strongly to keep going with the flow of the music. As a result, most make really good progress in the lesson.
136. In the other approach, students use their own instruments in group music-making. With many very competent musicians in the groups, the sound is very good. A drawback of this otherwise very good method of learning is that not all students are sufficiently challenged. This is because the teacher is occupied leading the playing. The teacher needs to be free to suggest and demonstrate more challenging approaches to lower attaining and some higher attaining

students. Using the first approach, rehearsing individually or in pairs, students play music that is more appropriate to challenge them.

137. Students are given good advice, listen to others and talk about the quality of their work in good class discussions, during and at the end of the lesson. Not all lessons include the opportunity for students to assess their work though. Taken in total, there is so much that is good in both approaches. Teachers could usefully incorporate aspects of both methods to give the students a more consistent experience of music.
138. The accommodation is now very good and no longer a barrier to students' learning. Students are provided with many opportunities to perform in and out of school for which the new head of department and assistant teacher have worked energetically to provide. The most recent events have been greatly appreciated performances of 'West Side Story' in which the standard was reputedly very high. In this healthy state, now is a good time to focus on plans to raise standards further through good teaching and learning, sharing good practice and for settling on a coherent and useful assessment strategy for all teachers and students.

Media Studies

Media studies is a popular GCSE option course and lessons were sampled as part of the inspection.

139. Standards are above average and students make good progress over the course. Students develop good critical skills in their studies of the various aspects of the media. Their knowledge of the subject and the quality of their practical work are above average. They express their ideas clearly both in speech and writing. Teaching is good and motivates students to work hard to improve their work. Standards could be improved if a wider range of learning resources were available.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE physical education are consistently well above average.
- An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities helps students to do well.
- Well planned, knowledgeable teaching helps students to learn well in lessons and achieve well overall.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well across the school.
- Students do not build secure skills in some activities in Years 7 to 9 because they are not taught over a long enough period.
- Checks on the quality of work across the department to identify strengths and areas for improvement are informal and best practice is not shared frequently enough.
- Outdoor play areas are in poor condition.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good

Quality of curriculum leadership	Good Satisfactory Satisfactory
Management of the department	
Improvement since the previous inspection	

Commentary

140. In Year 9, students' understanding of health and fitness is good and they confidently identify strengths and weaknesses in performance across most activities. In gymnastics and dance teachers successfully build on skills and themes common to both activities to ensure students reach average standards. Standards in games are more variable. The short amount of time that each activity is taught means that students do not always get a chance to build up secure skills. Netball and football are strong because a good proportion of students benefit from regular involvement in these activities outside lessons.
141. GCSE results in 2003 in the full and short course were well above the national average. More girls are taking GCSE than was the case at the previous inspection. Current standards in GCSE are well above average and students achieve very well. Students benefit from many opportunities to apply the theory in practical situations. Coursework is well informed by theory and students appreciate the individual support and tuition they receive from teachers. High standards in practical performance, especially in football and netball, help students to achieve well. In those lessons taken by all students in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average overall and are strongest in football. Students continue to have a good understanding of health and fitness.
142. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teachers work effectively with specialist assistants and teachers to provide support. Excellent extra-curricular provision helps students to achieve well and involves over one third of students in competitive sports, inter-form competitions and a wide range of recreational opportunities. Higher attaining and talented students benefit and students have represented the school at district, county and national level in a number of sports including cross-country running, netball and football. A small minority of older girls are not achieving well because they lack interest in some of the activities offered in Years 10 and 11.
143. Teachers' high expectations of students' conduct and learning lead to positive attitudes. Well-structured lessons set out the aims clearly and students know the purpose of activities. Clear demonstrations and probing questioning from knowledgeable teachers in most lessons help learning, for example, in discussing how skills are used strategically in games. Teachers pay good attention to developing students' skills in literacy and numeracy, especially in GCSE work. With the exception of GCSE practical work, assessment is not always used to give students a practical model of what they are aiming to achieve. In some lessons students are active but not required to think deeply enough. Many lessons do not start on time.
144. Good leadership provides a positive role model and is committed to high standards and ensures that all students, whatever their background or needs, benefit from the work of the department. Day-to-day organisation is good. Students' standards of kit and participation are high. Systems to check on the quality of the work, identify and share best practice in teaching and learning are informal and not focused enough on priorities. Although the accommodation is extensive, the outdoor hard play areas and the artificial playing area are in poor condition, some aspects of which are a health and safety risk. The lack of a dedicated teaching room for teaching GCSE restricts the range of resources in use.
145. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained in Year 10 and 11 but are lower in Years 7 to 9. Teaching remains good and extra-curricular provision has improved.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

146. **Business Studies** is a popular choice for students in Years 10 and 11. The subject tends to attract higher-attaining students and mainly boys. Standards of work are above the national average. The reason for this is some very good teaching and good management. Three business studies lessons were observed and in all lessons teaching was either good or very good. Teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve. Teachers plan interesting lessons and make good use of questioning skills to develop students' understanding. In the best lessons students were required to apply business theory to their own research areas in a range of different ways. Students respond well to the subject and demonstrated good understanding of customer care, business communications and finance.
147. The department is well managed by a committed head of department. Effective use is made of links with the local business community. In order to improve further, there needs to be a defined business studies area in the school with more wall displays.
148. **Health and social care** was sampled. In health and social care standards were overall average. Two lessons were seen. One was good in Year 11, but the other unsatisfactory in Year 10. In the good lesson work was well planned and successfully focused on extending students' knowledge of life stages. Achievement and learning was good. Poor standards of behaviour, motivation and activities insufficiently matched to the needs of some students, contributed to the underachievement in Year 10.
149. The **Leisure and Tourism** GCSE has tended to attract students of lower attainment. The department copes well with this and these students make good use of the visits to Manchester Airport and local leisure centre to develop their communication skills and their knowledge of industry. Their files, whilst lacking detailed work, are well kept and show their pride in the presentation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students in Years 7 to 9 show enthusiasm and interest in their work.
- There are good opportunities for students to participate in community links and record their activities.
- It is impossible to develop the full range of curriculum opportunities because there is insufficient time, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	average	below average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	good	good
Quality of teaching	good	good
Quality of learning	good	good
Quality of curriculum leadership	good	
Management of the department	good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	N/A	

Commentary

150. The planning for the introduction of citizenship shows creativity and clear understanding. As a result, students have very good opportunities to participate in a range of activities. There are residential visits in all years and geography fieldwork for all students in Years 7 and 8 that involves them in local planning and environmental issues. The school organised a successful mock election that involved the whole school. There are extensive opportunities for students to be involved with the school community through the positive work of the School Council, drama productions and assisting in the Resource Base.
151. Overall standards in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national expectations. In Years 10 and 11 standards are below the national expectations. By the end of Year 9, students effectively tackle issues that increase the knowledge and understanding they need to become informed citizens. For example, lessons on rights and responsibilities, democracy, local government and parenting encourage students to accept a responsible role in society. Visiting speakers, including magistrates, the police and parents, complement these lessons effectively.
152. The students have a very positive attitude to the school council, recognising it as a good example of democracy working in the local community. Year 10 students were very quick to list the successful outcomes of the work of the council.
153. By the end of Year 11, the substantial majority of students are able to understand the key elements of what it means to be a good citizen, within the school and in the wider community. This is reflected in the care that students show for the school site and the respect they have for all people in the school community. The participation in the local Youth Parliament and links with the Mayor are particularly successful.
154. Teaching is good, with imaginative tasks and sympathetic teachers. In Years 7 to 9, citizenship is taught in association with personal, social and health education and is only allocated one lesson per two weeks. In Years 10 and 11, it is taught in a carousel with religious education and personal, social and health education. This is unsatisfactory and does not allow teachers to fulfil their careful planning. It also limits the learning of students as continuity is interrupted and topics cannot be developed in sufficient depth. In Years 10 and 11 there is some confusion in the planning. Whilst topics such as human rights, challenging racism and the legal system are covered, they are not identified as a specific contribution to citizenship in planning documents. The self-assessment sheets and participation logs are very good in helping students to evaluate their own work and consider what makes a good citizen. However, there is no rigorous attempt to assess the knowledge and understanding of students.
155. The school, sensibly, has developed discrete units of work in citizenship and this has given a clear identity to the work that helps students' learning. An audit of departments has not yet been completed to ascertain which departments could also contribute to the overall teaching of citizenship. This is part of the current departmental development plan.

156. Notwithstanding the lack of time, the leadership and management of citizenship are good. The teacher in charge has shown imaginative leadership and provided good management of the resources and the time that have been allocated to citizenship. The responsibility to improve the provision rests in whole-school curricular design and planning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).