

INSPECTION REPORT

SETTLEBECK HIGH SCHOOL

Sedbergh, Cumbria

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112380

Headteacher: Mr David Smith

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 22 – 24 March 2004

Inspection number: 258753

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	212
School address:	Long Lane Sedbergh Cumbria
Postcode:	LA10 5AL
Telephone number:	01539 620383
Fax number:	01539 621024
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Hilary Dixon
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is much smaller than average with 212 students¹ on roll with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. It is a mixed, 11 to 16 comprehensive school serving a rural catchment area in and around the North Yorkshire National Park of Sedbergh. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) is well below average indicating a mainly advantaged socio-economic background although there are instances of disadvantage, and rural isolation is a feature for many students. Most students are white UK and there are no students with English as an additional language.

The percentage of students with special educational needs and with statements is above the national average. The school has a special educational needs unit for autistic students, which is part of a strategic, county-wide provision. A significant number of students join the school at various points in the school year. Some of these students make the transition to Settlebeck High School late in their own school career and often have additional needs.

Attainment on entry to the school is comprehensive in nature and includes higher attaining students and those requiring support. Its exact nature varies year-on-year, sometimes above average and sometimes below. Generally most students are working at or somewhat above the national expectations when they enter the school.

The school has been awarded Investor in People status. It has also just been granted Technology Status as part of the Rural Academy.²

¹ Ofsted reports normally use the term 'pupils' to describe boys and girls attending school in the 11 to 16 age-range and the term 'students' to describe those in attendance post-16. The school's preferred term is students and this is used throughout the text of the report to describe those attending the school. Headings in the report, which use the term pupils, have been retained.

² The nine small secondary schools in Cumbria have formally constituted themselves as a Rural Academy to provide mutual support and professional development opportunities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Citizenship Drama
19343	Marion Howell	Lay inspector	
32328	Neil Donkin	Team inspector	History Religious education
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
17201	Vikki HARRY	Team inspector	Physical education
31695	Margaret Jones	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
33154	Barbara Kwiecinski	Team inspector	Science
32340	Peter McKay	Team inspector	Geography
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Special educational needs English
22878	George Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Settlebeck High School is a very good school. Students attain very good standards at GCSE because of the good and often very good teaching that they receive. Members of staff are very committed to the students; the high quality of relationships between staff and students, along with the high quality support, care and guidance that students receive are the bedrock of the learning. Students develop very good attitudes towards their work and each other. Leadership is very good; it ensures that students are given all possible support to do well. The school has the respect of the community, parents and students. The costs of a small school are relatively high; the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school works very hard to try and ensure that all students do as well as they can. It is very inclusive.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership; he is supported very well by senior key staff; there is a very strong sense of teamwork within the school and shared values which creates a very good ethos for learning based on mutual respect between members of staff and students.
- The school tracks students carefully and picks up problems early. Members of staff know the students very well and use this knowledge effectively in their teaching.
- The provision for students with special educational needs in the learning resource centre and in the main school is very good.
- The leadership of the school has a clear idea of the strength of the school and what it needs to do in order to raise standards further: these relate to developing consistency by sharing good practice throughout the school; ensuring even greater challenge to higher attaining students and formalising aspects of teachers' planning and structures.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Key issues, which related to raising overall levels of attainment, provision in music and aspects of management, have been addressed well. Statutory requirements, except in the case of collective worship, are now met and overall standards have risen.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 results

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

The size of the school means that the statistics associated with examination performance can show considerable year-on-year variation. The performance of a relatively small number of students makes a very significant statistical difference.³ Based on averages over the last three years the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was well above the national average and for A* to G grades, above the national average. Results in 2001 were high, the percentage of students gaining five A* to G grades was in the top five per cent of the country. Results for the last two years have not been as high; the trend for improvement is currently below the national trend. Based on the last three years students' results were well above the national median with girls doing better than boys. The school anticipates that boys will do better than girls in next year's examinations where there is a more even distribution of boys and girls in the cohort.

³ Each pupil is equivalent to two per cent and given the size of the cohort changes of exam performance between 12 and 18 per cent should be treated with caution. Judging performance over a three-year average may well be more appropriate.

Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 are overall well above average compared to all schools nationally and average compared to similar schools - that is schools in which students had attained similar scores in their Year 6 National Curriculum tests. The school sets itself challenging targets in terms of examination performance based on data relating to student performance, although the performance of individual students and those nominally on roll but not in attendance can make a significant impact. The school does judge its effectiveness by close examination of individual students' results.

Overall, students achieve well and, in personal terms, some very well. On most occasions students are being challenged and supported appropriately to do the best that they are capable of. There is very good provision in English, mathematics and science. There are very effective tracking systems, which pick up students who are underachieving. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. Whilst higher attaining students are identified and challenged, there are occasions when even more could be demanded of them.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students themselves add value to what they are taught. The school is very good at fostering students' confidence, sense of self worth and individuality and develops their ability to work with others and respect their viewpoint. The school has a very strong moral framework. **Overall, the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.** Year 11 students are very good ambassadors for the school. Attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good with some very good features. Teaching is good. It is often very good. It is the regularity of moving from one good lesson to another that reinforces expectations and develops students' very positive attitudes to learning. Members of staff have very good subject expertise and they are extraordinarily committed to the students and the school. They give very generously of their time to ensure that the students do well. What is taught is interesting and is enriched by the extra-curricular provision. Homework is used well. The quality of care and support is very good. Across the school the formal systems are underpinned by a very strong informal network of support that stems from staff knowing the students so well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance of the school is good. **Leadership and management are very good.** Financial management is very good but money is very tight. The school evaluates its performance carefully. There is strong teamwork. The school has recently been given specialist Technology College status as part of the Rural Academy, which will provide even more opportunities for sharing and developing good professional practice and enhancing students' learning.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school works very hard to develop a partnership with parents to support their child's learning. Parents are very supportive of the school. Students are rightfully proud of the school and what they are achieving.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has a clear idea of what it needs to do as identified within the school improvement plan. There is much very good practice in the school that needs to be shared to develop consistency and to provide even greater challenge to higher attaining pupils. In addition, to raise standards even further, there is the need to formalise aspects of teacher planning and schemes of work.

To meet statutory requirements, the school should review its assembly arrangements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students do well and in personal terms sometimes very well. Based on the last three years, students attain well above average standards at GCSE when measured by the proportion gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE and the average point score.⁴

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests is overall well above the national median when averaged over three years.
- The proportion gaining high grades at GCSE is well above the national average.
- The school is very inclusive and students with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is comprehensive in nature and includes higher attaining students and those requiring support. Its exact nature varies year-on-year, sometimes above average and sometimes below. Generally most students are working at or somewhat above the national expectations when they enter the school.
2. In the Year 9 tests when viewed over three years students' performance in English and mathematics is above and, in science, well above the national median. Overall performance is well above the national median. Boys and girls do better than the average for their particular gender but at this stage girls perform particularly well. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum point score for all three subjects is broadly in line with the national trend. In 2003 the percentage of students gaining the higher levels at 7 or 7+ was very close to or above the national average. Higher attaining students clearly do well in the tests.
3. When compared to similar schools performance in the Year 9 tests is overall average. It is average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The value added is average compared to similar schools and above average when compared to the national distribution.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.4 (34.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.7 (37.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.7 (37.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 43 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results at GCSE are average compared to similar schools although the proportion gaining A* to C was above average in 2003. The percentage gaining at least one A* to G grade was amongst the top five per cent of similar schools but the percentage gaining five A* to G

⁴ There are different ways of analysing examination results. One way is to compare the percentages attaining a specific level. The other - perhaps fairer method, because it takes into account the performance of all students rather than simply those students who attained a specific threshold - is to use average point scores. This is determined by giving a numerical equivalent to each level or grade and dividing it by the number in the cohort who took the test or examination.

grades was well below average. Based on the average for the past three years the proportion of students gaining five A* to C results was well above the national average. The proportion gaining five A* to G grades was above the national average.

5. There were a number of reasons why results in 2003 showed a drop. The cohort had a high proportion of students with special educational needs who achieved very well in personal terms but who took certificates of achievement in a variety of subjects rather than GCSE examinations. In addition the cohort had a significant number of students, including some with additional needs, who joined the school late in their school career. Another very clear reason why examinations were not as high as previous years was because of particularly low examination results in information and communication technology (ICT).
6. Although usually close to the boys' national median, in 2003 overall performance for boys dropped below the national median for boys whilst girls' results were well above. This discrepancy in boys' and girls' performance is expected to be more even in 2004 where the ratio of boys to girls is more balanced. In lessons, whilst there were a few instances of girls automatically adopting the secretarial role, for example, making notes on the group discussion; in general, however, there were no obvious reasons to account for a difference in boys' and girls' performance.
7. The trend for improvement is below the national trend based on the results of the previous five years. However, such is the volatility of results that in 2002, the trend line indicated results improving above the national trend.

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	62 (68)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (100)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.0 (40.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Overall, students achieve well. In personal terms some achieve very well. On most occasions students are being challenged and supported appropriately to do the best that they are capable of. There are occasions when even more could be demanded of students, particularly but not exclusively higher attaining students. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. The fact that the overall quality of provision in English, mathematics and science is very good is a significant factor in students achieving well in GCSE examinations.
9. Overall students have good literacy and oral skills. They also have good mathematical skills. These factors allow them to work effectively in other subjects. Students are competent in ICT although access to ICT in other subjects is a problem. Many students have access to ICT at home.
10. A number of factors, other than good teaching, supports students' good achievement. These are:
 - Students are known and valued. This in-depth knowledge of students is used very well by teachers, formally within classrooms but also informally in all the chance encounters with students be it on a climbing wall or in the corridor. The high quality of informal relationships and the consistent reinforcement of achievement underpin the learning.

- The school is focused on individuals. Their performance is tracked carefully. The school is quick to pick up on under-achievement.
- The school expects students to develop very good attitudes to their work. Homework is used well. Students take evident pride in their school and their achievements, reflected in the student questionnaires undertaken in preparation for the inspection when 98 per cent thought it was a good school to be at and where 99 per cent thought that teachers expected them to work hard and do their best.
- There is a professionally appropriate but nevertheless emotional commitment to the students, which results in members of staff being very committed to the students' success - and giving an extraordinary amount of their time to support them.
- The school is very inclusive - each individual student is important and there is high quality care and support available.

The remainder of the report deals with these points in more detail.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school is very successful in promoting the personal development of its students. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are very good throughout the school. There is good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good relationships throughout the school.
- The students are very confident and know they are valued.
- The behaviour of the students is very good.
- Students have very good understanding of their role within the community.
- The provision for moral and social development is very good.

Commentary

11. Very good relationships exist between students, and between teachers and students. The school is a friendly and orderly community, where there is very good co-operation and consideration for others. Students are respected and listened to; the School Council is an important feature of the school in which students display considerable maturity. There is a very strong climate of respect so that students respect the views of others and work well together during lessons.
12. Students show very good self-motivation and have an eagerness to learn. This was demonstrated during a Year 10 history lesson. The students were working in small groups to produce a document about a new turnpike road they had designed. In addition to the homework they had been set, some of them had done a considerable amount of extra work both at home and during their lunch breaks. They were very interested and enthusiastic about the project and were very pleased with the amount and quality of the work they had produced.
13. The students know they are valued as individuals and thrive in the school's friendly and secure atmosphere. The school works hard to develop their sense of self-esteem and to recognise their individuality. As a consequence students are confident and very willing to offer their views and opinions, knowing their fellow students will respect these. They know their teachers are always available and very willing to provide support and help. The teachers act as very good role models, and the students follow that example by acting as equally good role models for the younger students.
14. Students behave very well both during lessons and whilst moving around the school. They respect the school rules and understand why they are necessary. Very little time is wasted in lessons dealing with inappropriate behaviour, and the supervision needed during breaks and at lunchtime is minimal. Students are polite and helpful and show a very good awareness of

what is happening around them. This was seen at the start of a physical education lesson when, with no prompting, two students helped the teacher to stack some chairs into the storage space so that the lesson could begin. The students do not abuse the freedom and trust put in them by their teachers.

15. The students are encouraged to take an interest in their local community and to be seen as good ambassadors for their school. They are very proud of their school. They are given good opportunities to provide practical help in the town. Students help at the playgroup on the school site, assist with the delivery of meals-on-wheels and enjoy the chance to provide entertainment through the performances of the school band.
16. Provision for students with special educational needs ensures very effective inclusion because they have their needs well met and they are valued members of the school community. The students with special educational needs are included fully in the life of the school. Students make them feel welcome. Whenever a student with special educational needs joins a class, the students are given a 'disability awareness' lesson in order that they understand the difficulties the new student experiences.
17. Overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is very good. The school is very good at fostering students' confidence, sense of self worth and individuality and develops their ability to work with others and respect their viewpoint. The spiritual development of the students is provided through the daily assemblies and the personal, health and social education policy. Through the wide-ranging topics raised in the daily assemblies, students are given good opportunities to consider the views of others and to question their own beliefs and principles. The Year 11 students are responsible for one assembly each week, and again a wide range of issues is discussed. Through the preparations for these assemblies, the students are able to research and consider a variety of viewpoints and opinions. The overall provision for spiritual development is good.
18. The very good attitudes and behaviour of the students is testament to the very good provision for moral development. They have been involved in drawing up the school rules, and recently members of the School Council took part in a conference dealing with bullying and the ways it can be handled. There is equally a very good provision for social development which leads to the students' understanding of their own position in the community, and how they can contribute to that community. The residential visits organised by the school also help the students to appreciate the need for co-operation and understanding within society.
19. Students are given good opportunities to appreciate their own culture through a good variety of visits to museums, theatres and local places of interest. They also benefit from a number of speakers and groups coming into the school, and through their art and music lessons. Their chances to experience and understand the culturally diverse nature of society are not as well developed and the school has recognised this. There are links with a school in Bradford and global issues are regularly raised during assemblies. Visits are made to places of worship for a variety of faiths, but there are further opportunities within the curriculum that could be taken to raise students' awareness of other cultures and traditions.

Attendance

Attendance rates are well above the national average with no instances of unauthorised absence. Students arrive on time and lessons begin promptly. The very good attendance rates are an indication of the strong support for the school from both the students and their parents. The very good attendance also has a very positive effect on students' attainment and their continuity of learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.7
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

The school uses the 'short sharp shock' of fixed period exclusions to involve parents and in co-operation devise a supportive strategy for the student. The exclusion periods are very short. Rates of re-offending are very low. There have been no permanent exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – any other mixed background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
210	18	0
2	1	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 that students receive is good with some very good features. Teaching is good. It is often very good. What is taught is interesting and is enriched by the extra-curricular provision. Homework is used well. The quality of care and support is very good. Across the school the formal systems are underpinned by a very strong informal network of support that stems from members of staff knowing the students so well.

Teaching and learning

Students' quality of learning is good because the quality of teaching they receive is good and often very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good command of their subjects and communicate their enthusiasm.
- They use their deep knowledge of students particularly well in their planning and manage the mixed ability nature of their classes very well.
- Students' mature attitudes to learning mean that they add value to what is taught.

Commentary

20. The regularity of the good teaching that students experience reinforces the school's expectations and develops students' very good attitudes to learning. Students themselves add value to what they are taught because the school encourages them to reflect on where they want to go and what they want to do so that they become self-motivated and disciplined in their approach to learning and their work. Students are able to work independently and well.
21. Homework is to most students part of the school routine. Over eight out of ten students responding to the student questionnaire thought that homework was worthwhile. Students are also able to work collaboratively and there are good opportunities across all subjects to work

with others and share the work. Students are used to group work and contributing to the group. The fact that attendance is very good coupled with very good behaviour means that there are not discontinuities to learning – teachers are skilled at ensuring that the work builds up in a sequence of well-planned activities.

22. Underpinning the good learning are the overall very good relationships that exist between members of staff and students. Already identified in the report is the properly professional very real commitment that members of staff have to the students. They want them to do well and they are very skilled at encouraging students to do their best. The informal relationships, built from the outset in the Year 7 residential experience, are a key factor in underpinning students' effective learning.
23. Nine out of ten students thought that their work was marked helpfully. Students' generally have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work. Assessment of student work is generally good with some very good examples. For example in maths, students' work is well marked and includes clear pointers for improvement. In history there is a thorough analysis of student achievement, and individual aspirational targets are set. The examples of very good practice need to be applied across the school.
24. Another factor, which stimulates and encourages students, is the very good teacher knowledge, which along with their energy and enthusiasm for their subject, and coupled with their generous use of their time to provide additional learning or support opportunities, engages and motivates students. Staffing in a small school is problematic – often the time required in a specific subject does not justify a full time appointment. Some schools solve this by using a small core of teachers who teach a range of subjects. Settlebeck has opted for specialist teachers, a large proportion of whom are part time. Whilst this means that timetabling can be extremely complex, it does have the benefit that teachers have specific subject expertise and knowledge. A very high proportion of teachers at Settlebeck have their expertise recognised either through Advanced Skills status – two members of staff – or by the local education authority who use their expertise as leading teachers to share their subject skills with other schools. The school also gains from the fact that all members of staff share a commitment to the school and students that far exceeds their paid time.
25. Teachers are skilled at managing the mixed ability classes. Classrooms are inclusive. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of the students particularly effectively and planning for these classes is good. Teachers have high expectations and provide a good level of challenge. They are often creative in their approach and have clearly reflected on the best way to approach a topic. Sometimes even more thought needs to be given to challenging the higher attaining pupils.
26. Students with special educational needs are supported very well because teaching assistants are linked to subject areas and this allows for teamwork with the teacher, with the consequence that teaching assistants have a very good understanding of what is going on in lessons and what they need to do.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 66 lessons⁵

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	14 (21%)	40 (61%)	10 (15%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	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.

⁵ The percentage does not total 100 because of rounding.

Judgements about the quality of teaching are not made simply on the basis of the sample of lessons seen but include other factors such as scrutiny of students' books.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are met. The curriculum is broad, balanced and inclusive; it meets the needs of students and ensures progression for learning. Staffing is very good overall. Provision of accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very inclusive. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Equality of access and opportunity for all students is very good, although not all students participate in music mainly because of issues relating to sound sensitivity.
- The taught provision for personal, social and health education is good.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment.
- The access to and use of ICT in subject areas need further development.

Commentary

27. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for the students. What is taught is interesting, engages students and is seen by them to be relevant. They participate fully in the work as a consequence, adding value to what is taught through their own learnt self-motivation. The school has been successful in providing vocational courses for a limited number of students but there are plans to extend this element with GNVQ level 2 courses for double the number of students. The establishment of links with the feeder primary school ensures smooth progression into school and continuity of learning.
28. As already identified in the section on teaching, teachers are skilled at managing the mixed ability classes. Teachers have high expectations and provide a good level of challenge. The provision for gifted and talented students is, overall, good. There is a policy for these students and they are identified in teachers' planning for lessons. There are sometimes occasions when the pace of work could be even more demanding. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. These students are well integrated into teaching groups. Inclusion is a high priority in this school and has a positive effect on standards for these students in particular. Classroom assistants support students with special educational needs well. Members of staff ensure that students with special educational needs associated with autism follow a differentiated curriculum. This means following the activities of the base class in most subjects, except music (because of the sound sensitivity issue for some). The individual education plans are of a very good quality, telling the story of the pupil well and clearly identifying developmental needs.
29. The taught provision for personal, social and health education is good and ensures that students are taught about relationships, sex and substance abuse. The Issues, Beliefs and Values (IBV) course brings together broader religious education concepts and citizenship education well. The school is skilled in ensuring that participation in school activities is recorded and wherever possible serves several functions. Thus, for example, working within the playgroup is included in students' record of achievement and used in citizenship as part of their record of 'taking responsible action'.
30. Despite the obvious difficulties caused by transport, the school provides a very good range of opportunities for the students to enrich and extend their development. The activities include participation in sporting activities, outdoor pursuits, field trips and Young Enterprise. A feature of the school is the very high uptake in the number of students participating in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Visits abroad are arranged to broaden students' cultural horizons. In religious education and history, besides a range of visits, members of the local community

come in to the school to talk, for example, a speaker on the historical research being undertaken for a film.

31. Students receive very good support for their work outside the classroom. An interview with a writer on history provides valuable support for learning for some Year 9 students. Revision classes are offered for the GCSE examinations in, for example, art, Spanish, ICT and a weekend in mathematics. Good support is provided at home with students completing GCSE assignments using ICT. Students also use an e-learning package to undertake revision at home.
32. The number of teaching staff to meet the needs of the curriculum is very good. Teachers have the appropriate qualifications or experience to teach the courses timetabled for them. Technical support in science, ICT and design and technology is good.
33. Specialist teachers of special educational needs and teaching assistants are well qualified, many having successfully completed the Certificate in 'Professional Studies in Autism'. The teaching assistants contribute substantially to the progress being made by students with special educational needs. They are very well deployed. Support focuses on the younger students in order to develop their confidence, and then again in Years 10 and 11 as students prepare for their examinations and have more individual programmes of study. The teaching assistants are developing an affinity with one or more subjects so that they can provide more focused support.
34. Overall school accommodation is good but is unsatisfactory for physical education, particularly when lessons have to be transferred indoors because of poor weather. Resources for learning are satisfactory to meet the overall needs of the curriculum. Students' current access to ICT is a problem and limits its use in other subjects. The school has recently purchased a set of laptops, which are to be wireless networked, which will help solve the issue of access.
35. Accommodation for students with special educational needs is very good. The Learning Resource Centre is accessible and welcoming. It is very well used as a whole school facility throughout the day, and by a significant number of students of all abilities. This includes use by students who benefit from being able to work and socialise before school and at break and lunch times.
36. The Rural Academy Technology College status that the school has achieved should significantly enhance the curriculum. It will provide further opportunities for students, for example, to use ICT to support their learning and will no doubt through the additional funding and investment requirements help overcome the current issues of access to ICT by other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for the students' care, welfare and health and safety. There is very good support and guidance for students' academic and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good procedures in place to meet the personal and emotional needs of the individual student.
- The procedures to ensure that students work in a healthy, safe environment are very good.
- There are very good induction and transfer arrangements.
- Students have access to very good careers guidance.
- The students' views are sought and valued.

Commentary

37. All the students are valued as individuals, and their teachers have very good knowledge of both them and their families. The close working partnership between the school and the parents is an important factor in the school's approach to teaching and caring for 'the whole child'. Personal development is carefully monitored through regular meetings between teachers, and there is a counselling service available for any student who is experiencing particular problems. The size of the school and the excellent relationships between students and between students and teachers are significant factors in ensuring all students have access to very good support and guidance. Students know they can turn to their teachers whenever they need help, and that they will be listened to and taken seriously. The procedures for ensuring that the school is a healthy and safe environment are very good. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting all expressed total confidence that their children would be well looked after at school and on the many trips that the school organises. There are clear arrangements for child protection issues.
38. Procedures for using assessment data to monitor and assess students' work are good and improving rapidly. This is driven by the teaching and learning group and the leadership and management of the school. There are representatives in the group from most curriculum areas. Through this informal structure, sharing of good practice has resulted in formative assessment techniques being effectively used in most lessons. This is improving student learning and their ability to reflect on their progress. At this stage the group does not involve all departments but it has the potential to raise expectations of staff, students and parents. Positive marking occurs in most departments but there is a need for a common marking policy and greater consistency.
39. The school makes very good use of residential visits to develop the students' confidence and sense of maturity. These include a four-day trip for Year 7 students very early in their first term. When speaking to the students, they all said how much they had enjoyed this time, and how very helpful they had found it to be. They got to know their teachers and fellow students, and it also helped them to feel a part of the school. Students in Years 9 and 11 benefit from 'successful learner courses', which are aimed at helping them to prepare for their coming examinations. There are also a number of foreign visits that further help to broaden the students' horizons.
40. The close links with local primary schools mean that there are very good induction arrangements for new students. Both parents and students have confidence in the system and feel it works very well. The school provides students with very good guidance and advice to help them decide on the next phase of their education. They work closely with the Connexions service, and all Year 11 students have the benefit of an individual interview. Students are able to attend careers conventions and experience 'taster days' at the local colleges. The previous year's Year 11 students return to school to share their experiences and any advice they had found to be particularly helpful. The variety of courses and other training that students embrace after leaving the school are evidence of the effectiveness of the guidance they have received.
41. Students have good opportunities to express their views through the School Council, and this is extended through the attendance of members at Governors' Meetings. They consider their opinions are valued and that they play an active part in the day-to-day running of their school. Students have free access to the teachers and the headteacher, and this is also a very effective way for them to make their views known.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The links with parents, other schools and the community are very good. Parents are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very real sense of partnership between the school and parents.
- The school is an active member of the Rural Academy. There are very close links with local primary schools, which ensures a smooth transfer from the primary to secondary phase of education.
- The school is a natural focus for the community. The school is very aware that it is an important part of the local community and works hard to foster links with other organisations.

Commentary

42. There was very strong support for the school from the parents who responded to the questionnaire, and from those who attended the pre-inspection meeting. They were particularly pleased with the way the teachers expect the students to work hard and do their best. They are confident that their children are known as individuals, and feel very comfortable to approach the teachers if there are any concerns. There is a very real sense of partnership between the school and the parents.
43. Parents are fully involved in the life of the school and their children's education. The information supplied to them by the school is very good. There are regular and very informative newsletters that keep them fully aware of all that is planned for the coming weeks. The annual reports tell them of their child's progress, targets for the next year, and clearly relate to the individual student. When their children move into Year 11, they are provided with a comprehensive booklet giving them the important dates and deadlines for the forthcoming examinations. This helps them to be aware of the times their children will be under greatest pressure. There is a very active Parents, Teachers and Friends Association that involves many of the parents and plays an important part in the good relationships between home and school. Teachers and parents meet regularly, both formally and informally, and this very good two-way communication makes a considerable contribution to the students' learning, both whilst in school and at home.
44. The school works very closely with a number of other local schools. The site is shared with a nursery group and the local primary school, and there is very good co-operation between them. There are close links during Years 5 and 6 and these links leads to very good induction arrangements when the students transfer. The two schools share the use of the dining room and this also helps students to feel comfortable when they move into the senior school. The school is an active and enthusiastic member of the recently formed Rural Academy. It is anticipated that there will be many benefits for the students through the sharing of facilities and expertise that will result from this close partnership of schools. A great deal of time and effort has been needed for the Academy to reach this point, and the school has played a very significant part in this process.
45. The school is very aware that it is an important part of the local community and works hard to foster links with other organisations. As a result, the local community makes good use of the school. It is used as the Community Education Centre and is also used as a meeting place for a number of local groups and societies. The school makes good use of local places of interest and takes every opportunity to broaden the students' horizons and experiences. Local business people provide students with the opportunity to experience a 'mock' job interview, and this takes place in the town. The feedback from these interviews is very positive and helps students to gain confidence as they prepare to leave the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' interests are the focus for the school's leadership and management.
- Governance is good.
- The leadership of the headteacher supported very effectively by senior staff is very good.

Commentary

46. Governance of the school is good. Governors are very supportive and work hard on the school's behalf. They bring a wide range of personal and professional expertise to the school. There is a very good relationship between the governing body and the school's senior leadership but the relationship is not a cosy one. The governing body is prepared to challenge the leadership appropriately and does act as critical friend of the school. The governing body is involved in setting the strategic direction of the school by its review and involvement in school development at the annual 'away-day' and the effective working of its working parties. The governing body meets formally every half term and requires that the headteacher report on the progress of the school development plan.
47. The governing body also analyses examination performance and other performance indicators. It has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This would be strengthened further by the adoption of the governing body's idea for further development of individual link governor roles to provide a more effective voice and advocacy for staff and to facilitate more effective understanding and contribute to the evaluation of the work of the school. The provision for special educational needs Code of practice is fully in place and the governing body has started the process of examining the recently received local education authority's accessibility audit. Other statutory requirements are in place.
48. The governing body have a clear rationale to explain the fact that the school does not meet fully the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. The governing body expects that assemblies should be important occasions and should be planned to be broadly Christian in content but to also include moral as well as spiritual issues. They also expect the assemblies to assert the values of the school and for all students to attend three assemblies a week. However, they also feel that the time spent with tutors is particularly important in providing time for the tutors to meet with their tutor group and to follow school and individual issues. The inspection team agree with the governing body that this time is valuable. Given that assemblies are planned around a theme it would take little additional planning to introduce the 'thought for the day' and a brief period of reflection to allow class assemblies to meet fully the statutory requirement.
49. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Members of the senior management team support him very effectively. The school is very inclusive and has a very strong ethos, which is based on mutual respect. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared values. All members of staff display a particular loyalty to the school and its students and work very hard on their behalf. Students are the focus of the school. Communication is open and the headteacher is accessible. The school has a clear sense of direction and is ambitious as indicated by the successful application to become a Specialist Technology College within the Rural Academy.
50. Management is also very good. The school's performance is evaluated carefully. There is a rich body of internal and external assessment data. This is available to all staff and in most departments is used effectively to raise standards. Students' performance is tracked carefully and potential underachievement picked up quickly. Performance management is well organised and successfully implemented. The procedures and policies are appropriate and in

place. The outcomes are used well to determine training needs and link to both school and subject priorities. Performance management has had a positive effect on standards in the school.

51. The school places a high priority on professional development. This is reflected in the fact that it was awarded Investor in People status. Induction to the school is excellent. The school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training through the work of the professional mentor who is also an advanced skills teacher. The school benefits from its involvement with Initial Teacher Training because it encourages reflective practice and because trainees bring new ideas and approaches into the school.
52. The school's financial procedures are sound. They allow teachers to concentrate on teaching; seek best value for money; and enable governors to be active in fulfilling their role of monitoring the budget. The close informal working in school ensures that finance is managed to achieve the priorities of the school development plan. The school gained a small surplus in the last three financial years. A small school has relatively high unit costs and is not always able to operate as efficiently as a larger school. The school provides good value for money. Money, however, is very tight.
53. The leadership and management of special educational needs - by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the ASD 'specialist' teacher - are very good. There is a commitment to the development of the Learning Resource Centre as a 'Strategic Facility'. This means that the Learning Resource Centre addresses wider issues appropriate to many pupils such as 'anger management', 'touch typing', 'voice recognition software training' and 'social skills', as well as being a resource for disaffection, when it occurs.
54. Leadership and management in a small school are very demanding. People have multiple responsibilities along with a very significant teaching load. Distinguishing between equally demanding priorities is a skill – the cost of doing something is paid by not doing something else. The clear priority in this school, to which all staff members adhere and which stems from the headteacher and senior staff, is the students' interests. Ensuring that the students have the best opportunities is the main driving force behind the curriculum and other developments taking place.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	964,399	Balance from previous year	16,336
Total expenditure	961,973	Balance carried forward to the next	18,762
Expenditure per pupil	4,624.87		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11.
- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is good, with many very good features.
- There is a very strong team ethos in the department.
- The most able students are capable of still higher standards.

Commentary

55. Standards have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. In 2003 standards attained by Year 9 students in the National Curriculum tests were above the national average, while the GCSE results in both the English Language and the English Literature examinations were well above the national averages. Standards are high in English Literature in particular. Overall, achievement is good and often very good. Students with special educational needs, of below average and average ability achieve particularly well. The higher ability students are not always achieving the very highest grades. Because it is reflective, one of the department's many strengths is the way in which it seeks to address what it perceives as its weaknesses, and the issue of the more able student is recognised as a priority.
56. Lesson observations and examination of students' work also show that students are achieving very well. All students come to lessons expecting to work hard, and they behave well. This is particularly the case for older students because they know that the teachers will treat them respectfully and that they will do their best for them. As a result all students respond well in lessons because of the quality of the relationships they have with the teachers.
57. The quality of teaching is good, with many very good features. The atmosphere in every lesson seen was positive. Teaching is accurate, and the 'specialist' English teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject. Others who teach the subject are very well supported, including by the teaching assistants who are very effective. Teachers and students make appropriate use of ICT. Students are fully involved in their learning, taking advantage of the opportunities given to them. The nature of the work done is interesting, reflecting considered development of the subject content. Teachers pay attention to important factors, including finding time for reading and regular drafting of written work, as well as regular testing of spellings.
58. There are no significant shortcomings in teaching. Some improvements could be made though. For example, rooms are not always used well to facilitate paired and group work. Teachers also tend to do too much for students, who have the capacity for taking even more responsibility. Marking is regular and detailed but does not always clearly set out targets for improvement. In the group exercises observed girls did all the writing!
59. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards remain above national expectations. Most students now make good progress, which is an improvement.

60. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear drive to raise standards. Very effective use is made of resources, including staffing, to enable the school to respond flexibly to the particular needs of students. For example, classes are organised, and re-organised where necessary, according to need, which may be by ability, sex or course requirements. This demonstrates flexibility, with the school making adjustments and changes to address students' needs. The development planning is sharp, with a focus on what is important. Above all, the small team of teachers and teaching assistants share a common goal and so work very effectively together.

English and literacy across the curriculum

61. Teachers are aware of students' needs and the English department, aided by very effective work done by colleagues from the special educational needs department, makes very effective provision. There is no monitoring or evaluation of the teaching of literacy in subjects. Nonetheless, students' oral and literacy skills are good. A strong feature is the way that students use Standard English and extended responses when questioned. Students are not allowed to get away with one-word answers but, when appropriate, present a reasoned argument. These skills are well used in mathematics and science, and in most other subjects.

Modern foreign languages (French and Spanish)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall students achieve well in modern foreign languages.
- The Key Stage 3⁶ Strategy is implemented and well developed with all lessons having clear learning objectives, which are shared with students. Assessment data guides curriculum planning and focuses on students' individual needs.
- Students with special educational needs are well-supported.
- The department is well managed and teamwork is good.
- ICT needs better integration into modern foreign languages classroom-teaching and learning.
- There needs to be a greater use by the teacher of the language that is being taught during the lesson to improve students' listening skills.

Commentary

62. French and Spanish are the main foreign languages taught in the school, and almost all students take both languages in Years 8 and 9. For the last two years, results of the teacher assessments in Year 9 have been well above the national average for boys and girls. Many students continue with a foreign language in Years 10 and 11, with a few opting for two foreign languages for GCSE. Overall, students achieve well.
63. The number of students taking Spanish in Years 10 and 11 has increased recently. Girls achieved higher grades than boys in both languages. French results at GCSE in 2003 were lower than the national average and Spanish results were above the national average. A significant proportion of students achieved A* -C grades in Spanish in 2003. Listening is relatively the weaker skill in GCSE in both French and Spanish and boys particularly need more support for languages at GCSE. A focus on integration of ICT to improve boys' attainment is envisaged but is not yet implemented fully.

⁶ Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) - aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy and helping students who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate students and demand their active participation and providing professional development and support for teachers.

64. In French, several high attaining students reach above national standards and make very good progress, and all other students make good progress. In Spanish, students achieve very well. Standards and achievements of the girls are generally above those of the boys in both languages. Students make good progress in reading and writing, and satisfactory progress in listening. In speaking, progress varies, but it is generally good in Year 7 in French and in Years 8 and 9 in Spanish because of the enthusiasm the students have in the early stages of learning the language.
65. By the end of Year 11, standards in modern foreign languages are good and sometimes very good. Students develop confidence in language learning, due to the teachers' clear references to examination requirements, and to their very good lesson planning. All students achieve very well in writing, and the written coursework of the abler students is good in both languages. In frequent oral role-plays, students make good progress in speaking to interact in practical situations and to express their feelings and opinions in the foreign language.
66. Teaching and learning are good and often very good across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject. Particularly inspiring and enthusiastic teaching enables both boys and girls to achieve their best in Spanish. Students make good progress in French due to the teacher's high expectations, good teaching and attention to strategies to improve boys' motivation. All lessons observed began with clear learning objectives and good use was made of time. There were effective starters and reflective opportunities at the end of the lessons as well as effective questioning techniques designed to improve pace of lessons and thinking skills of students. The use of resources was satisfactory. Minor discipline problems were dealt with effectively and teachers made clear their expectations for good behaviour.
67. Teachers' careful tracking of students' progress informs planning to improve weaker areas enabling less able pupils to make good progress to reach their potential. Students with special educational needs are well supported and those who are gifted and talented make good progress. Teachers monitor individual students' progress and set targets relating them to National Curriculum levels and examination grades for each skill. Teachers encourage students to become responsible for their own learning and offer support through encouragement and differentiated teaching.
68. The department contributes well to the development of students' literacy especially in reading, writing and general awareness of how language works. Teachers experiment with creative ideas to enable students to learn independently. High quality displays motivate students well. For example, an interactive 'verb-tree' with roots and branches helps students improve their knowledge of the structure of the language.
69. The management of the modern foreign languages department is good and directed towards monitoring, evaluating and improving performance. Departmental policies and assessment information are comprehensive and the department is fully involved in implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy. The department has good schemes of work and procedures for tracking students' attainment and progress. The leadership is good and the two teachers work well together and are strongly committed to their students' success. School trips to France are arranged and these contribute to students' cultural and social development as well as extending opportunities for students to practise their foreign language skills. The opportunity for students to take two languages at GCSE is good but it is at present restricted by the necessity for students to attend a twilight session outside the normal timetable.
70. Since the last inspection, the department has gained a specialist teaching room for modern foreign languages and a specialist teacher has replaced a non-specialist. The department has developed and is implementing teaching strategies to raise the attainment of boys and methodology has been improved through the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average results in national tests.
- Teaching is never less than good, and often better.
- Very good leadership of the subject.
- There is a need to continue to develop the use of ICT.
- The performance of boys in relation to the girls in national tests needs to be improved.

Commentary

71. At the end of Year 9, the latest national test results are well above the national average when compared with results in all and similar schools. The trend over the last three years is above the national average for their age group. The girls out-perform the boys in these tests. The GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above the national average for the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C and there was a 100% pass rate at grades A*-G. Overall, students achieve well. The girls out-performed the boys significantly at these examinations. Although the students did less well when compared against the results in the other subjects they entered, this can be attributed to adjusting to the new modular course at GCSE and the high number of students with special education needs in the year group. The percentage of students gaining the top grades needs to be improved, as in 2003 it was slightly lower than could be expected.
72. Current work seen in lessons and in students' exercise books shows that standards are above average. The work of the students shows much care and attention and their knowledge and understanding are built upon well, resulting in very good overall achievement. This was exemplified in Year 7 on finding mean and ranges using a probability strategy game in which the students were openly discussing their findings and consolidating their understanding. Similar very good progress was seen in Year 11 where students were proving conjectures about the size of an angle and looking for elegant solutions.
73. This subject is inclusive of all students. The progress of the students with special educational needs is very good as observed in a Year 7 lesson where the students were building up patterns of number sequences using correct mathematical language throughout. The work for the most able would benefit from being moved along at a quicker pace. The attitudes of the students towards the subject are very good and they work hard and stay on task throughout the lessons.
74. During the inspection there were no obvious differences in the responses of the boys from the girls in what they were being asked to do both in lessons and in the work scrutiny. This being the case the underperformance of boys relative to the girls might well be down to the lack of thorough revision at the final stages before the external examinations by the boys.
75. Teaching is often very good and good overall. It benefits from very good planning, explanations and well-judged teacher interventions. Considering the fact that all classes are of mixed ability the work is very well matched to the needs of the students. Where a teaching assistant was available for supporting students the deployment was very effective. The positive relationships between the teachers and students contribute significantly to the learning that takes place. Homework is set regularly and is well marked with helpful comments.
76. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader has a clear vision of how the subject should be taught. There is a good team spirit among the mathematics teachers. He supports them well and monitors and evaluates their work in order to inform future priorities for improvement. There is a good subject development plan and a

very good system of tracking the progress of the students using prior attainment; predictions and target-setting procedures are in place.

77. The accommodation and resources are both good - a particularly good feature is that teachers have a sufficient supply of equipment so that if students have forgotten anything then the lessons can continue with the minimum of disruption. The use of ICT is still too limited.
78. Since the last inspection the overall improvement is good. The standards of teaching, the results in the national tests and the leadership and management have all made significant contributions to this judgement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

79. Students' competence in mathematics is good. A good policy and guidance on developing students' skills in mathematics across the curriculum exist within the subject area. All other members of the staff have received training in this aspect of their work. However, in order that the approach throughout the school can become more co-ordinated and effective the policy and guidance should now be appropriately amended for the use of all teachers and support staff throughout the school. A very thorough audit of the use of mathematics shows that skills in extracting information from graphs, tables, charts and diagrams are being used in geography, history, food, modern foreign languages and science. Similarly work with two- and three-dimensional shapes occur in art and technology. During the inspection no obvious problems with the use of mathematics across the curriculum were reported. The improvement since the last inspection is good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent relationships between staff and students and between students.
- There has been a formalised commitment to raising standards in the science department.
- There has been sustained improvement in external tests and examinations in the lower school and at GCSE.
- The emphasis on good aural skills and the use of technical language is very well developed in all year groups.
- Leadership and management are very good, with planning and assessment meeting the needs of the individual.
- Imaginative teaching links science to real life; this encourages students to enter into logical debate which stimulates their learning.
- There are not enough computers in the laboratory, which restricts the use of ICT in practical work.
- Some lessons are taught outside the laboratories; this has a negative impact on teaching and learning.

Commentary

80. Standards are very good. There is evidence of strong, sustained and good improvement since the last inspection. When students take external tests in Year 9, they are achieving results well above the national average for all schools. This achievement is significant. GCSE results also show very good improvement. The work seen in the students' files shows that they make very good progress. They achieve at least well. The progression is enhanced by the emphasis placed on scientific enquiry, logical debate and discussion of scientific issues related to the 21st century. The issues ranged from genetic engineering to differences in characteristics of radio waves. The use of challenging open-ended tasks raises standards

because students are engaged and motivated by the opportunity to put forward their own ideas.

81. Teaching is usually good with examples of very good practice. Students learn well because teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching expertise. Both science teachers are Advanced Skills Teachers and act as coaches to other schools for the Cognitive Accelerated Science Education. For example, in Year 11 students analysed difficult text on gene research and entered into logical debate on associated issues. In another Year 11 lesson students' knowledge on the electromagnetic spectrum was extended through careful questioning. Health and safety issues were clearly addressed and when a demonstration did not go as planned, the teacher involved the students in a debate on safety and decisions were made whether to repeat the experiment. In a Year 9 lesson data logging equipment was used but there are not enough computers in the laboratory for use in practical work. Lack of access to ICT is hindering developments in science.
82. The students' attitude to their science lessons is a strength of the department. They enjoy the challenge set by teachers and enter readily into scientific debate. In a Year 10 lesson students worked in groups of three to discuss their coursework and how their methodology could be improved. They were empathetic to each other and their discussions were focused on how they could do better. The students' literacy skills were very well developed; in most lessons they were able to use new scientific words well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson students were able to relate acidity and alkalinity to pH number. Teachers showed respect to all students' views and when incorrect answers were offered students were given the opportunity to reflect and correct their answers.
83. Leadership and management of the department are very good. These are established through a supportive and collegiate style of working. The vision, sense of purpose and a desire for students to do well are seen throughout the department. Assessment is very good because of:
- the formative marking of student work;
 - the students' ability to reflect on what they are doing in a self-critical manner;
 - the sharing of process with other departments;
 - the sharing through the portfolio of good practice with the students.
- These factors lead to students and parents knowing what needs to be done to achieve further.
84. The department benefits from the good support of the technician but this could be further improved if requests for equipment were linked to schemes of work, enabling apparatus to be prepared in advance. The production of shared resources would ease the demands on a small department. The fact that it is not possible that all science lessons are taught in specialist accommodation sometimes restricts the opportunities for practical work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** and improving under the new head of department.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising because of the good teaching students receive.
- Students enjoy ICT and work hard.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9.
- Lesson plans do not always contain enough different work for higher attaining students.

Commentary

85. Results in GNVQ ICT examination in 2003 were poor. Out of the whole year group that started the course four passed. ICT standards of the current students in GCSE Business and Communications classes are average. The majority of students show an above average grasp of the ICT work they have studied such as designing office stationery and the use of mail merge in word processing. But there are areas of work that are weaker and these include the use spreadsheets and databases. This is because there is insufficient curriculum time allocated for the subject. For the small minority of students who study ICT for more than one lesson per week, standards are above average across all areas of work.
86. For current students in Year 7 standards are average and they are making sound progress in their work on data handling. In Years 8 and 9 standards are below average because their previous experience left them with low skill levels. Year 9 students have only a rudimentary understanding of how web sites are constructed and how web pages are written. The new head of department is raising standards. For example, although students still need considerable help with desktop publishing, they are quickly gaining many new skills such as the use of templates and merging text with relevant graphics. Students are well aware of the dangers of revealing personal information on the Internet.
87. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Students enter the school with average ICT skills and these are maintained in Year 7. Past experiences have left students with lower than expected standards in Years 8 and 9. Good teaching is helping students to catch up but at present they are achieving less well than they should be. In GCSE classes, achievement is satisfactory. However, this represents very good progress in this school year, the result of good teaching by new staff. Students with special educational needs achieve well because of the additional help they receive in practical sessions.
88. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and ensures learning focuses on key concepts. Expectations are high and learning is accelerated through good use of technical vocabulary, detailed explanations and discussions. Teachers plan the use of time and resources well and there is a good balance between learning of theory and practical work. However, lesson plans do not always contain enough different work for higher attaining students in the mixed ability classes. Students' attitudes are positive in lessons, an improvement, they say, on the past. Some lessons could contain more challenge to really inspire learners. The ICT technician often makes a good contribution to lessons, taking responsibility for a small group and, for example, showing them how to use a digital camera successfully. Class management is very good and students always behave very well.
89. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department has made a very significant impact on raising standards in a short period of time. Her development plans are well explained and are relevant. She has clear priorities, which are ensuring time and energy are spent raising standards. Assessment is good and having a significant impact on raising aspirations in Year 11 classes.
90. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Teachers are well qualified and there are no unsatisfactory lessons. The school now has an adequate number of computers. Students' attitudes have improved. At the time of the last inspection leadership and management were unsatisfactory and assessment was weak.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. When available students use computers well to present GCSE coursework in many subjects. Computers are well used in design technology where students learn about CAD and CAM. Students use spreadsheets in food technology to calculate and compare the cost of different recipes. In science students use computers and data logging equipment well to measure sound. A French group make good use of boys' interest in computers to develop their

language skills. In mathematics Year 7 use simulation software successfully to develop students' understanding of probability. Overall, however, there is insufficient use of computers in lessons across the curriculum. This is partly because access to computers has been problematic in the past. The recent purchase of a set of wireless laptops will help redress this as will the additional investment resulting from Technology College status.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently well above average.
- The majority of students show positive attitudes and achieve well.
- Assessment information is not used effectively to monitor progress.
- Development planning is not sufficiently focused on achievement.
- Good support for students with special educational needs enables them to achieve very well.

Commentary

92. Standards in both the teacher assessed tests at the end of Year 9 and the GCSE examinations for 2003 were well above average. Work seen in Years 9 and 11 during the inspection was of a lower standard though still above average.
93. Students enter the school with broadly average levels of geographical knowledge and understanding. They develop basic skills of map reading and interpretation and improve their knowledge of the location of places. They record information in maps, graphs and diagrams and most use vocabulary accurately in descriptive and explanatory writing. A significant number can draw and link evidence from a range of sources to support conclusions and attain the higher National Curriculum levels. Given their starting point the progress made by the majority of students by the end of Year 9 represents good achievement. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because they are given materials well matched to their capabilities and receive very good help from both teachers and teaching assistants. In Years 10 and 11 students continue to achieve well. They apply previously acquired knowledge and skills to a range of more complex case studies and issues and use enquiry skills and ICT effectively in producing high quality fieldwork.
94. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. A major strength is that teachers form good relationships with their students, know them well and give good individual support. Tasks and activities challenge students of all capabilities and homework is used effectively to build on work in lessons. Almost all students show interest, work productively and behave very well. They learn most effectively when given the opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in new contexts and when they are engaged on independent enquiry and research projects. Marking and assessment procedures allow too few opportunities for them to assess their own learning and do not give them a clear idea on how to progress.
95. The subject is led and managed competently on a day-to-day, informal basis by a head of department, who carries a range of additional responsibilities, and working relationships are good. However, the impact on achievement of actions proposed in development planning is not clear and little progress has been made in improving teaching through systematic monitoring and the implementation of new ideas. The department now generates a good deal of assessment data but there are no effective procedures for target-setting and tracking student progress.

96. Higher standards, good student achievement and the introduction of new schemes of work represent satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Planning, the adoption of a wider range of teaching styles and the more effective use of assessment data remain as areas for further development.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Leadership and management are very good and support teachers on initial training.
- Students have positive attitudes and learn very well from the variety of activities provided.
- Assessment procedures do not yet inform students of the level that they are working at and of the actions needed to improve.
- The achievement of students is good.

Commentary

97. Students achieve well in history. Standards on entry to Year 7 are at national expectations and by Year 9 standards are above them. The small numbers of students studying history in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress and attain appropriate standards.
98. Teaching overall is very good. It is well planned; has a variety of activities; and so appeals to a variety of learning styles. The teaching is enthusiastic and well paced. This communicates to students who enjoy their lessons. They move between activities without wasting time. Teaching includes work on literacy and numeracy and adopts the Key Stage 3 strategy consistently. The setting of objectives through key questions is particularly effective in providing a clear focus for the lesson. Homework is well planned and adds to students' knowledge and understanding.
99. Students have a very positive attitude to history. They take a pride in the presentation of their work. In one Year 10 lesson, this led to groups of students producing excellent work, using ICT, on the route and construction of a turnpike road. Students co-operate and relate well to each other and to their teacher. This promotes strong personal development for the students. These positive student attitudes and very good teaching lead to very good learning.
100. The department's inclusion of all students is very good. It caters very well for special educational needs and lower attaining students with differentiated activities. Also, the differentiation includes activities to extend the thinking and understanding of the most able students. Boys and girls are involved equally in the lessons.
101. The leadership and management of history are very good. The department's documentation supports its work and helps teachers on initial training within the department. The head of department's professional self-evaluation of its work has led her to produce an appropriately focused departmental development plan. Marking is thorough and students' progress is well monitored. As yet, the assessment procedures do not inform students sufficiently of the level of their work and of the measures they need to take to improve.
102. History has made good progress from the previous inspection where the report was good. This is a credit to the clear vision and hard work of the head of department.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching through oral strategies in Years 10 and 11 produces good learning and good personal development.
- Departmental documentation does not support the department's teachers adequately.
- The overall good teaching enables students to achieve in line with expectations.
- Assessment procedures are inadequately developed.
- The department's teachers are helped by the head of department's strong informal support.

Commentary

103. Students' achievement is satisfactory in religious education. The standard of work seen in the scrutiny of students' work throughout the school meets expectations. However, the standard of oral work in Years 10 and 11 shows knowledge and understanding above that level.
104. Overall teaching is good. Appropriate materials capture students' interest. For example in a Year 9 lesson leaflets on "Kick Racism out of Football" were analysed to consider methods of raising racial awareness. In the lower school, good classroom management skills keep students on task and allow them to raise issues about the topics being studied. In Years 10 and 11, teaching through oral strategies enables students to extend their knowledge and understanding through discussion and collaborative activities.
105. The positive approach by teachers to their teaching is mirrored by the positive attitudes of the students. Students engage willingly in the activities set for them. They enjoy their lessons, work actively on the tasks set and in consequence their learning is good.
106. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The head of department gives strong informal support to other subject teachers. She has provided them with a summary of topics, which is helpful. However, the department lacks a fully developed scheme of work. This would give teachers security in their teaching and would ensure that teachers have appropriate assessment opportunities to help their planning. The departmental action plan is appropriate. One key area in it is to match the work being covered to the new Cumbria Agreed Syllabus. The department lacks a thorough assessment procedure, which will inform students of the level of their work and what they need to do to make progress.
107. The department is inclusive. Boys and girls are involved equally in lessons. It makes good provision for lower attaining students and for those with special educational needs. The department's provision for the more able is less developed. It does not consistently provide differentiated work to challenge them. In Key Stage 4, it makes a good contribution to students' personal development through the emphasising in oral work of the need to express a view and to listen with respect to the views of others. Examples were seen of reflection in lessons. For example, in one lesson, students talked about prayer and spiritual needs. Although in some other lessons opportunities were missed to encourage reflection, the department does make a satisfactory contribution to students' spiritual development.
108. The department's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. It has established religious education as a separate subject in Key Stage 4.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Students enjoy design and technology and work hard.
- Good teaching ensures students make good progress in their learning.
- Not enough different work is planned for higher attaining students.

Commentary

109. Results in GCSE examination in 2003 were amongst the best in the school and many students far exceeded their predicted grade. The results were an improvement over 2002, which were also above the average for the school. Boys' and girls' results are similar.
110. For current students, standards in GCSE classes are well above average. Students undertake a good range of appropriate research when designing and this is carefully analysed. The results of the research are used very well to guide product development. Hand drawings of design ideas are of a good quality, carefully annotated to show strengths and weaknesses. However, final designs do not usually take advantage of computer aided design (CAD) software. Evaluations of finished articles are well structured and show how the product can be improved. Standards of practical work are also above average. In resistant materials, where students are making a variety of wooden cabinets, standards are very high with work often finished to a professional standard.
111. For current students in Year 9 standards are average. Students use hand tools accurately and safely to cut and join a good variety of materials. They have a sound understanding of materials and structures, for example how triangle shapes give bridges added strength. They have a good understanding of food and diets and can use this knowledge well to develop healthy recipes. Designing is average overall and good in food technology. Here well-structured work sheets focus clearly on key aspects of research and evaluation.
112. Achievement overall is good. Achievement in GCSE classes is very good. Students start their GCSE courses with average standards and gain very good results. This is because of the very good teaching they receive. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is good because students join the school with standards a little below average. Students are making good progress in the use and understanding of ICT in design technology, for example how computers can be used in manufacturing (CAM). Achievement of students with special educational needs is similar to that of other students.
113. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and ensures learning focuses on key concepts. Some teaching successfully embraces the Key Stage 3 strategy and this accelerates learning. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject engages students well. Students' attitudes are very positive in lessons and in the best they are completely engrossed in their work. Expectations are usually high and learning is reinforced through good use of technical vocabulary, detailed explanations and discussions. In some lessons higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged by the work. Occasionally the pace of lessons flag and some students lose concentration towards the end. Teachers use resources well and there is a good balance between learning of theory and practical work. The technician and teacher assistants make a good contribution to learning by taking responsibility for helping small groups who are catching up. Class management is very good and students always behave very well.

114. Leadership and management are good. This is successfully shared between the teachers in the department. Development plans are challenging and well explained. Targets set in the school's Technology bid are demanding but realistic. Assessment is good and having a significant impact on raising standards in Year 11 classes.
115. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and the accommodation and resources much improved. The good teaching highlighted in the last report has been sustained. The use of ICT is well established. Standards of designing are now similar to those of making.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Standards are improving, particularly of boys.
- The leadership of the subject is good.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology.
- The performance of students is not analysed.

Commentary

116. Recent results from National Curriculum teacher assessments carried out in Year 9 indicate that standards are well above the national average. These results must be regarded as unreliable as standards of work seen are just below the national average. However, recent Year 7 work involving interesting combinations of media and observational drawing is above average at this stage.
117. With the exception of 2003, when results were well below the national average, recent results at GCSE show that girls perform very well, often exceeding the national average. In sharp contrast, the performance of the low number of boys taking the subject has been extremely poor. However, as a result of improved teaching, standards of boys' work have improved significantly and the gap in current performance is now no bigger than experienced nationally. Overall standards of work in Year 11 are below national average. However, current Year 10 work is in line with the national average.
118. The standard of teaching is good. The recently appointed experienced teacher has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons have clear objectives and are well structured. Work set allows students of all abilities to achieve well. The individual needs of students, including those with special needs, are met by continuous individual support, which characterises most lessons. There is good classroom management and resources are well prepared. Students respond very positively to the teaching, and approach the work with enthusiasm and interest. This results in a good working atmosphere. As a result, the achievement of students of all abilities is good. However, in one Year 9 lesson observed a small group of boys were not applying themselves to the work as well as girls and consequently were underachieving. On occasions students move on to the next stage of their work without referring to previous preparatory work and this lowers standards.
119. Leadership of the department is good. The new teacher in charge has taken over following a long period of staffing instability. She has a clear view of how the subject and overall provision needs to improve. Management of the subject is satisfactory. There are targets for improvement focused on developing the curriculum, raising standards and improving student

attitude towards the subject. Schemes of work are very thorough and ensure a broad and balanced coverage of the curriculum. Assessment is good, with students aware of their level of performance and what they need to do to improve. National curriculum teacher assessment in Year 9 is now accurate and linked to assessment criteria. There are good links with both feeder primary schools and the local college.

120. More use could be made of ICT. Sketchbooks are not used universally and their status needs improving. Information on the performance of groups of students is not analysed and therefore not informing teaching and curriculum development.
121. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. In particular, the standard of teaching and accommodation has improved significantly.

Drama

Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is seen as being a very important plank in the school's provision for students' social development as well as being part of their arts experience.
- Very good relationships exist between teachers and students.
- The work develops students' knowledge and understanding about drama through text and other means as well as developing students' 'performance' skills.

Commentary

122. Students attain broadly average standards in drama. Achievement by Year 11 is sound. In 2003 there was a drop in examination results at GCSE due to a change in the exam board specifications, which put more emphasis on coursework. The school has since adjusted its approach.
123. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject because of the very good relationships that exist between students and the teachers. Students gain a significant sense of success as evidenced, for example, by their reaction to Year 6's responses to their performance to the local primary school. Older students work well with each other and are able to initiate and refine their ideas within the group work. In their coursework they show that they are able to analyse characters and motives in, for example *Educating Rita*.
124. Teaching is shared between two very senior members of staff. Teaching is overall good; teachers are very skilled and experienced. This compensates for some lack of specific subject expertise in the teaching of the lower school. They build a high degree of trust, listen to and value students' contributions and students gain in confidence as a result. In the upper school, students were clearly used to the teacher adopting and working within a role. They were able to sustain a character and atmosphere and also analyse key moments within their improvisation where individuals took the drama forward or blocked a possible development. In this lesson the theme of homelessness had been explored sufficiently to inform the drama and provide them with a 'vocabulary' of experience, and similarly in Year 7, although more could have been made of *Ariels'* song, students explored in their drama the basic themes of *The Tempest*. Year 8 explored *status* in pair work leading to examination of a play text in their next lesson. Drama does not have attainment targets but the work in drama at the school does allow the interrelationship between developing performing skills and enhancing their dramatic experience through text and other means.
125. The school places a high value on the teaching of drama; it is seen as not only extending students' experience of the arts but in the process being a very important plank in the school's overall provision for students' social development. The school values, to a very high degree,

the important investment opportunities the subject provides for very senior managers in the school to develop active working relationships with the students with the resultant long-term benefits that this provides. Overall, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The subject would benefit from the investment of both management time to pull some of the subject planning together and opportunities for staff development. The subject was not reported at the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy and value music because the practical classroom activities provide them with positive experiences.
- Teaching and learning in lessons are good overall with some very strong features.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because a number of important aspects of the subject have not been developed.
- The subject is not allocated enough timetable time and this has an impact on achievement, particularly at GCSE level.

Commentary

126. A very small number of students entered the GCSE examination in 2003 and therefore no significance can be attached to the results.
127. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and this represents satisfactory achievement because standards on entry to the school are also average. In Years 7 to 9, achievement in performing is good because most emphasis is given to this in lessons. Students in Year 7 perform in time within simple musical structures. By the end of Year 9 they perform more complex pieces in parts and have learned to play popular instruments using the correct technique. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is only satisfactory because students have only one lesson per week. They compose and perform confidently but are less secure in their listening and appraising.
128. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In the most successful lessons, the teacher leads the class as a performer, providing an excellent role model. The best lessons are well paced and well structured enabling rapid progress to be made. Students become engrossed in their work and experience a huge sense of achievement. When students are left to practise, with only a worksheet for support, they quickly go off task and underachieve. There is little written work or homework set in Years 7 to 9, and this means that students do not have planned opportunities to consolidate or extend their knowledge. In the GCSE class, students are given good individual support for their practical work.
129. The school has met its major objective of raising the profile of music with outstanding success. However, there are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject. ICT has not been developed in the curriculum, and the contribution that music makes to students' literacy and numeracy skills has not been considered. There is no coherent assessment strategy in place to support students' understanding of what they are learning. There is good provision of a range of instrumental tuition although the work of freelance tutors is not systematically monitored. High value is placed on students' own practical work and the use of music created by students at school events enhances their self-esteem. The department is not sufficiently inclusive: some students with special educational needs do not attend music lessons, and some students are not able to take instrumental tuition because they do not have the means.

130. The department has made a major stride forward since the time of the previous inspection. Music is now a valued, popular and practical subject. Overall progress is satisfactory because weaknesses in management mean that other important areas of the subject have not been developed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and their participation levels in physical education activities are very high.
- Members of staff are very committed to the students and school.
- The extra-curricular provision, particularly with respect to outdoor and adventurous activities is excellent.
- The paucity of indoor accommodation for physical education adversely impacts upon the breadth of the taught curriculum.
- The lack of breadth of curricular provision and the weighting of activities within the curriculum.
- Assessment procedures to be linked with planning for teaching and learning.

Commentary

131. Since the last inspection, GCSE examinations have been successfully introduced in this subject: standards achieved by students at GCSE are broadly consistent with national performance. Student written work for GCSE, particularly with respect to their individual experimental work, is good and clearly demonstrates that their interest is engaged, that they are committed to their course and that they are confident in the subject. Numbers wishing to take the subject, next year, have doubled. The Year 9 teacher assessments are slightly lower than the national figures. However, this may be a result of a small cohort where the performance of a tiny minority of students can have an impact on the overall statistics. From the limited activities seen, the standard of work in Years 7 to 9 is in line with that of students elsewhere and similarly in Years 10 and 11 GCSE: no Year 10 and 11 core work was programmed on the days of the inspection. Some students graduate to study the subject at A-level and beyond, building upon the interest generated and developed by the subject in school.
132. The quality of teaching and learning within physical education is satisfactory. The teachers have specific areas of strength, in which they take the lead in planning and in teaching. An example of good practice was seen in a Year 7 class, where students were challenged to analyse the action and then use that information. They were set an investigative project relating to the broad jump, shared their observations with the rest of the class, key principles and learning points being recorded on the board, for future reference: those points were then used to improve their own and group performance.
133. Planned differentiation, together with the use of different forms of assessment to inform planning, would further enhance the learning of students. Students are encouraged, praised and enjoy the security of a safe working environment: generally they are clear as to what is expected of them. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and perform as well as their peers. Students prepare quickly for lessons and participate with enthusiasm.
134. Teaching and learning are facilitated by the very high standards of students' behaviour assisted by the relaxed relationship between the students and their supportive teachers.
135. The department functions satisfactorily under difficult circumstances. The two teachers involved are both part time within the department although both give much more time and effort to the subject. Their teaching commitment is shared with another subject and the head of

department is head of department in both subjects: the other teacher is a part time teacher in the school. The availability of staff also impacts on the possible use of the hall for teaching, as many of the classes are team-taught due to the numbers involved and facilities availability. Both female and male students follow the same basic course dividing, according to sex, to follow the traditional team games.

136. The outside accommodation to develop games is good, comprising a well maintained hard-court area, with a four tennis-court capacity, and two out of three level and relatively well-drained pitches, playable at the time of the inspection. Although the technical requirements of the National Curriculum for Physical Education are fulfilled, the programme breadth, within the selected aspects, is limited particularly with regard to the time accorded to gymnastics: there is no dance provision within the curriculum. Time and financial constraints on the head of department have resulted in slow engagement with ICT, although this is improving, along with national strategies. Overall, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory.
137. A comprehensive programme of extra-curricular sporting activities is in place, through inter-house and extra-mural competition; these are weighted towards games of the invasion type. The school acquits itself well in extra-mural competition. The department also offers an exciting, well-established, extra-curricular programme of outdoor pursuits that encompass a range of water sports and mountain activities and are greatly appreciated by the students. An annual expedition abroad, currently to Norway, is another positive feature of the extra-curricular opportunities offered to students. Although not directly linked to the physical education department, a large number of students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.
138. There have been improvements since the last inspection. GCSE examinations are now a feature of the programme and results are in line with national attainment. Risk assessment is established and there is evidence that students evaluate and improve their work in some sessions: more emphasis should be placed upon this aspect of the work, together with the integration of assessment. The standards achieved by students with special educational needs allow them to work alongside their peers successfully and make good progress, but greater consideration must be given to differentiated planning and delivery to ensure that more able students are sufficiently challenged in lessons. Enthusiasm of students for the subject, and appreciation of the commitment of their teachers, remains a strong feature of the work of the department.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- The subject is very well supported by the school's community ethos with its extensive opportunities for students to develop their skills for responsible action.

Commentary

139. Standards in citizenship are above average.⁷ Students achieve well. Standards in the subject are enhanced significantly by the school's very good community ethos. A parent at the pre-inspection meeting said that, 'the students are born into the community and at the school they are taught to care for that community'. They are also taught how that community, in the broadest sense, functions and works.

⁷ Citizenship has attainment targets for Year 9 and Year 11. There are no national averages for Citizenship and personal, social and health education and the term above average is used more colloquially than other subject reports where there are references to national GCSE average - the term is used to describe students performing at a level above what is normally seen.

140. The senior management team conducted a careful audit of the subject requirements of citizenship and what subjects make a specific contribution to it. In the lower school it is largely taught through the personal, social and health education course and through tutorial time, and in the upper school through tutorial time supplemented by specific contributions by English and the IBV course (Issues, Beliefs and Values). Students have a good knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and through their specific citizenship work research political and cultural issues. The school's ethos is such that they have very good opportunities for developing their skills for responsible action. The school is skilled at ensuring that engagement in school activities is recorded and certificated in order to provide the evidence for their citizenship portfolio.
141. In the teaching seen in the sample of lessons there was some variability but teaching is good over time, as evidenced by students' good attitudes towards the subject. A Year 9 lesson, for example, required students to give presentations having researched specific areas of enquiry based around what a member of parliament (MP) does and the workings of the House of Commons. Specific key skills of research, and leadership and group working were developed well, along with basic knowledge and understanding. Students who had written to their MP were evidently delighted to have received answers from the MP. Year 11 students all have to take an assembly on a citizenship theme. Much of the work with older students is based on discussion.
142. There is a clear scheme of work for the lower school and an outline for Year 10 and 11, which identifies the target work. There is good use made of nationally published schemes of work in the upper school and the fact that the head of English is responsible for the IBV component and is a key player in the personal, social and health education programme helps in ensuring that the overlap and contribution from one subject area to citizenship is explicit. More detailed schemes of work will provide the support to other tutorial staff although there is a high degree of informal support. The school is actively in the process of identifying what aspects of the coursework work well and is refining and developing the subject. Leadership by those responsible for auditing and establishing the subject has been good. Management is also good, although a formal re-evaluation by the school of the subject at an early point is required - particularly to judge the impact of the time available for citizenship as a subject, in the light of any changes in the religious education syllabus which result from the process of matching religious education to the requirements of the new Cumbrian Agreed syllabus.

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The taught programme is supported by very good care and guidance systems to support individuals.
- The quality of relationships between staff and students is very good; there is much informal support to individuals.

Commentary

143. Standards in personal, social and health education are good. Students achieve well. Their very good attitudes, maturity and the wide-range of post-16 choices are a reflection of the good taught provision and the extensive informal support that they receive. Students are very well prepared for their next step when they leave school through such activities as work experience, formal interviewing by local business managers and school and college open days. A Year 11 student liked the fact that the school was for students aged 11 to 16 because she could make her own mind up what she wanted to do post-16 without offending anyone. She clearly had the view that the school was a launch pad for the post-16 provision.

144. The personal, social and health education course covers aspects of health education, including sex and relationships and drug and substance abuse. In Years 7 to 9 there is a close link to citizenship but other themes, such as personal organisation and choices are explored. Drama is seen as making a significant contribution to students' personal development. In Year 10 and 11 the work is broadened further to ensure students conduct a self assessment, moderated by their teacher and based on evidence from their portfolio.
145. In the sample of lessons seen teaching was good. In one lesson, for example, the teacher's evident trust in the students allowed her to share her feelings towards her 'first car', leading to much laughter and engagement of the students. The evident good relationships and skilled teacher management enabled the students to make the required transitions to exploring the themes of the Cumbrian road awareness programme. In another lesson, students explored with the local Connexions adviser the range of options available post-16.
146. The taught provision is supported very effectively by the school's ethos and high level of informal support. Assemblies make an important contribution to the personal, social and health education programme. For example, one assembly tackled the particular theme of prejudice and making judgements based on hearsay rather than facts relating it to Travellers. The subject has maintained the standards identified in the previous inspection. It continues to be used effectively to raise the self-esteem of students and to prepare them for life beyond school. Leadership and management of the provision are overall effective.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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