

## INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Fulwood, Preston

LEA area: Preston

Unique reference number: 119779

Headteacher: Mr N J Ranson

Lead inspector: Terence Parish

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Inspection number: 258722

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	954
School address:	St Anthony's Drive Fulwood Preston Lancashire
Postcode:	PR2 3SQ
Telephone number:	01772 726441
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Philip Rydeard
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils are a mix of local boys and girls and those that travel a fair distance to attend a Catholic school. Socio-economically the intake is average. Attainment on entry is also now average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and those who left last year were above average when they started at the school; there has been a slow change in the areas from which the school attracts pupils. Most pupils are white British; there are a few pupils in each of 11 other ethnic groups. No pupils are deemed as having English as a language not used in the home. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is a little above average; needs are fairly diverse and include dyslexia and emotional and behavioural disorders. Few pupils leave or start school at other than the ends and beginnings of years; most are in school for five years. The school has Investors in People award and a Sportsmark award. The school is overfull and accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7958	G. Lewis	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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30825	K. Hayton	Team inspector	Science
21806	P. Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology
32211	B. Geohegan	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
12408	A. Frith	Team inspector	Modern languages
30457	D. Evans	Team inspector	History
33002	J. Woodhouse	Team inspector	Geography
30899	K. Boden	Team inspector	Art and design; vocational work
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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>37</b>

**PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

**OVERALL EVALUATION**

**The school is fairly effective with significant strengths .** Much provision in subjects is good or better, but some weaknesses in teaching and learning make teaching and learning satisfactory overall rather than good; consequently pupils achieve satisfactorily overall rather than well. Attitudes and behaviour are also satisfactory overall. Weaknesses are being tackled systematically and improvements in systems, procedures, attitudes and teaching are clearly and quickly emerging. Consequently, leadership is good and management satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Many teachers are using new techniques well but unsatisfactory teaching and some generally satisfactory teaching has room for improvement so that pupils can learn better.
- Whilst most pupils often demonstrate good or better attitudes and behaviour, a minority let the school down with unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- Governors have not historically questioned shortfalls in the school's provision rigorously enough to help ensure rapid improvement; such evaluation is now improving.
- Despite governors' very good financial control, lack of money has slowed the pace of change and improvement, for example in provision for ICT.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well. More able pupils are also enabled to attain high GCSE grades.
- A large number of pupils participate successfully in sport, drama, community and Church related activities , helping talented pupils in particular to achieve well.
- Very good links with further education colleges help pupils on vocational courses to do very well. Careers guidance is also very good and 'Connexions' advice is effective.
- In Years 10 and 11 standards in ICT are below average and pupils achieve unsatisfactorily.

Though the performance of the most able has improved significantly, overall standards in GCSE examinations have declined slowly over the last four years; too many pupils were not entered for examinations. Attitudes and behaviour are not as good as those indicated six years ago, partly due to a change in the nature of pupils joining the school. Training and development in the last two years have led to a higher proportion of good or better teaching, though the proportion is still below that in most schools. National requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are still not met though they should be from September 2004. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

**STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

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

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

**Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall.** Standards are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and broadly above average in Years 10 and 11; achievement is satisfactory in both stages. Girls have attained significantly better at the end of Year 11 in the last three years; previously boys did better. Currently, the achievement of boys and girls is similar. Pupils with special educational needs and more able and talented pupils achieve well. Pupils on vocational courses achieve well. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve well in English and in mathematics. In Years 10 and 11, standards in ICT are below average and pupils achieve unsatisfactorily, whereas they achieve very well in art and design and in drama, and standards in modern languages are well above average. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development, are satisfactory overall;**

spiritual development is very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall and has significant strengths. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall;** they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Scattered across subjects in Years 7 to 9 there is some unsatisfactory teaching which leads to unsatisfactory learning. Many teachers are using techniques from the National Key Stage 3 strategy well and their lessons are often good or better. Learning in ICT in Years 10 and 11 is, overall, unsatisfactory. Teaching of modern languages and of drama is very good in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, however there is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. Very good links with further education institutions support vocational courses. There are extensive and very good links with the community, especially through support from employers and parish connections. Care, guidance and support are good; induction into Year 7 and guidance for examination options at the end of Year 9 are very good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good overall.** The leadership of the new headteacher is very good; management of curriculum areas is most often good and management of the school is satisfactory overall, as necessary improvements are just taking effect. The governance of the school is satisfactory; monitoring and evaluation have room for further development. The work of governors is hindered by relatively low funding and the accommodation, parts of which are poor. Statutory requirements for ICT are not met in Years 10 and 11 though governors have very effectively managed funds to provide the systems needed and a new course will commence in September 2004.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Almost all pupils answered an Ofsted questionnaire. Nine out of ten responses indicated pupils think they are taught well, and about three-quarters think that work is assessed helpfully and that worthwhile homework is set. One hundred and fifty one parents responded to their questionnaire. About four out of five indicated they consider teaching is good or better; most of the other parents did not know. Almost all said pupils were expected to work hard and about three quarters were happy with homework set. Between 20 and 30 parents and over half of the pupils indicated some dissatisfaction with behaviour. Pupils tended to be more positive when asked questions directly but inspectors broadly agree with the concerns some have.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Eradicate unsatisfactory teaching and continue to raise the quality of all teaching and learning.
- Continue to tackle the reasons for the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some pupils and reduce such incidences further.
- Governors should pursue more vigorously any unsatisfactory features or work in the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- National expectations for ICT need to be met.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Standards are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and broadly above average in Years 10 and 11. Boys' and girls' relative attainment varies from year to year at the end of Year 9 and is similar when considered over several years. Girls have attained significantly better at the end of Year 11 in the last three years. Years in which girls do particularly well generally follow on from when the same girls did well at the end of Year 9; at present, the achievement of boys and girls is similar.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve well in English and in mathematics .
- Pupils with special educational needs and more able and talented pupils achieve well.
- Pupils on vocational courses achieve well.
- In Years 10 and 11 standards in ICT are below average and pupils achieve unsatisfactorily.
- In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve very well in art and design and in drama; standards in modern languages are well above average.
- Overall standards in GCSE examinations have declined slowly in recent years.

#### Commentary

1. Standards of attainment, when pupils start at the school in Year 7, are currently a good average whereas they have been above average; the difference occurs around Year 9 – the standards of older pupils, including those who have recently left, were above average when they began; those of younger pupils average. The change took place over a number of years and is due to a shift in the proportions of pupils drawn from different demographic areas served by the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.4 (33.7)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.4 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.8 (34.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 192 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average overall; they were well above average in English, average in mathematics and science. Overall, pupils did well from their starting point in Year 7 but very good achievement in English masks underperformance in both mathematics and science. Compared to schools with similar social circumstances, results were average overall; they were well above average in English, well below average in mathematics and in science. The 2003 results overall were the same as those in the previous three years but English markedly improved, mathematics significantly declined and science slipped. Staffing difficulties in the year prior to the tests explain, to an extent, the decline in mathematics. These have now been resolved and standards in mathematics are now above average in Year 9, and pupils are achieving well, as they are in English. In science, standards are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Though standards are above average in several other subjects such as history, modern languages and music, in most subjects standards are average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall.



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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (87)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.3 (37.4)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 175 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. There has been a slow decline in overall GCSE results since a peak in 2000. Standards in GCSE results in 2003 were above average overall and for the proportion attaining five or more A\*-C grades. The proportion achieving no pass grades at all was higher than average and this can be linked to the relatively high numbers entered for certification below GCSE standards and also the minority of pupils entered for vocational qualifications which do not figure in statistical analysis of the school's results. Inspection judged that pupils currently on such vocational courses achieve at least well whilst the number of pupils not entered for GCSE in 2004 will be much smaller than in 2003. Standards in GCSE results in 2003 compared to the results of pupils elsewhere with similar prior attainment are statistically just above average. However, this result hides the fact that the proportion attaining five or more grades A\*-C was no more than average, and proportions attaining lower grades were lower than average. Compared with schools admitting pupils with similar social circumstances, pupils, overall, in this school did as well as might be expected and this analysis better fits how well pupils achieved - satisfactorily. Standards of current work are above average in English and in mathematics and average in science, above average across all subjects overall. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in English, mathematics and science, well in most other subjects, very well in art and design, and unsatisfactorily in ICT; they achieve satisfactorily overall.
4. Standards are well above average in modern languages, pupils achieving well from above average standards in Year 9 due to very good teaching. Art and design and drama are particularly successful at GCSE and pupils achieve very well in them. Design and technology was also successful in 2003. In ICT in Years 10 and 11 standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because the school has been slow to address issues identified at the time of the last inspection. Considering ICT has been part of the statutory curriculum for almost fourteen years, many pupils have achieved too little. The position should improve for current Year 9 pupils in September 2004 but nothing is planned to help raise the achievement of the current Year 10.
5. By Year 9, pupils with specific learning difficulties are making good progress. Pupils in a Year 9 class studying Macbeth showed good knowledge of the text; their reading ages are below their actual ages but they successfully participated in a game to revise their knowledge, reading extracts from the play. The good and sometimes very good support received in lessons helps pupils with special educational needs to achieve well; pupils in Years 7 to 9 make better progress as a result of the higher level of support available in these classes. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is impeded by the immature behaviour of a minority of pupils and the need for direct supervision much of the time. Even in smaller groups it is only as a result of the good management skills of teachers that progress is made. However, the work produced by pupils at the end of Year 11 is often of a higher standard than would be expected from their prior attainment and is the result of carefully prepared guidance in completing their examination coursework.
6. A whole school issue at the time of the last inspection was the then low proportion of pupils attaining the highest A\* and A grades at GCSE. The proportions are now above the national average; in 2003 both boys and girls attained more high grades than average, girls attained almost double the national proportion of A\* grades and one and half times the proportion of A

grades. The most able pupils are therefore able to achieve well though little evidence of this better achievement was seen in work during the inspection. Talented pupils also have plenty of opportunities in music and in sport as well as in drama and art and design and aspire to do well in all.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Attendance is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory overall; spiritual development is very good .

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make extensive use of provision for spiritual development and they participate well in school, social and community activities.
- Whilst most pupils often demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour, a minority let the school down with unsatisfactory attitudes and a few with occasionally poor behaviour.
- The school council is enabling the views and desires of pupils to be better understood.

### **Commentary**

7. The school's provision for the spiritual and moral development of pupils is extensive, including daily prayers, an on-site chapel and resident chaplain, religious education lessons throughout the curriculum and "Faith and Justice" workshop days. There is a strong emphasis in personal and social education lessons (PSE) lessons on judging right from wrong; there are wide ranging discussions on social and moral issues such as people's feelings and appropriate punitive sentences on offenders. These provisions result in pupils having a well developed sense of fairness and justice and compassion, as well as strong underlying religious values and beliefs.
8. Pupils have a good understanding about being part of a community and are widely involved in activities within the school and in the parish and in social activities too. They take on responsibilities such as prefect duties or leading prayers or as reception greeters. The school council is becoming increasingly effective at raising issues and pursuing the interests of pupils. Pupils do extensive charity work in support of international and national schemes as well as being involved with local senior citizens and youth schemes. They make good use of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available, achieving success on the sports field and in school performances and concerts.
9. However, neither extensive provision for spiritual and moral development nor community related activities result in overall good attitudes and behaviour in school; a significant minority do not live up to expectations of them. Cultural development is satisfactory overall; arts and community links aspects of it are much stronger. This inspection did not inspect religious education, where work related to people's beliefs and approaches to life undoubtedly goes on.
10. Most teachers work hard to achieve the expected high standards of attitudes and behaviour. Lessons commence and end with pupils standing quietly, attention to work is encouraged, and any signs of poor behaviour are most often addressed quickly. Visible signs of conformance to expectations, such as wearing correct uniform and not dropping litter or chewing gum, are being firmly enforced. There is discussion about the negative effects of poor behaviour and bullying issues in PSE lessons, and the religious ethos of the school provides a constant base supporting the school's work. There is a high level of exclusions- mainly fixed term and of short duration - but numbers have fallen significantly since the equivalent period last year. This is despite the recent policy change which will not tolerate any violence of any kind now; all pupils involved in a fracas are suspended. The school expects that, as the new behaviour policies become more understood and accepted, this situation will reduce still further and inspectors agree with that view.

11. A substantial proportion of pupils feel that other children do not behave well and feel also that bullying is an issue. A small number of parents also feel that there is some bullying at the school. Recognising this situation, the school is currently carrying out its own survey about bullying, with the help of the school council, encouraging pupils to name the ones carrying out the bullying and then dealing with those pupils. Indications are that bullying is at name-calling and annoyance level rather than physical. Pupils' smoking, particularly in toilets, disturbs many other pupils and is known about by teachers. Smoking took place during the inspection in both toilets and on the school grounds. It was also noted that too much litter is dropped, sometimes being put down toilets.
12. In lessons pupils are mostly well behaved and keen to answer questions, or be involved in activities, when given opportunities to do so. However, there is a minority who misbehave and talk in some lessons, causing teachers to spend time correcting this behaviour at the expense of the learning of others. In a few lessons remonstrations by teachers do not always control misbehaviour.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year – 2002/03 (%)**

	Attendance	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
School data	92.1	7.3	0.6
National data	91.7	7.3	1.1

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

13. Attendance was good during 2002/3, and during the autumn term there was an improvement to 92.5% attendance.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	903	143	5
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	8	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall and has significant strengths. Teaching and learning are satisfactory; the curriculum is satisfactory; care, guidance and support are good; the partnership with parents, other schools and the community is very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; they are satisfactory in Years 7 -9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is satisfactory across all years.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9 there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching which leads to unsatisfactory learning.
- Some generally satisfactory teaching has room for improvement so that pupils can learn better.
- Teaching and learning in most subjects are good despite weaknesses in some of the teaching across the school.
- Many teachers are using techniques from the National Key Stage 3 strategy well and their lessons are often good or better.
- Learning in ICT in Years 10 and 11 is, overall, unsatisfactory.
- Teaching of modern languages is very good in Years 10 and 11.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 126 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	25 (20%)	53 (42%)	43 (34%)	5 (4%)	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.*

14. Almost all pupils answered an OFSTED questionnaire. Nine out of ten responses indicated pupils think they are taught well, and about three-quarters think that work is assessed helpfully and that worthwhile homework is set. One hundred and fifty one parents responded to their questionnaire. About four out of five responses indicated that teaching is considered good or better; most of the other parents did not know. Almost all parental responses said pupils were expected to work hard and about three quarters were happy with homework set.
15. Teaching and learning are good in many subjects across all years and satisfactory in the rest except for learning of ICT in Years 10 and 11. Though learning is satisfactory in ICT lessons that are taught, because not all pupils have them, their learning about uses of ICT, through increasing their skills and competence, is unsatisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics in all years and in English in Years 10 and 11. Compared with the previous inspection, teaching and learning are better in art and design and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11; they have improved to good in art and design due to better specialist teaching, and to good in design and technology as some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7-9 is no longer present. Teaching and learning have also improved in modern languages, this time from good to very good. Drama was only sampled but work seen in progress and success in examinations indicates teaching and learning are at least good.
16. The proportions of unsatisfactory teaching and of very good or better teaching are in line with the national picture of all secondary schools. However, the proportion of good teaching is 17 per cent less whilst the proportion of satisfactory teaching is 16 per cent more. Unsatisfactory teaching was all in Years 7 to 9 and spread across English, mathematics, science, design and

technology and ICT; though only five lessons, this was eight per cent of lessons seen in these years. A lack of pace and challenge, few activities to engage pupils, and some deterioration in pupils' behaviour were characteristic of these lessons. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour also occurred in some lessons judged satisfactory but were either better controlled, involved fewer pupils or disrupted less of the lesson. Some otherwise satisfactory lessons also had too few activities planned and did not prepare well for the range of ability in classes; more able pupils were more frequently not challenged rather than relatively lower attainers not coping with the work. Very good lessons were characterised by very good planning, varied but well linked activities and opportunities for pupils to work alone and in groups as well as listening to the teacher. Enthusiasm by teachers was also transferred to pupils who worked at a brisk pace, and attitudes to learning were good or better. In both very good and good lessons teachers used techniques from the National Key Stage 3 strategy better, for example the 'three-part lesson'. Starter activities were particularly strong and some plenaries brought in good assessment practice and pupils gained understanding of how well they were doing against both the intentions of the lesson and national expectations. In the middle part of the lessons, the activities designed to enable pupils to learn new material were sometimes weaker, lacking range in type or depth.

17. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 for a variety of reasons. Some teachers, whose lessons in Years 7 to 9 had significant weaknesses, do not teach in Years 10 and 11; some teachers who have classroom management problems with full classes of lively and/or challenging younger pupils come into their own with well motivated older pupils in examination classes; and older pupils are generally more tractable than younger ones and certainly respond well to good lessons in courses they have chosen to follow. Inspection does not allow judgements about teaching by non-school staff off site but in the few activities seen at a local college pupils were enthused about their work and were achieving at least well.
  
18. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Marking is most often competent and reasonably useful to pupils. School managers sample books and scrutinise marking and this helps standards to be similar across the school. There is variable practice in informing pupils about how well they are doing; some teachers do it better within lessons than others, some written comments are more useful. The school's assessment system does not yet extend to providing individual learning targets to pupils. Previously to September 2003 inadequate or inappropriate assessment led to too many pupils being entered for certificate qualifications rather than GCSE; consequently statistical analysis of results shows them too often to be weaker than they should be. This situation has now been resolved; almost all pupils will be entered for GCSE in 2004.
  
19. Insufficient support for pupils with special educational needs was reported in the previous inspection. Support is now good. Withdrawal into support lessons at the time of the previous inspection meant pupils regularly missed the same mainstream lessons. Withdrawal has now been minimised and organised so that few lessons are missed and never the same lesson. Learning support continues to be effectively managed and good use is made of resources. Pupils with very low ability are taught in small groups and this ensures that they make good progress and develop writing and reading skills more quickly than they might in larger classes. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs was at least satisfactory in most lessons seen and often good. Where teaching was good or better teachers used pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to guide their lesson preparation. The IEPs have a pen picture of each child which better informs the staff teaching them; they are individual to each pupil and set learning targets and advise teachers of strategies likely to help pupils meet those targets. Teachers also made good use of high quality support assistance when it was available. This was particularly significant in design and technology where one assistant has specific skills in technology which were used to assist Year 10 and 11 pupils with their GCSE practical work. Teachers have received advice on teaching strategies for pupils with special educational needs and, where these were adopted, pupils were engaged and did not need constant supervision. Where teachers persisted in using a mainly teacher-led approach, with little variety in presentation or activity, pupils became distracted and needed more correction.

## The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular work are very good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory; staffing and resources are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements for National Curriculum ICT are not met in Years 10 and 11, but the provision of vocational courses in those years is very good.
- There is a high degree of successful pupil participation in sport, drama, community activities and Church related activities, such as retreats.
- There are very good links to further education institutions.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs which enables them to participate in opportunities available to all pupils.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and the library is poor; it does not support independent learning effectively enough.

### Commentary

20. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and developments have taken place to expand teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 9 with good participation in the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 strategy, but this has not helped to ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their statutory National Curriculum ICT entitlement. A lack of money has hindered ICT developments; all Year 10 pupils will take an applied GCSE course in September 2004 but Year 11 will still not receive their entitlement. A vocational curriculum, including college link courses, has been provided for many years and is already well in advance of such provision now developing in many other schools; provision is very good in this school. The school is also looking to provide a better curriculum which allows pupils more easily to pick and mix vocational subjects and more traditional subjects when in Years 10 and 11. Though the current vocational work is available to any pupils to choose it, higher attaining pupils have historically not done so. This is in part due to restrictive option patterns and the school is putting a new, innovative, option package together for September 2004. Currently, there is a broad and balanced curriculum that supports good achievement in most subjects. There is good breadth in design and technology although pupils do not have the opportunity to choose textiles in Years 10 and 11. Able linguists are able to pursue two modern languages, and do so successfully. Reviews in the mathematics department have led to a new course that is more suited to pupils' strengths.
21. In Year 9, preparation for courses in Years 10 and 11 is good with careers support and options information taught well within the PSE programme. Working independently, pupils also use ICT well to examine their preferences and identify strengths using careers related software. Local colleges work very well with the school, both to support the vocational curriculum and also to help prepare pupils for becoming post-16 students. The school also participates in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme, which is successful at motivating pupils to some independent work and fosters an interest in business.
22. The range and quality of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are very good. Levels of involvement are high and many members of staff give a lot of time in planning and providing a varied programme. Many subject areas, including sport, drama, music, science, design technology and ICT, provide clubs or support classes at lunchtimes and after school so that pupils can develop their interests and abilities. Pupils have a good record of success in extra-curricular sport and the school has gained the national Sportsmark award. An annual musical play, overseen by the drama and music departments, involves pupils in providing the orchestra and choir, as well as the actors. Beneficial trips and visits to places of particular interest stimulate pupils' interest in history, art and modern languages. These include visits to sites of local historical significance, art galleries and museums. The exchange programme with a school at Chaville in France has run successfully for thirty years and provides a fine

opportunity for pupils to practise their skills, both linguistic and social. The curriculum in citizenship and history provides a range of activities, some of which take place on designated days, involving local and international visiting speakers, including holocaust survivors. There is a chaplaincy programme in tutorial time, which is supplemented by retreats for all pupils, during which they reflect on topical issues and deal with important challenges such as the resolution of conflict. Opportunities to contribute within the school community include the prefect system, library duties and the school council, which pupils run, gaining first hand experience of how democracy works.

23. Pupils with special educational needs are able to participate fully in the life of the school through a combination of good specialist support in and out of mainstream classrooms and college link courses available to them in Years 10 and 11.
24. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in many respects. Money has been made available to upgrade the unsatisfactory art and design and physical education facilities; work is due to commence in February 2004. The dining arrangements whereby four classrooms have to be vacated prior to lunch time affects learning in those subjects because pupils miss time before and after lunch. It is also an unsuitable arrangement for dining; people should not have to eat where others work and vice versa. Science facilities are old and worn, sometimes hinder teaching and learning directly, and do not help make anyone enthusiastic about science. There is a shortfall of four classrooms within the school which necessitates more movement and sharing of rooms than is desirable. Vocational subjects do not have their own facilities and this restricts the integrated use of ICT in pupils' learning. The library is very small, can only carry a very limited stock and its use has to be rotated to allow pupils access; consequently it does not help pupils learn independently well enough. The music practice room situated below modern foreign languages means language lessons are disturbed by pupils practising their instruments.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' care and welfare are good overall. Pupils are provided with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. Pupils' views are now well considered and acted on.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a wide ranging support provision which provides good pastoral care.
- Induction into Year 7, guidance for examination options at the end of Year 9, and careers guidance are all very good.
- There is not enough consistent application of test and examination information to assist pupils to know how they should improve their work or produce academic targets for them during the school year.
- Some health and safety issues need addressing.

### **Commentary**

25. Pupils like being at school. Parents feel that their children are treated fairly. There is a comprehensive and effective network of adults responsible for care of pupils; for example, there is a chaplain, a mentor, and a youth worker in addition to heads of year and form tutors. Child protection procedures are very good. In contrast, there are some health and safety issues within some specialist teaching areas and around the school. For example, some areas are dirty, some pupils eat in toilets, some certainly smoke there, and soap is not available in toilets; classrooms have to be used as dining areas because there are no proper dining facilities. The school has drawn attention to the poor state of accommodation to various authorities on numerous occasions. Inspectors agree that the worn and inadequate condition of much of the accommodation, coupled with funding which is below average, makes it impossible for the school to provide care and welfare as effectively as it would like.

26. Induction of pupils into Year 7 is very good and parents commented favourably on it. Visits to new pupils are made by staff and current pupils to explain the way the school works, reading work is set, and the individual circumstances of pupils are discussed with their primary school teachers. Year 6 pupils visit for a lesson in ICT, and prayers. Older pupils help the newcomers settle in September. Each of Years 7 to 11 has a year head who co-ordinates the work of form teachers and is responsible for the care of pupils in that year. Pupils are most often passed from one year head to another as they get older; this does not provide the continuity of care most often seen and recognized as good practice in other schools.
27. Pupils also get very good guidance, in Year 9, about option choices for Year 10 and 11. A significant element of this was coming to fruition as the inspection closed; following intensive work in PSE lessons with pupils, parents had an evening of discussion. Pupils analyse their personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as their hopes for lifestyle, and contrast these with information about potential earnings and work expectations for different careers. Support from local employers and colleges is provided and used appropriately with both pupils and parents. Careers guidance for when pupils leave at 16 is very good; the partnership with the Connexions service is very effective and significant numbers of pupils enter modern apprenticeships, for example.
28. Though there are substantial records about pupils' attainments and their results in various tests, held both centrally and distributed to all teachers at the start of the year, such information is not used consistently nor well enough to inform pupils about how well they are doing or set new learning targets for them. Consequently it is harder for pupils to achieve better than they do. There are some examples of good practice: assessment books in mathematics help pupils know what they can do; helpful comments are included with much science marking; National Curriculum attainment levels are beginning to be shared with pupils in history; opportunities for self assessment are increasing in art and design and they are used well in music; and unusually, assessment procedures are well thought out in citizenship, though their use is inconsistent across departments which teach it.
29. The school council is increasingly involved in seeking the opinions and views of pupils and feels that due notice is being taken of it both from a basic level, such as toilet paper now being provided, and at a deeper level, such as the headteacher's pursuance of what they perceive as bullying.

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

Partnerships with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good. Links with parents are satisfactory.

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

- Links with other schools and colleges support the development of pupils well.
- There are extensive links with the community, especially through support from employers and parish connections.
- Links with parents are good in many aspects but let down by inadequate annual pupil progress reports.

#### **Commentary**

30. The school works effectively with local colleges to provide vocational courses in which pupils receive expert tuition and the use of professional facilities from which they learn well; a course on interior design is well supported by pupils in the evenings, for example. Colleges support careers choices at the school and open evenings and PSE lessons as well as running "taster days". The Connexions service also provides very good support for careers advice.



31. Local employers offer work experience, modern apprenticeship schemes and also circulate employment vacancy notices to the school. Some employers also provide educational and work opportunities for pupils who are at risk of being excluded from school. Pupils at the school carry out extensive collections for charity, some of which benefits local parish communities, and pupils work at homes for senior citizens and organise parties for them. The school's St Vincent de Paul Society youth work group also help pupils at primary schools after school. A link youth worker visits school daily to ensure older pupils are aware of youth opportunities and also assists with their organisation of annual retreats for Year 10 and 11 pupils. All these opportunities have a good impact on pupils' personal development.
32. Local priests provide good support by coming in to school to support the chaplain with assemblies and prayers. A link worker from Venezuela - working with the local parish - is providing cultural awareness of her home country.
33. Regular information is provided to parents through a broad range of newsletters and general reports. The school, in conjunction with a local college, provides computer and mathematics courses for parents. Parents are supportive when requested to help with drama productions or fund raising or with other events and there is an active Parent Teacher Association. Most parents feel that the school seeks their views, gives advice about how parents can help their children and are comfortable about approaching the school if they have any concerns. The sample of annual reports to parents, seen during the inspection, do not provide sufficient clear, consistent information about pupils' achievements and progress, particularly what pupils need to do to improve.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governance of the school is satisfactory, though statutory requirements in ICT are not yet fully met. The leadership of the school is good overall and management is satisfactory; the leadership of the new headteacher is very good and his new management strategies are very good but are not yet fully effective. The school receives less money per pupil than average and this, coupled with poor accommodation in parts of the school, hinders improvement of provision.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers, managers and governors are fully behind the drive for improvement which is very well led by the headteacher.
- Financial control is very good and best value very well sought.
- Senior managers provide very good role models to staff and pupils.
- Good academic performance data is not used well enough to promote the improvement of individual pupils' achievement.
- Governors have not questioned shortfalls in the school's provision rigorously enough, nor have ensured weaknesses in teaching have been adequately recorded to help ensure improvement.
- Tight finances make curriculum changes and staff recruitment difficult and hinder and delay necessary improvements to accommodation.

### **Commentary**

34. The governing body has the interests of pupils and staff at heart and ensures that a Catholic ethos is upheld in the school. Governors also were clear in what was needed in a new headteacher and have supported changes brought in since his appointment. In this they have helped shape the future direction of the school. They have clearly recognised weaknesses the school has: some unsatisfactory teaching; aspects of behaviour; and omissions to the curriculum. However, in the past, they have been remiss in not challenging such weaknesses effectively enough and moving the school forwards. Consequently the new headteacher has had to act swiftly to tackle these issues and has been hindered by a lack of written evidence about, for example, unsatisfactory teaching. Governors are now clearer about their evaluation and monitoring role and have taken it in hand. They have always given full support to

supporting community, drama and sporting activities as well as numerous committees which help ensure the school is inclusive and provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Governors have also done remarkably well in ensuring a well balanced budget which has never gone into the 'red' even in recent challenging times. This is indicative of very good adherence to 'best value' principles – ensuring resources are well directed and used, for example very successful links with further education. Governors have fought a long battle about poor accommodation and have succeeded in refurbishing some and more will be completed shortly after the inspection. However, major difficulties remain, particularly related to dining, science, and lack of classrooms; the relatively low level of funding the school attracts prevents governors from addressing these issues and the school is hindered from improving on many fronts.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,488,479	Balance from previous year	1,686
Total expenditure	2,454,892	Balance carried forward to the next	21,000
Expenditure per pupil	2,584		

35. The new headteacher has very quickly established what needs to be done to improve the school and has put in train a set of actions designed to raise standards of behaviour, improve teaching and learning, raise achievement and lift standards. He has done this by immediately tackling smaller issues of concern such as conformity to school uniform and chewing gum disposal and ensuring rules and systems about behaviour, which have been in place for some time, are consistently followed by staff. Overlaying this has been a more rigorous approach to improving teaching and learning, picking up on actions taken since the last inspection. In addition, an ongoing review of the curriculum and greater flexibility in timetabling should allow the school's strength in vocational work and college links to be made better available to all pupils. More flexible 'setting' of pupils by ability has also reduced some constraints on curriculum development caused by relatively low staffing; the school is about five teachers down compared to many similarly sized schools because of relatively low funding. In all these new and further developments, the headteacher is well supported by senior managers and the newly organised administrative and finance team. There are fewer managers than in many schools and all teach for significant amounts of the school week. As they do this well, often very well, they provide good role models for other staff, and through attention to detail, hard work and fairness, very good role models for pupils. Good leadership also predominates across subject and pastoral areas and the headteacher was instrumental in extending the school leadership group to include key managers so issues relating to teaching and learning and the curriculum, for example, could be taken up by more people. This move also helped to address the male/female imbalance at senior management level.
36. The school has collected data about pupils' academic performance and made it available to all teachers for some years. Teachers can use this alongside departmental records to anticipate pupils' potential and some departments do this quite well. However, such information is not used to set individual targets for pupils until quite late in Year 11; for example targets based on end of Year 9 national test results, routinely created in many schools, are not commonplace in this school. Trials of such analysis and target setting are beginning. What was clear to the new headteacher, upon analysis of results, is that too many pupils, prior to 2004, were being entered for 'certificate' qualifications rather than full GCSE's, on the grounds that they appeared unlikely to do well in the latter. Better use of academic data for individuals rather than classes or year groups should ensure they are appropriately entered for the right course and level of examination. Finance, or lack of it, militates against the school following through intensively with individual target setting as there is no money to pay for pupil mentors who are adults used elsewhere to support and cajole pupils to meet their targets. Monitoring of departmental performance, from examination results, book scrutiny, and some direct

observation, has been extended and action points for improvement agreed. These will allow for review of performance in the future.

37. Performance management of teachers has proceeded along national guidelines in recent years. However, there has been limited observation of lessons, partly due to high teaching loads not releasing time for it, and there is little evidence that the small proportion of obviously inadequate teaching has been picked up on until comparatively recently. The new teaching and learning policy will enable performance management to be linked to school criteria for improving both. Staff development has not been extensive but the focus on teaching and learning has accelerated it. Work involving the use of ICT has paid off and the use of computers in many areas is quite healthy. New staff are well cared for as are trainee teachers. The school has a long history of involvement with teacher trainers and is now successfully involved with the graduate teacher training programme. Recruitment causes occasional difficulties, for example in mathematics several years ago, but not as much as in many schools. It would be appropriate to recruit more staff but funding is tight; some key people are needed, for example a dedicated ICT co-ordinator and an extra person in senior management. Staff workloads are managed as well as possible within the constraints of staffing, all staff contributing well. Contrary to many teachers doing less work outside the classroom, for example supervising pupils at lunchtime, significant numbers of teachers in this school have taken on more.
38. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) leads and manages well and is committed to raising achievement. The SENCO provides a very good role model for all who teach pupils with special educational needs; good working relationships are fostered with sometimes very difficult pupils because of the high level of care and respect shown in the department. The support team meets regularly to discuss pupils' progress and to review their IEPs and the methods used to meet their needs. The organisation of pupils' records is an area for development. The SENCO teaches and has a limited amount of time available for administrative duties and no administrative support. Any time available is spent preparing for pupils' annual reviews and the regular IEP reviews of pupils on the special educational needs register.

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

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

English and French were both inspected fully. German was sampled. The school teaches German to high attaining pupils in Year 9, providing a very good opportunity for talented pupils to stretch themselves, and offers it to them as an option in Years 10 and 11. GCSE standards were well above the national average in 2002 and 2003, when all candidates gained grade C or higher, doing better overall in German than in the average for all their other subjects. Provision is very good and the attitudes of pupils towards the subject in Years 10 and 11 are excellent. The courses are very well planned and meet the needs of the target group very well. Taught in small groups, pupils learn very well and lessons are conducted primarily in German. Strengths and weaknesses are similar to those found in French, but pupils make slightly greater use of ICT, as they have access to a website where their teachers post exercises and puzzles.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Standards and results are above average.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- A minority of pupils, mostly in Years 7 and 8, have unsatisfactory attitudes to learning.

#### **Commentary**

39. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were better than those in 2002. The trend over the last three years is one of steady improvement. Results in 2003 were higher in standard than the work being done in the current Year 9 as the prior attainment of last year's Year 9 was higher. Test results in 2003 were much better than they were in similar schools.
40. GCSE results for 2003 in both English and English literature were above average compared to those in other schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-C grade was above average in both subjects. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-G grade was slightly below average in both subjects; this was due to some pupils not being entered for GCSE. Results were down slightly overall on those of 2002, but most pupils did at least as well in English subjects as in their other subjects.
41. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average and pupils achieve well given that they join the school with average levels of attainment. Their reading skills are not as strongly developed as their writing skills, however. A small minority, mostly in Years 7 and 8, do not listen well in lessons and their behaviour reduces the impact of good teaching. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average; this represents satisfactory achievement, given the fact that they were above average on entry to Year 10. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or of different groups of pupils. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they achieve at least as well as other pupils. The attitudes to learning of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are better than those in the lower part of the school.

42. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. There is a strong team of teachers whose knowledge of the subject is good. Teachers use resources and support staff well and structure their lessons appropriately. For example, a very good Year 11 lesson helped pupils to appreciate the language of a love poem and to assess what is needed to achieve a particular grade in the GCSE examination by looking at some exemplar work. Other good lessons were seen involving the use of computers and an interactive whiteboard to help organise teaching and learning better. Relationships with pupils are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9; not every teacher has the strategies for dealing with immature behaviour. Homework is set regularly and done well. Work is marked thoroughly, although assessment could be still more focused on individual needs so that pupils know how further to improve.
43. Leadership and management are good. The head of English has only been in post for a few months, but is an experienced and knowledgeable practitioner who has already made an impact on the department. There is a clear sense of direction and an increasing sense of teamwork. The quality of teaching and learning is being monitored, and the department is moving towards a sharper evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. It benefits from a suite of rooms around the English office; one of the rooms is equipped with computers and another has a data projector and whiteboard, so there is potential for exchange of rooms to maximise the use of new technologies. Curricular opportunities are rich: aspects of citizenship are included and the subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. All pupils now have the opportunity to take GCSE examinations in English and English literature.
44. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is now lower, which is reflected in standards, but teaching and learning are now better and leadership and management are more focused. The accommodation and learning resources for English are now much better than they were.

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

45. Pupils at the school, taken overall, do not have significant problems with literacy. They are able to access all parts of the taught curriculum. Reading skills are less well developed than writing skills, and limited access to the library does not help this situation. Speaking and listening skills could be better developed in some areas, where teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to speak at length.
46. The literacy co-ordinator is currently on leave, but the documentation available shows that staff are well supported in promoting better writing in particular, and have had appropriate training. There is a wide selection of material to show how each subject area can improve literacy at word, sentence and text level. Subject specific writing frames are available and good exemplar material of different kinds of text. Some subjects have embraced these methods with enthusiasm. Writing frames are in use in history, and speaking and listening skills are developed in a range of ways, including drama and role play. Modern foreign languages teachers have no qualms about using grammatical terms such as 'past participle' or 'infinitive' and reinforce concepts such as 'connectives' that are covered well in English lessons. Other subjects are at an earlier stage: design and technology teachers, for example, are due to introduce the literacy strategy properly in the very near future, as part of a rolling programme of addressing the policy across the curriculum.

#### **French**

Provision in French is **very good**.

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

- In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good and pupils achieve significantly better results than they do in other subjects.

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Access to ICT has improved, but is not yet consistent, and neither have pupils developed enough independent working.

### Commentary

47. Almost all pupils in Year 11 took GCSE French in 2003 and achieved significantly better results in this GCSE than they did in the average for all their other subjects. These results are consistent with those achieved in recent years. When results in their other subjects are considered, boys did comparatively better in French than did girls. Levels achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 are also above average. Standards seen in lessons are above average in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieve well in French in all year groups and achieve very well overall. There is good provision for pupils of all ages with special educational needs and they achieve well. In almost all lessons observed, pupils worked to their full capacity and made very good progress.
48. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. A particular strength is pupils' ability to speak and write at length. Teachers plan lessons efficiently, with clear, attractive resources, and provide plenty of practice with the spoken language, using French for large parts of every lesson. The link with the French school near Paris provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to use their language skills in an authentic context. In most cases, teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and generate good attitudes towards the subject. They mark pupils' work conscientiously, correcting errors and giving useful guidance, but they do not give enough information on National Curriculum attainment levels in Years 7 to 9 or the GCSE standards achieved during the course in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are generally aware of how well they are doing, but only the higher attaining ones know how to improve and very few learn to work independently. ICT is used to help pupils to learn but not consistently well by all teachers
49. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides a clear vision for the teaching of modern languages, very well supported by documentation and planning. All teachers have high expectations and most practice, such as the use of French in lessons and marking, is consistent. All teachers work very well as a team and are very willing to innovate, taking on and developing new ideas. The department analyses its strengths and weaknesses, monitoring performance data and taking action. The development plan includes appropriate priorities, including ICT and independence, though the latter deals only with literacy and not the more general skills of independent learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are higher, teaching is better, the needs of the most and least able pupils are met and boys' achievement has improved. Access to ICT is still below what is expected.

### MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good teaching and high expectations help pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Relatively lower attaining pupils in classes make less progress than their more able peers; work is not well matched to their particular needs.
- Leadership and management are good; effective monitoring of teaching and learning and appropriate changes to the curriculum contribute to good improvement.
- ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.

## Commentary

50. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average, lower than in the previous two years, when results were well above national averages. The decline in standards coincided with a time of staffing difficulties for the department. Results in 2003 do not match the standard of work seen because staffing problems have now been resolved and standards are improving again. Test results in 2003 were well below those of similar schools because of these difficulties, whereas in 2002 and the previous three years, results had been high in comparison.
51. GCSE results in 2003 were above average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades was above national figures. When compared with similar schools, GCSE results were slightly lower than might be expected. Boys' results were poorer than those of girls because, the school says, of a decline in attitudes to work of a significant minority of boys. Results in 2003 were similar to those in 2002 at A\*-C levels and the proportion of pupils who passed, achieving levels A\*-G, rose slightly. The trend over the last three years shows consistent performance as appropriate deployment of teachers ensured minimum disruption to GCSE work during the staffing turbulence.
52. Standards of work in Years 8 and 9 are above average; pupils entered the school with average standards and they achieve well, with little difference between the achievement of girls and boys. By Year 9, pupils of average attainment can multiply two basic algebraic equations, although they cannot yet analyse more complex ones.
53. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, with the attainment of a significant number of pupils being well above average. Current Year 11 pupils entered Year 10 with well above average standards and overall pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, girls perform better than boys do because their attitudes to work continue to be more positive. By Year 11, pupils of average attainment can draw appropriate and sometimes complex graphs but are not secure at using mathematical rules of similar complexity. Higher attainers plot graphs of quite complex mathematical functions and lower attainers cope well solving straightforward equations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as early identification of their needs ensures that they receive effective support throughout their time in school.
54. Overall, pupils achieve well because of teachers' high expectations and challenging lessons. However the support of teaching and learning through the use of ICT is not consistent. The department is developing its expertise in this area through ongoing weekly training sessions for teachers. However, in a significant number of lessons in all years, relatively low attainers, in whatever ability 'set' they are in, do not achieve as well as most of the pupils in the class because work is not matched well enough to their needs.
55. Teaching and learning are good overall and have improved since the previous inspection. In a challenging and effective Year 7 lesson based on substituting numerical values into algebraic expressions, the teacher maintained the high motivation of pupils through the variety of methods used. These included the use of individual whiteboards in the starter session and application and rehearsal of relevant skills as part of a board game devised by the teacher. The enjoyment and motivation of the pupils resulted in good learning overall. In contrast, in an unsatisfactory lesson, the behaviour of a minority of challenging pupils and the insecure management skills of the teacher resulted in a slow pace of lesson where increasing numbers of pupils lost motivation. In Year 11, a very good, challenging lesson was based on the application of trigonometry in problem solving; clear explanations, effective questioning of pupils, a good pace, good use of the interactive whiteboard and very good pupil management resulted in very good learning. In contrast, in a less successful lesson, explanations and questions were not as clear and the teacher had to provide significant individual support when pupils were working on their own in order to ensure satisfactory learning.
56. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but marking often does not help pupils to know what they have to do to improve. The use of assessment books helps pupils to know what they can do,

but the link to National Curriculum attainment levels is not made. Teachers support pupils' literacy development satisfactorily through the use of key words and objectives displayed in lessons. However opportunities to enhance speaking and listening skills through pupils reporting back in plenary sessions are missed. Opportunities are taken to relate pupils' learning to everyday life as, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on percentages.

57. Leadership and management are good. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning enables the head of department to respond promptly to any issues. Some middle and lower attaining pupils, for example, are now following a modular GCSE course and this has raised motivation and improved achievement; more pupils have improved their target grade to a 'C'. Weekly lessons for higher attainers, in conjunction with other schools, ensure that pupils have time and experiences necessary to consolidate the high standard of work necessary for A or A\* grades at GCSE. The accommodation, in a purpose designed block, is good and enables teachers to support each other and share good ideas on a day-to-day basis. Good quality displays in the block celebrate pupils' work and also provides pupils with background information on famous mathematicians over the centuries, contributing to pupils' cultural development. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Pupils' good standards of numeracy support work in other subjects well when required. Since the previous inspection awareness of numeracy has been raised by whole school training sessions for teachers. Each department has now a link member of the mathematics department to approach for discussion and a recently appointed teacher has been given the responsibility of co-ordinating provision. There is good practice evident in some subjects, for example, in science through work on levers, moments of forces and heat loss. Here, the demands of graphical work are designed to meet the needs of pupils' varying levels of attainment. In physical education there are also examples of good practice; health and fitness testing and the subsequent analysis of data make good use of pupils' skills of tabulation and graphical interpretation. Unusually, art and design develops pupils' numeracy well through consideration of size and shapes, for example. However, opportunities to enhance learning and reinforce numeracy skills are often missed.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

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

- There is a hard-working and committed team of teachers who are led well.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities for involvement in lessons and independent study.
- Work schemes are thorough and helpful.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

59. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. Results in 2003 were poorer than the previous two years because they were significantly affected by the absence of staff through illness. Test results in 2003 were below those in similar schools but the standard of current Year 9 work is above average; staffing is currently stable and the use of the National Key Stage 3 strategy has improved teaching and learning for these pupils.
60. In 2003, GCSE results were above average compared to those in all schools. When compared to similar schools, GCSE results were as good as might be expected. Boys' results were low compared with girls' results because, the school says, the attitude of the boys in that year was less positive. Results in 2003 were poorer than in 2002 but over three years results are pretty similar. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades.



Overall, achievement in test and examinations in recent years has been satisfactory. Present work in science also shows satisfactory achievement.

61. By Year 9 higher attaining pupils are able to follow a scientific argument, ask appropriate questions and apply mathematics to their work. Lower attaining pupils understand basic concepts but find difficulty in concentrating for any length of time. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils are able to present and develop their ideas in discussion, when given the opportunity, and to understand the relevance of scientific ideas. Lower attaining pupils 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 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 research; library provision is also poor and does not support independent work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are taught in smaller groups, supported by suitable material and helped by in-class support assistants.
62. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with just under half of the lessons seen being good or better. However, there are too many instances of lessons being too focused on the teacher with pupils being passive. Active and independent learning still needs development, as at the time of the last inspection. Good lessons are well prepared. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and teachers often give interesting background to the work to increase its relevance to pupils. In Year 8, in a very good lesson on digestion, pupils were fully engaged, challenged to carry out an experiment in a limited time, and had to make deductions from their observations. They worked hard and cooperatively, achieved experimental success and learned a lot. In contrast, in an unsatisfactory lesson, pupils were insufficiently challenged, behaviour deteriorated and much time was lost in behaviour management. Consequently little effective learning occurred. In Year 10, in a good lesson about limestone, the teacher's energy and enthusiasm were transmitted to the class, a brisk pace of work was demanded and the result was a stimulating and enjoyable lesson; learning was good. In contrast, a satisfactory lesson was too focused on the teacher and, although the material was suitable and pupils' learning satisfactory, there were opportunities missed to involve pupils actively in the lesson which would have increased learning and made it more enjoyable.
63. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The head of department provides a good role model, illustrated by the very high standard and thoroughness of work schemes. Marking is carried out regularly with many exercise books containing helpful comments. However, academic targets do not appear until a late stage in pupils' courses. Accommodation is unsatisfactory with some laboratories being in urgent need of refurbishment. They hinder teaching and learning, for example through no working gas supplies, as well as failing to provide a welcoming environment. Opportunities for work in ICT are unsatisfactory because of the lack of easily accessible computers and there is only one piece of equipment for data logging rather than a class set. Research work and ICT skill development is consequently very limited. Two part-time technicians support teachers well but, with six laboratories to service, technician time is not adequate.
64. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. The proportion of pupils attaining higher grade GCSEs has increased; teaching and learning are beginning to benefit from the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 strategy and the use of CASE materials (Cognitive Acceleration of Science Education).

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are still not receiving their National Curriculum entitlement and their achievement is still unsatisfactory.

- Monitoring practices are not ensuring consistency of ICT experiences for all pupils.
- Good recent developments have extended the discrete teaching of ICT to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and plans are in place for all pupils to follow a vocational GCSE.
- Although some unsatisfactory teaching was seen, standards are rising through some good teaching in Years 7 and 8, and good use being made of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- The number of computers available for pupils is below that seen nationally.
- Good primary school links are easing the transition from primary to secondary school.

### Commentary

65. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow a course of study recognised as meeting their statutory entitlement and ICT experiences across the curriculum are insufficient and inconsistent across teaching sets. A small number of pupils undertaking a vocational programme in Years 10 and 11 follow a computer skills course. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory overall. In September 2004, all Year 10 pupils will start an applied GCSE in ICT which will ensure they have their statutory entitlement; Year 11 pupils will not.
66. Teacher assessments of pupils' capability at the end of Year 9 are above average. These are high in relation to standards seen, which are broadly in line with expectation. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; pupils confidently and independently use the school computer system to store and retrieve their work and to find information from the Internet. Pupils plan their work well, edit and arrange their work on screen to suit a range of audiences and work well with web publishing, presentation and word processing software. Pupils do not yet understand the steps required to solve problems efficiently in an ICT solutions context. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also satisfactory and individual education plans are used well. Good links with primary schools give experiences to future pupils which support a broadly average attainment on entry to the school.
67. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching practices expected are not yet embedded across all teaching of ICT. Where good teaching was seen, objectives were made clear to pupils at the start of the lesson. For example, in a good lesson on web page design the teacher had broken the objectives down into recognisable steps before the lesson and then introduced these to pupils one at a time to check that they were clear about their meaning. Teachers move around the class well to help pupils with their work and make clear what is required to improve it. The testing of learning through effective plenary sessions is underdeveloped. The unsatisfactory teaching seen was not planned effectively and pupil management did not ensure that all pupils were attentive to instruction and that they stayed on task. Homework is inconsistent in frequency and in quality. Reports to parents require improved targets related to ICT capability.
68. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Monitoring of ICT experiences both in lessons and across the curriculum are not ensuring pupils receive their National Curriculum entitlement and a positive learning experience. Leadership has identified weaknesses and a plan is underway to expand learning in Years 10 and 11. An external consultant is supporting the introduction of ICT strand materials from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Planning does not yet show how ICT experiences progressively develop and there is no planning to indicate expected practice in the department's support for literacy, numeracy and citizenship.
69. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. A key area for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection was the raising of attainment in Years 10 and 11. This is still required, as overall achievement is still unsatisfactory. Although computer resources have been improved and a whole school computer network established, the number of computers available for pupils is below that normally seen in a school of this size. Improvements have been made in experiences for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in the use of ICT in some subjects of the curriculum. There is capacity for further improvement.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. Staff confidence has improved since the previous inspection with many linking computers to digital projectors and interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' attention and support their subject teaching. Most pupils work with word processing, desktop publishing, presentation software and the Internet in coursework. Good use was seen within the special educational needs, English, geography, music and design and technology departments. Pupils use computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing equipment to produce puzzles, they work with systems and control software to mimic real traffic control situations, they also use modelling programs within food technology to help them understand nutrition. Further developments are required to embed the use of ICT in mathematics, science and physical education.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and is monitored regularly to help raise standards.
- Pupils achieve well overall and their level of skill, knowledge and understanding is improving through the use of ICT.
- Work in the main part of lessons sometimes sets too little challenge.
- Pupils do not know well enough what they have to do to make further progress.

#### Commentary

71. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall; in Year 8, they are able to understand the causes of poverty in developing countries whilst in Year 7 pupils lack confidence in the use of latitude and longitude in locating places. In Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of the main features of tourism and make very good progress with their individual presentations and reports. The level of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding is often improved through the use of computers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons as they are well supported by learning support assistants.
72. In 2003, in GCSE, the proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-C grade was less than that nationally but the proportion of the highest, A, grades was more. The proportion of A\*-G grades was in line with national figures. Generally, pupils performed better than their predicted grades and girls did better than boys. Results in 2003 are not significantly different from those in 2002.
73. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Year 10 pupils are able to classify 'aid schemes' in developing countries but the lack of opportunity for small group and whole class discussion means they are less confident when analysing the effectiveness of such schemes. Similarly, in Year 11, pupils are able to enquire independently into the causes of flooding but are not given opportunities to discuss their findings with others during the lesson. Pupils use an enquiry based approach to coursework very effectively and are skilled at drawing conclusions and evaluating their findings.
74. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons have clear objectives so that pupils know what they have to learn and there are usually opportunities to review what they have done at the end. 'Starter' activities are sufficiently interesting and varied to hold the attention of the class. However, the main activity is too often not planned well enough to maintain interest and ensure sufficient challenge. Teachers are enthusiastic and show good subject knowledge. However, sometimes this enthusiasm does not allow pupils sufficient opportunities to

contribute to discussion or answer questions. Pupils' work is marked with useful comments on how they can improve and a grade is given to show how well they have done. Pupils are assessed at the end of each topic, but are insufficiently aware of the national standards they are working at. In Years 7 to 9, individual target setting would help to monitor pupils' progress.

75. Leadership and management are both good. The recent introduction of a teaching and learning strategy is having a positive impact in lessons. The quality of teaching is monitored on a regular basis, reflecting a commitment to the raising of standards. In planning documents, there are some clear ideas on how the department should move forward such as more emphasis on enquiry based learning and more formal target setting. In Years 7 to 9, there are insufficient opportunities for fieldwork. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning and progress by pupils.
- Good teaching of literacy skills helps pupils succeed.
- Good relationships and interesting classrooms help pupils achieve well.
- Good leadership and management have a clear focus on raising standards.
- Assessment is not secure, particularly the tracking of pupils' progress.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not give sufficient guidance on how they might improve.

### Commentary

76. Standards in Year 9 are above average and pupils achieve well. GCSE results in 2003 were below average and pupils did less well in history than in their other subjects. Current work in Year 11 is above average standards and pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Standards and the number of pupils choosing to take the subject at GCSE are improving steadily. This is due to the effect of strong leadership, good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils to their work.
77. By Year 9, pupils have developed a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of primary and secondary evidence, the ability to empathise with different situations and the understanding of chronology. Pupils are able to evaluate the relative importance of political, social, economic and cultural factors using a variety of different sources and they can debate the significance of important leaders in various periods. There is very good emphasis on investigative and exploratory methods of learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to talk about history.
78. By Year 11, pupils of all levels of attainment can extract and deploy information from historical sources. Those of below average attainment answer questions about the past and use many historical terms correctly, and more able pupils can produce a high standard of written work and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of their units of work.
79. Teaching is good overall, with a minority of lessons being satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic historians. They manage pupils' behaviour very well and this allows pupils to learn and promotes good attitudes and relationships. Literacy is well developed through written and verbal work. In good lessons learning objectives are shared with pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, and a variety of teaching methods are deployed in between. In a few lessons, there is an overemphasis on teacher-led activities, with pupils spending long periods listening or writing without much support. Some very effective group work was observed in most classes, with pupils undertaking research tasks and reporting their findings to their classmates. Assessment through questioning is used well by

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teachers and assessment information is managed appropriately, but this information is not always used to match tasks and resources to the ability of pupils. Opportunities for regular assessment are too few to enable both teachers and pupils to have a clear idea about individual progress. Some work has begun to share information about National Curriculum attainment levels with pupils.

80. Good leadership and management give clear educational direction, with a sharp focus on raising standards that is shared across the department. Departmental resources are broadly satisfactory but accommodation is unsatisfactory as rooms are not close together, which hinders good practice being shared. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Good teaching enables pupils to attain GCSE results that are well above average.
- Pupils generally have a good attitude to the subject and enjoy their work.
- Leadership is good and ready to improve provision further.
- The design process is taught consistently so pupils know how to use it to solve design problems.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is insufficiently linked to National Curriculum requirements.
- Good practice is not shared well enough and there is some weak teaching.

#### **Commentary**

81. Pupils enter the school with average standards in the subject. Standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed standards to be well above average, similar to previous years. The Year 9 in 2003 began with higher standards than the current Year 9 and teacher assessments were also over-generous.
82. Pupils acquire a good knowledge of the design process over Years 7 to 9. They are able to design and make products and work safely with a range of tools and materials. Most pupils enjoy making products and take a pride in their work. There are, however, a significant minority of pupils who are not totally attentive to their teacher and who present challenging behaviour. In lessons where this occurs, pace is slower and achievement is hindered. Testing through the use of a computer is proving useful in helping pupils to identify for themselves what they know and understand and how they have improved over time.
83. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average compared to all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-C grade was high. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-G was about average. Overall, pupils achieved grades in line with those in their other subjects; boys attained better and significantly better than the national average. Girls attained marginally less well in this subject than in their other subjects but the number of A\*-C grades was above average. These results are better than those in 2002, when results dipped because of staff absence.
84. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall and pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Some slight variation exists between the various areas which constitute design and technology. Food technology has some very good examples of coursework; all aspects of the work showed attention to detail, good presentation and displayed an individual and, in some cases, an innovative response to design

problems. Pupils using resistant materials, often disaffected in other subjects, work industriously and productively in the workshop. Pupils generally are confident and use ICT appropriately when working.

85. Teaching, learning and achievement are good overall. Lessons are generally well planned and include a variety of activities which motivate pupils to achieve well. Teaching and learning are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is because some lessons in the earlier years are affected by the disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils who are not attentive. This wastes time and all pupils in such classes do not achieve as well as they might. Some teachers are better than others at managing pupils and there is a need to share good practice better. Most pupils, however, display a good attitude and particularly enjoy practical work and this has a positive effect on their learning. Good teaching of the design process in Years 7 to 9 results in pupils using it independently to design and manufacture products in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to gain high marks in GCSE, particularly in coursework, because teaching is well directed at fulfilling examination board requirements.
86. Assessment is satisfactory but is not sufficiently well linked to National Curriculum attainment levels and this creates difficulty for teacher assessment at the end of Year 9. Although pupils in Years 7 to 10 know what needs to improve in their work, many of them are not clear about their current level of attainment.
87. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject. He regularly monitors work and sets appropriate targets. He has devised a realistic development plan. Some strategies for improvement have yet to be fully realised so management, whilst currently satisfactory, is improving. Projects are not reviewed regularly enough to ensure that they are interesting and likely to inspire up and coming pupils.
88. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have improved and food technology has been successfully re-introduced. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation with the exception of the workshops. These need refurbishing to meet the demands of current courses. The temperature in these rooms falls below what is acceptable and standards are affected when pupils have to be taken to other rooms which do not have facilities for practical work.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected fully. Drama was sampled. The report on it includes observation of four lessons, anecdotal evidence from pupils and parents, and observations of a lunchtime rehearsal.

89. Achievement in **drama** is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning seen were good or better and pupils responded well to the methods employed.
90. The teaching seen was well disciplined but not restrictive, allowing pupils to develop skills and learn terminology with confidence. All lessons seen were well managed. In one Year 7 lesson, a small group of boys were not cooperating fully and the teacher's intervention was unobtrusive but firm and ensured that the rest of the class was not disturbed by the actions of a small minority. Learning seen in drama was very good. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils directed their own play and showed confidence in the roles being played. Pupils' work is assessed in progress by the teacher and also evaluated by pupils. Pupils are self-critical and make positive suggestions to each other for improvement. In lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils worked co-operatively and collaboratively to develop their practical work. The teacher guided and advised without constraining pupils' creative development.
91. The enrichment to the curriculum provided by drama is very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and very willing to participate in the school's productions. These involve large numbers of pupils both on and off stage and both pupils and parents think they are wonderful. A preliminary casting meeting, during one lunchtime, involved almost two hundred eager pupils determined

to take part or support their peers. Pupils also have opportunities to visit the theatre and benefit from the productions seen. The teaching of drama makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

92. Leadership and management are effective and efficient. The teacher responsible for drama is an enthusiastic practitioner whose commitment to the subject is relayed to pupils. The organisation of the subject is thorough and assessment continuous.
93. The area used for drama is the school hall and 'backstage'. It is not purpose built but is well utilised.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Teaching is good, leading to good achievement overall with very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Good leadership and management have led to improvement since the last inspection.
- GCSE results have risen to well above average.
- Many pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not work independently and do not have well developed critical evaluation skills.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

94. Overall, standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are average; some pupils attain higher standards. Folders and sketchbooks show that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils are able to use sources drawn from artistic styles such as Art Nouveau and adapt them to their own work. They develop very good observational drawing skills and use line and tone in a meticulous and skilful way. They use colour well and they work with care and pride in the outcome. Lower attaining pupils do not extend the work on their own initiative and independent learning skills in general are not well developed. The introduction of sketchbooks has been valuable in helping to correct this and, where pupils use these well, they form a good record of developing skills. In one well-taught lesson, Year 9 pupils with special educational needs were enthused by the practical nature of the work and were developing good technical skills.
95. Research into art from other cultures makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development but pupils are not good at articulating their responses to artists and artistic styles either verbally or in writing. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed through work on symmetry, measurement, proportion and perspective when drawing ellipses to represent three-dimensional shapes.
96. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and represent very good improvement on previous figures. Pupils do better in art than in many of their other subjects; girls do particularly well. There have been many more girls than boys in GCSE groups but the balance is more even in current Year 10 classes. In work and lessons seen, standards are above average. Year 11 pupils build on the skills acquired in earlier years and begin to apply them in a more individual way. For example, there is a high level of imaginative response to studies of natural forms linked to the work of Georgia O'Keefe. Pupils can develop a theme through a range of media and techniques. Higher attaining pupils are able to explain their response to the emotional impact of O'Keefe's work, whereas lower attaining pupils restrict themselves to descriptive accounts of her life and work. Some Year 11 pupils working on the controlled examination test had difficulty in explaining the rationale behind their work and, whilst their technical skills were good, their artistic understanding was not well developed. Research

material is drawn from a wide range of sources including the Internet. Some Internet material, however, is used without editing or adapting the content. All pupils make rapid progress in Years 10 and 11 and achievement is very good.

97. Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement overall. Strong teaching, together with good lesson planning, contributes significantly to the quality of learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' enthusiasm, good subject knowledge and expertise are communicated effectively to pupils, who reflect this in their high levels of interest and concentration. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils, who have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and work with a sense of purpose. Some satisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9 does not fully contain the difficult attitudes of some pupils; pupils' immature relationships with other pupils reduce the effectiveness of teachers' efforts and hinder progress for others. Good classroom practice supports the development of pupils' numeracy skills and talented pupils are identified and given appropriate help and advice. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and constructive comments are accompanied by encouragement to improve. Changes to the way pupils' work is assessed, including opportunities for self-assessment, are beginning to improve pupils' knowledge of their own learning. Some pupils, however, are still unsure of what National Curriculum levels are and, more significantly, what they have to do to improve.
98. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision for developing the curriculum area and has begun to build effective systems for doing so. Schemes of work are thorough and the curriculum now provides pupils with a much broader and richer experience than at the last inspection. Current setting arrangements in Years 8 and 9, however, are based on pupils' abilities in other curriculum areas and do not provide the best groupings for art. In Year 7 this issue has been addressed successfully. Pupils' observational drawing skills have improved and standards for pupils in Years 10 and 11 have improved considerably. Accommodation for art and design is unsatisfactory. Inadequate heating, poor maintenance, and lack of cleaning and decoration create an uninspiring environment, and this is only mitigated by the colourful and creative displays of pupils' work. Although resources are adequate, there is insufficient access to ICT facilities to allow pupils to use ICT more widely in their work. Because good improvements have taken place since the last inspection, art now occupies a more prominent position in the life of the school.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Composition and performance standards are high.
- Lessons are well planned with good use of resources.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Work is not always sufficiently matched to the needs of different groups of pupils.
- There is insufficient use of homework in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

99. The number of entries for GCSE music in recent years is too small to make meaningful comparisons with national statistics or to identify trends. In work seen, overall, standards of attainment are above average.
100. Pupils in Year 9 are achieving well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. The small number of pupils taking music in Year 11 are achieving well in relation to their musical experience prior to starting the course. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational



needs also achieve well, profiting from the essentially practical nature of the curriculum which is offered. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' responses when listening to music are good; they are perceptive and can identify features of instrumentation and style. They perform confidently with a good feeling for pulse and rhythm, holding independent parts well. Their compositions show an awareness of style and texture which is based on a good understanding of the elements of music. In Years 10 and 11 composition standards are high. Pupils compose wellstructured songs with good harmonic progression and effective word setting. Performance standards are varied but overall are above average. Pupils play and sing with a good sense of style and idiom and perform in public confidently, taking advantage of the many extra-curricular opportunities which are offered. Talented pupils are well challenged in this respect.

101. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Good management and control of pupils, combined with well planned lessons and good use of a variety of resources, result in effective learning with pupils working productively. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work is well graded with clear explanations at each stage. They give a good level of individual help which is well matched to pupils' needs. This particularly helps pupils with special educational needs to make progress, but sometimes tasks set could be better matched to the differing ability levels within classes. ICT is well used for research and composition, for example Year 8 pupils learn to use sequencing software to record compositions. Although homework is well used in Years 10 and 11, homework is not set in Years 7 to 9 so opportunities for consolidation and development of class work are lost. Assessment is systematic with good use of self-evaluation by pupils.
102. Leadership and management are good. There is a thoughtful approach involving very good self-evaluation and monitoring followed by action to secure improvement. Resources are well organised and instrumental teaching is well coordinated. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The accommodation has been improved. The above average standards of attainment have been maintained despite a decline in the standards on entry. Assessment procedures have been improved. ICT resources have been increased although they are still inadequate for the needs of the department.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of pupils to learn well.
- GCSE examination results are consistently above the national average.
- Some facilities, particularly the sports hall and all-weather pitch, are in urgent need of attention and hinder achievement from being higher.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

103. Standards of work by pupils in Year 9 and in Year 11 match national expectations. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily across Years 7 to 9, and well in non-examination lessons in Years 10 and 11. Leadership and management are good and enable pupils to achieve well overall despite poor facilities and less time for lessons in Years 10 and 11 than is typical. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Building work to improve facilities was due to commence immediately after the inspection.

104. Year 11 pupils' examination results in physical education are consistently above the national average. Pupils achieve better pass grades than those in their other subjects; standards are rising in line with the national trend. Girls' examination results are better than those of boys. Pupils with special educational needs and the talented achieve well. High attaining pupils are successful in a range of sports at district, county and sometimes, regional levels.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teaching is well planned, varied and challenging; consequently, pupils are well focused and lessons proceed at a good pace. Work is planned to suit all pupils. For example, in a Year 9 badminton lesson, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress because the teacher modified equipment (short-handle rackets), simplified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and very good extra-curricular provision. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In Year 10 fitness work, pupils plan personal training programmes, record data and evaluate performance. Learning is less effective in a few lessons when teaching becomes more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes. Assessment procedures, although lacking initial 'baseline' testing in Year 7, are satisfactory overall.
106. Most pupils, across all years, show good numerical skills, because teachers provide them with many opportunities to score, measure and record performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of pupils across the attainment levels. ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.
107. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching is now good across all years; good examination results have been maintained and independent learning opportunities improved. Insufficient curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 remains a management problem as provision outside school hours has to be maintained and ensured. Facilities, generally, are poor and teachers and pupils achieve in spite of them; they deserve better. The sports hall and all-weather pitch are in urgent need of attention; improvements to the former are imminent. The teaching of GCSE theory work lacks the support a subject specific teaching base can give it. Curricular links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Vocational provision was sampled. A very good and diverse range of subjects is taught, both in school and in a local college.

108. Pupils are given opportunities for experiencing a vocationally oriented curriculum through a combination of college link courses and subjects taught in school. Present provision has developed from long established contacts with Preston College. Groups of pupils who would not necessarily benefit from a full GCSE course are well provided for. Plans to promote these courses to a wider ability range fit well with new curricula now developing in many schools. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are very good. The recently appointed head of department is committed to the value of vocational studies and leads by example and with enthusiasm. Funding has been obtained from various sources including the Increased Flexibility Programme.
109. College link courses are managed well. Pupils attend regularly and display high levels of motivation. They value their places on the courses, feel they are treated as responsible young people and respond accordingly. During the inspection, pupils were seen to be benefiting from professional tuition and facilities in a range of work related areas such as construction, catering and motor vehicle maintenance. Pupils acquire skills and knowledge more readily than in their normal school context. Boys and girls have equal access to all courses and pupils with special educational needs are accompanied by learning support assistants during their time at college. Relationships with the college are good and regular contact with course tutors ensures that pupils' progress is monitored. Courses lead to an appropriate range of alternative qualifications

for pupils, including the college's own certificates, and the college and school work closely to advise pupils on suitable career pathways. Consequently, many pupils choose to continue on to further education courses.

110. Vocationally related courses taught in school are business studies and leisure and tourism. Two lessons in each subject were sampled and teaching in all four was very good.
111. In 2003, GCSE results in business studies dipped to below average but this was against the trend of previous years. A change to an applied GCSE in the subject is providing more vocational content and a more relevant course for current pupils. Confident and knowledgeable teaching is supported by resources appropriate to pupils' differing abilities. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
112. Lessons in leisure and tourism are conducted at a brisk pace and make skilful use of ICT to improve learning. GNVQ results have been good and the change to an applied GCSE course has been managed smoothly. Standards seen in lessons are below average but pupils achieve well.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- Citizenship makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of pupils.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The curriculum is well planned and organised.
- There is very good use of visiting speakers and enrichment activities.
- The time allocation to citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
- The implementation of assessment procedures is not consistent across all contributing departments.

#### **Commentary**

113. Citizenship is taught as part of the curriculum by all subjects though the main contributing subjects are personal and social education, history, geography, religious education and English. Pupils in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 achieve satisfactorily in attaining average standards. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into all activities and achieve satisfactorily.
114. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are taught by a large number of staff from various departments but the personal and social education contribution is mostly taught by experienced pastoral staff; lessons are well planned with a good variety of approaches which engage pupils and maintain interest. Not all activities are increasing pupils' understanding of the topic and sometimes too much time is spent on details of presentation more appropriate to an art lesson than citizenship. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, managing them well, and this ensures concentration and good behaviour. However, sometimes the pace of lessons suffers because of the time this takes. Pupils collaborate well in group work but more opportunities could be given for pupils to discuss issues which arise. There is very good use made of visiting speakers from outside agencies such as the police and fire service. For example, there are occasional citizenship days covering topics such as fair trade and the marketing of baby milk in the third world. There are workshops led by outside speakers such as aid workers and shelter workers. Through the wide range of topics and issues covered, the subject makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The school council gives all pupils first hand experience of the

workings of democracy as they go through the annual election process. Pupils have a good awareness of citizenship issues as they arise in various subjects across the curriculum.

115. Leadership and management are good and there is good potential for further development. Schemes of work have been well analysed to ensure coverage. Assessment procedures have been established; they are well thought out, with each pupil producing a portfolio of citizenship work to enable effective monitoring of progress. However, at present the implementation for the assessment procedures is not consistent across all departments.
116. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has looked carefully at how citizenship was being taught across the curriculum and has adopted a much more coordinated approach which is well matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum. However the time allocated to citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is limited and standards could be higher if this was increased.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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