

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Crewe

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111452

Headteacher: Mr P Walters

Lead inspector: Mr A Henderson

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 February 2004

Inspection number: 258784

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	604
School address:	Dane Bank Avenue Crewe Cheshire
Postcode:	CW2 8AE
Telephone number:	01270 458014 / 01270 661328
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Walton-Smith
Date of previous inspection:	7 December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas More High School is a voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive school for boy and girls aged 11 to 16, situated close to the centre of Crewe, in Cheshire. It is smaller than average; at present there are 604 pupils on roll with slightly more boys than girls. Most pupils are drawn from four parishes within the Shrewsbury Diocese, and the school serves a wide, diverse area that includes areas both of social deprivation and relative affluence. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, including 22 pupils with statements of need, mostly for specific or moderate learning problems. The vast majority of pupils are indigenous white with the remainder from mixed race or black origins, including six traveller pupils. In addition, there are two refugee pupils who are both at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Since the previous inspection the school has gained Beacon School status acknowledging its very good practice, and a Schools Achievement Award in 2003 in recognition of its positive progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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30941	K Brammer	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
22985	J Sparkes	Team inspector	Science
14841	M Duffey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
10209	V Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
3930	R Pitcher	Team inspector	History Special educational needs
3793	J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective, successful school that is providing a high quality of education for its pupils. It has many very good features, and the school's strengths far outweigh the areas needing improvement. Standards are well above average by Year 11, and results in both national tests and GCSE examinations are improving faster than the national picture. Pupils achieve very well because they have very good attitudes to their learning, and because they are very well taught. **The school is well led, and provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results are well above average, and are much higher than those achieved by similar schools. They include an exceptionally high proportion of the highest A and A* grades.
- Provision in modern foreign languages is very good.
- The very good overall quality and consistency of teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and commitment to their studies are major strengths.
- Good leadership ensures a sharp focus on standards through the very good monitoring, review and evaluation of examination performance and pupils' progress.

But...

- Standards in English are not as high as those in mathematics and science in Year 9.
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Aspects of accommodation, including provision for drama, music, art and special educational needs are unsatisfactory.
- Provision for ICT and the use of the library need improvement to enhance pupils' independent learning, research and study.

The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Standards in Year 9 tests and GCSE have improved more quickly than the national rate of improvement, in response to improved teaching. The school has responded effectively to the issues raised in the previous report, although the accommodation is still inadequate for some subjects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Overall, the achievements of pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 are very good. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9, and are well above average in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results are improving more quickly than the national rate; in 2003 they were well above the national average, and in the top five per cent compared with similar schools. 71 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades, including an outstanding 33 per cent at the higher A and A* grades. At the end of Year 9 in 2003 results in national tests were well above average in mathematics and science, and above average in English.

Standards in work seen are similar to the test and examination results. In Year 9 they are above average overall. Standards are above average in English, science and in most other subjects although they are not as high in English as in mathematics and science. Standards in both mathematics and modern foreign languages are well above average at this stage. In Years 10 and 11 progress quickens. Standards by Year 11 are well above average overall. In English and science they continue to be above average, whilst in mathematics they are well above average. There are also well above average standards in ICT, art, design and technology and modern foreign languages at this stage. Pupils achieve well through Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 they achieve very

well. Girls do better than boys, in line with the national variation, but both are achieving very well as they progress through the school.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good overall. Their attitudes to school are extremely positive, and are reflected in their well above average attendance rates. Behaviour is very good and relationships throughout the school are a major strength. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school, though better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9. Teaching is particularly strong in modern foreign languages. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, pupils' learning is very good overall, and is enhanced by their positive aspirations and commitment to their studies. The school has high expectations for learning, achievement and the fulfilment of each pupil's potential.

Despite deficiencies in accommodation and the time given to citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE), the curriculum is satisfactory. It is flexible and provides appropriate courses that are matched well to pupils' capabilities. The range of extra-curricular opportunities to extend learning is good, although the library should be developed further in this respect. The school takes good care of its pupils; they are valued and respected, and their progress is very well monitored. Links with parents are good, and have positive impact on pupils' learning, for example, by ensuring regular attendance and completion of homework. The good partnership arrangements with the community and with other schools also positively enhance the learning experiences for pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership and sets a clear direction for the school's ongoing development. With strong support from the senior management team and staff, there is a shared commitment to improving further the quality of education. The school runs smoothly and effectively. Management is good, with the regular review and evaluation of performance and checking on progress particularly strong features. Governors are committed and hardworking. They have a thorough knowledge of the school's work, monitor its progress and fulfil their responsibilities well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in high regard and have considerable confidence in it. Their views are justified, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching and the progress their children make. Parents are particularly pleased with the good leadership and management, the arrangements for helping their children to settle in, and that pupils are expected to work hard. Pupils like the school, and they also feel strongly that they are taught well and expected to work hard. Their main reservations are about behaviour and bullying; however, inspectors' further investigation revealed little of concern in either area. Pupils' concerns about insufficient consideration of their views have been acknowledged by the school as justified. The introduction of the school council and of greater opportunity for responsibility for older pupils will help to remedy this.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in English in Years 7, 8 and 9 to match those in mathematics and science.
- Ensure sufficient time is given to teaching citizenship and PSHE.
- Enhance opportunities for pupils' independent learning through improved provision for ICT and wider use of the library.
- When funding allows, provide appropriate specialist accommodation for teaching drama, music, art and special educational needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' overall achievement is very good. Boys and girls make good initial progress and achieve well in Years 7-9, with standards that are above average. Standards in Years 10 and 11 improve to well above average, and reflect very good achievement by boys and girls of all abilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are well above average.
- GCSE results are much higher than those of similar schools, with notably high success in A* and A grades.
- Pupils achieve very well through Years 7-11 because they are very well taught and keenly focused in their learning
- GCSE results are very high in German, ICT, business studies, drama and music.
- Pupils are achieving very well in modern foreign languages and drama throughout the school, and in ICT, art, design and technology, and business studies in Years 10-11.

But...

- Standards in English are not as high as those in mathematics and science by Year 9.
- Pupils are not making the expected progress in citizenship.

Commentary

1. When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 7 their standards are above average. Their results in National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6 at their primary schools are above average. The school administers further standardised tests in Year 7 which confirm that standards are better than average. The results of these tests provide a consistent picture for each year since the previous inspection, and confirm that the school receives pupils from the full range of ability.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.8 (34.4)	33.6 (33.3)
mathematics	38.9 (38.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.4 (37.9)	33.5 (33.3)

There were 126 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. From this beginning, pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good and their attitudes to school are very positive. Overall results in the 2003 National Curriculum test were above the national average; results in both mathematics and science were well above average, whilst in English they were above average. In all three subjects, pupils did not do as well as expected given their Year 6 test scores in 2000 – the school's targets for 2003 were met in mathematics, but not in English or science. However, the trend in these national test results shows improvement at a faster rate than the national picture. In recent years, girls have performed better than boys in the tests, reflecting the difference found nationally.
3. Current standards seen in Year 9 are well above average in mathematics and above average in English and science. Given their starting points, pupils are achieving well and making good progress in mathematics and science; their achievement in English is satisfactory at this

stage and their progress is slower because work could be more demanding, and assessment procedures are not helpful enough at this stage.

4. Standards seen in lessons in virtually all other subjects are above average by Year 9. Pupils are making good progress and are generally achieving well. Standards are well above average in modern foreign languages where pupils of all abilities are achieving very well in response to very good, challenging teaching. In geography, standards are average but pupils are achieving well because their attainment in the subject is below average when they come into the school. Elsewhere, standards are above average and pupils are achieving well except in citizenship, where the subject has too little time. As a result, standards here are average and pupils are not making the progress they should.

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	71 (71)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	43.5 (43.9)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 117 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Since the last inspection GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have improved significantly at a faster rate than the national improvement. The improvement is marked over the past three years by a sharp rise in the performance of boys. Whilst girls do better than boys generally, the gap is closing and now reflects the national variation. The results for both boys and girls are well above their respective national averages.
6. In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at both A*-C and A*-G was well above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs do well in examinations and very few fail to achieve GCSE passes in at least five subjects. Almost half of pupils taking GCSE examinations gained ten or more A*-C grades, with a third of all entries being awarded the highest A and A* grades, an outstanding achievement. When comparison is made with those schools whose pupils achieved similar results in the Year 9 national tests, the school's GCSE performance was in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Unsurprisingly, the school exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE by a considerable margin.
7. GCSE results for subjects in 2003 were significantly above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, physical education and social studies. They were particularly high in German, business studies, ICT, drama and music. Pupils did significantly better in ICT than in their other GCSE examinations. Results were above or close to average in all other subjects, apart from religious education where pupils did less well than in their other examinations. Indicative of the quality of GCSE performance in 2003 is that virtually all subjects included at least a quarter of passes at the highest grades. Exceptionally, over half of boys achieved A* in ICT, together with a similar proportion of boys and girls gaining A* in German.
8. Overall, the GCSE results are testimony to both the very good quality of teaching and learning. They also reflect the effectiveness of the school's procedures for tracking pupils' progress in Years 10-11 and identifying possible underachievement promptly, usually through mentoring. Other strategies designed to help raise boys' attainment have also impacted effectively, such as broadening the curriculum to give a wider choice, and revisiting subject schemes of work to ensure that what is being taught is attractive to both boys and girls. Pupils, particularly boys, say that these strategies are supporting them well and helping them

to do better. The school is now including the mentoring strategy for identified pupils in Year 9 to boost progress there.

9. Standards seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are similar to the picture presented by these GCSE results, and are well above average overall. In subjects, standards are well above average in ICT, modern foreign languages, art, design and technology, drama and business studies - pupils are achieving particularly well in response to very good teaching. With two exceptions, in all other subjects standards are above average and pupils are achieving well. Standards in geography are average; pupils opting for the subject in Years 10 and 11 are mainly lower attainers, and good teaching ensures that their achievement is good. In citizenship, achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are just average because of limited time and the conflict with other programmed tutorial activities.
10. Pupils with special educational needs achieve a wide range of GCSE passes, normally at the lower grades. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils with low literacy levels are given special opportunities to progress. Generally, their progress reflects their literacy competence, and is satisfactory. The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve just as well as others. The two who are at early stages of language acquisition receive good quality individual support from teaching assistants and are greatly encouraged and helped by other pupils.
11. Standards of literacy are above average, and most subjects are contributing well to the development of pupils' literary skills. Numeracy and the use of mathematics to support learning in other subjects are also above average. Standards in the use of ICT through work in other subjects are improving and are average. The standards in taught ICT lessons are above average in Years 7-9, and well above average in Years 10-11. In other subjects, development is variable because, despite improved provision, issues of access and specialist equipment remain. Subjects have clearly identified where pupils would use ICT in their planning, but some are not yet realising their plans.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual and social development is very good, their moral development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory, making these aspects of personal development good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and their studies and these attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
- Pupils behave very well and try hard in lessons, because they are valued and treated fairly.
- Attendance is very good reflecting parents' support and pupils' commitment to the school.
- Pupils' spiritual development is very good.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	School data	0.4
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

12. Pupils are very keen to come to school because they think it is a friendly school, which provides a good education. Apart from a very small number of pupils, predominantly in Year

11, nearly all pupils have very good attendance records and this makes a very positive contribution to their progress and learning. Form teachers check absence assiduously and their consistent attention proves very effective in promoting very good attendance and punctuality.

13. Pupils' attitudes are very positive because they have pride in their school and want to learn. They feel secure and confident in school and are helpful and considerate because the school fosters the good levels of maturity that pupils bring with them. Teachers set clear, fair and consistent standards of behaviour. They reinforce this by showing they care about their pupils by helping them after lessons. In turn pupils show respect for their teachers and behave very well. It is only on rare occasions, perhaps with a temporary teacher or when set inappropriate work that these high standards slip. The number of temporary exclusions is considerably higher than that usually expected for a school this size. This is partly because the school rightly sets high standards and partly because the school does not have a supervised internal detention area. However, it is significant that no pupils have had to be permanently excluded in the last year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	547	60	0
White – Irish	8	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	1	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	0	0

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

14. Pupils behave very well around the school. They move sensibly between lessons in narrow stairwells and outside. In the survey conducted for the inspection, pupils said that there was some misbehaviour and bullying at the school. The inspectors' investigation indicated that this was due to a misinterpretation of the relevant questions in the questionnaire. In fact, there is relatively little bullying or racial tension. Pupils feel confident that teachers will deal with any serious concerns, although a few of the younger pupils think it could be useful to develop some additional approaches, for example, peer mentoring, rather than quickly involving teachers when problems first arise.
15. The pupils with special educational needs benefit from and share the school's positive ethos which fosters a good attitude to both school work and social activities. They feel fully included within the whole range of the school's opportunities.

16. The school is faithful to its Catholic heritage, and Catholic prayer, worship and liturgy are central to its ethos. Pupils experience these through assemblies, form times and retreats away from school. Every class takes its turn to prepare an assembly, and twice a week half of each year group can assemble. On other days there are assemblies for upper and lower school groups meeting together. Prayer and reflection in form times complement these, so that the school meets the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. Christian symbolism is further explored through poetry, for example, through a poetic presentation of the Easter story as observed in one Year 11 English lesson. Aesthetic awareness is also developed through literature, art and drama, though only to a limited extent through music because of staffing difficulties at this time. Despite this, provision for spiritual development is a strength of the school. A small group went to Lourdes in 2003 and had opportunities to act as carers. Year 7 pupils go camping in Derbyshire. Every year group gets a retreat day each year and there are voluntary retreats for older pupils. Such experiences contribute very well to pupils' social as well as spiritual development.
17. Early in Year 7 pupils consider rights and responsibilities as part of citizenship, learning to listen to one another, to respect one another's points of view. They are articulate young people who can discuss freely why rules are necessary for life in an ordered community. Moral principles of right and wrong, good order and anarchy are well understood. Opportunities are now being further developed for them to take a measure of responsibility in their own school community, for example, through the school council. There is an impressive list of charities, local, national and international which have been and continue to be supported. By this the school is meeting its stated aim to foster an awareness of the needs of others. It is understood that pupils learn something about Judaism, Hinduism and Islam in the course of religious education lessons in Years 7 to 9, which fall outside the remit of this inspection. Also, the small number of Afro-Caribbean children are well integrated. Nevertheless, it does appear that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to learn about values and beliefs in communities other than their own. Overall, however, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are very good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is satisfactory, and includes strong enrichment opportunities, but there are inadequacies in accommodation for particular subjects. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance. The school has a good partnership with parents, and works well with the wider community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall, and stronger in Years 10-11. Assessment is a good feature generally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of both teaching and learning are consistently strong throughout the school.
 - Pupils are challenged to work hard, focus strongly on learning and are very keen to do well.
 - Teachers' very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations promote very good learning and achievement.
 - Very good relationships between teachers and pupils underpin the positive atmosphere for learning.
 - Assessment is used well to set targets for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- But...
- More opportunities are needed for the further development of pupils' skills of research and independent learning.
 - The school's policy for assessment is not used consistently in all subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (4%)	32 (30%)	44 (41%)	24 (22 %)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0 %)

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

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. During the inspection, teaching in three-quarters of lessons seen was at least good and in more than one-third was very good or better. Both teaching and learning were stronger in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in almost all subjects. It is very good throughout the school in modern foreign languages; it is also very good in Years 10 and 11 in art, design and technology and ICT. Teaching in physical education is very good in Years 7-9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in citizenship throughout the school, and in English in Years 7-9. This general consistency of teaching quality is a major strength of the school, serves pupils' needs very well, and enables them to access advanced knowledge and greater skills both within each subject and across the whole curriculum. Both parents and pupils recognise and appreciate the very good quality of teaching provided by the school.
19. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in consolidating and further improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is the main reason for the school's marked progress since that time. There is very little teaching that is less than satisfactory. The consistency of teaching quality that now obtains is testimony to the positive impact of the school's work in the identification and sharing of best practice within subjects and across the whole school. This has clearly been effective, and has been augmented by the school's professional development programme and by the techniques adopted from the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. As a result, the strong teaching quality combines with pupils' very good attitudes and learning skills to ensure that they make rapid progress, leading to the improving test and examination results evident since the last inspection.
20. Teaching is notably effective in modern foreign languages. However, across the school, examples of very good teaching feature in every subject inspected. Teachers know their subjects and requirements for examination success very well and their enthusiasm, even passion for some, communicates itself to the pupils and creates an atmosphere of confident enquiry in many lessons. In an excellent French lesson consolidating the use of the perfect tense in Year 8, for example, the teacher's enthusiasm, strong understanding of the subject and very high expectations led to clear explanations of key concepts and resulted in very high standards by totally engaged pupils. Teachers' careful planning, positive presentation of their subjects, and expectation that pupils are engaged in critical analysis and review were clearly illustrated in a similarly successful Year 9 physical education lesson in which pupils effectively improved their defensive techniques in basketball. Many teachers have successfully created very good learning environments in which pupils are able to develop both their academic and personal potential, and there is good use of new technology to support this.
21. Just four lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. Two were in tutorial periods, in Year 7 and Year 9, in citizenship and PSHE where weaknesses in planning and purpose resulted in unsatisfactory pupil behaviour and little progress. In a Year 7 ICT lesson, learning and progress were unsatisfactory because there were too few computers available, and pupils were frequently off task. Weaknesses in planning, together with unsuitable teaching methods, were features of the final unsatisfactory Year 10 English lesson: the lack of progress was compounded by weak management of the poor pupil behaviour that resulted.

22. The clarity of the beginning of lessons is a strong feature of the most successful teaching. Teachers are effectively setting the scene, explaining the aims of the lesson and ensuring their pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and why. This positive feature of the Key Stage 3 initiative is clearly impacting in many subjects. Pupils' progress and understanding are regularly checked in lessons and drawn together in effective summaries, though less consistently in the shorter 35 minute periods. A Year 9 food technology lesson in which pupils batch produced Bakewell tarts demonstrated many of these qualities. In this lesson, the clarity of organisation, the benefits of sustaining a good pace from the outset and of keeping pupils challenged were clearly evident. Teachers generally have a good awareness of setting time limits to activities to ensure that lessons move at a good pace and best use is made of the time available.
23. The management of pupils is a considerable strength of the teaching. Relationships are very good. Teachers are good role models and relate well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support and encouragement. Their expectations of behaviour and response are high - few pupils fall short of these in class, and their motivation and commitment to their work are notable. Many teachers are good listeners and treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is free from confrontation, and has an atmosphere of trust and consideration that enables pupils to thrive in their learning and personal development. This good level of trust was clearly evident in a very good Year 7 drama lesson in which pupils were able to confidently explore sensitive issues around prejudice and fears arising from the plight of refugees.
24. All teachers are aware of the need to promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and are successful in this. There is a general level of consistency of approach across the school, and good use is made of writing frames in many subjects to guide middle and lower attaining pupils in their development of extended writing. However, the lack of access to library facilities is holding back the further development of pupils' skills in research and independent learning. The use and application of ICT in subjects has improved, and is satisfactory overall. Weaknesses in, for example, mathematics, science and art result from lack of access to computers.
25. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. This provision benefits greatly from the small classes and the high level of competence of the team of learning support assistants. If their training can be enhanced and the teachers use them with maximum effect they will be a very significant force to raise the pupils' attainment. The use of the pupils' individual education plans varies greatly. The special educational needs register is in the process of being reviewed. In particular, the support given by subject teachers to pupils at the School Action stage needs to be strengthened.
26. Assessment of pupils' performance is used well overall to inform teaching and learning and to monitor pupils' progress. It is used very well in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education; it is only satisfactory in art and geography, and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9; it is unsatisfactory in citizenship.
27. Very rigorous analysis of examination results is carried out by the senior staff and heads of departments and clear strategies for improvement are identified for each department. This contributes to the high standards at GCSE. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have target grades for every subject and in most subjects pupils are aware of what to do to improve. Underachievers are identified in Years 9 and 11 and receive mentoring support. In Years 7 to 9, teachers set individual pupil targets based on prior attainment, but these are seen as aspirational targets for the teacher and are not shared with the pupils. Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is tracked once a year on the basis of pupils' position in the year rather than by National Curriculum attainment level. Informal monitoring of pupil progress does take place within departments throughout the year and this is successful because teachers know their pupils well. Setting arrangements are reviewed at regular intervals. Pupils' work is marked regularly and assessment is used well in class to promote good learning. There is a

comprehensive school policy for assessment which gives clear guidance on homework, marking, target setting, and record keeping. However, it is not implemented consistently across all departments.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is regularly reviewed and updated to suit pupils' needs, particularly those in Years 10 and 11. Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are good. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In all years, the subjects offered cater well for pupils' needs, aspirations and interests.
- The curriculum enables pupils to achieve very well, reach well above average standards and develop their personal qualities.
- Most pupils are able to take 10 GCSE subjects.
- There is a good programme of enrichment activities, particularly in sport.

But...

- The time allocated to citizenship and PSHE is not adequate.
- Pupils with special educational needs have a limited range of applied and vocational opportunities in Years 10 and 11.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in a number of subjects, for example, drama, music and art.
- ICT resources are insufficient.

Commentary

28. The school reviews its curriculum regularly to make sure that it matches what pupils need and that it helps them to combine subjects they enjoy, and excel at. In Years 7-9, all pupils now take drama, but only one group is able to study German as a second language, and this is at the expense of citizenship, design and technology in Year 8 and single lessons of physical education and French in Year 9. In Years 8 and 9, the time allocated to science is above average, yet history and geography have barely enough. In Years 10 and 11, there is a very good range of option subjects at GCSE for a small school. There are vocational courses including business studies, and also in life skills for those with special educational needs; additionally, these pupils take Entry Level courses in both French and German. Pupils' successes and very good achievement at GCSE indicate that the school is preparing most of them very well for further academic studies. Post 16 course and careers advice is good. Citizenship and PSHE lessons are timetabled, but the twenty-five minute periods are not long enough. The school is investigating changes in its lesson timings in order to overcome these problems. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, and cross-curricular numeracy and literacy are well embedded in the work of departments.
29. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision, in spite of the limit placed on the number of activities by the very short lunch break and the fact that so many pupils have to catch a bus at the end of the school day. Activities include a very popular drama club, an annual school play, homework club, Maths Challenge and master classes for the most able. There are also many Christian Action projects to support a range of charities, as well as retreats, foreign visits and language exchanges, and work experience in Year 11. The usual very rich range of musical activities has been reduced this term until staffing problems have been resolved. Pupils say that they would like greater access to the library and to computers. Very good sports provision enables many to take pride in representing their school in a wide range of events. The curriculum therefore promotes pupils' personal qualities very effectively as well as developing a very good range of knowledge, understanding and skills.

30. Pupils with special educational needs share the curriculum offered to all pupils. There are also frequent additional opportunities for those with very low literacy levels to make significant progress. A small number of pupils in Years 10-11 study the Asdan life skills course. Overall there is a need to review the curricular opportunities in Years 10-11 and consider its vocational possibilities.
31. The programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. It is taught in some of the three twenty-five minute periods of form time a week which are shared with citizenship and careers. During the inspection it was not possible to observe lessons of personal, social and health education, as citizenship and careers were being taught that week. However, the programme is clearly effective in terms of its outcomes because pupils have very good attitudes and make good gains in personal development. Nevertheless, the teaching of the programme is not sufficiently monitored to ensure consistency and to ensure that topics are taught at the most appropriate time. For example, pupils in Year 9 said that they had not yet received any drugs education, a topic which is usually covered before this age. The programme for careers guidance is good and provides sound impartial advice as pupils consider the options open to them for the next stage of their education or the world of work. "Connexions" give very good support to the careers programme with interviews for all pupils.
32. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good overall; the school has worked hard to provide cover in music due to long term absence of the only music specialist. Teachers have a wide range of experience and expertise. The provision of support staff is satisfactory overall and, where observed during the inspection, they are used effectively. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. It is good in geography and modern foreign languages, but is unsatisfactory in physical education, art, design and technology, music and drama, all of which have shortcomings. In some areas, lack of space restricts teaching and learning but teachers cope well despite this. The new science block when completed, will help resolve many of these problems as the current laboratories will be adapted for use by other subjects. Resources are generally satisfactory, enabling pupils to make good progress. However, they are insufficient in ICT where there is a below average number of computers, drama, which has no resources, and for the special educational needs department. Resources are good in modern foreign languages and good in geography and music. Several departments complain about lack of access to computers. The library provision is insufficient to enhance learning effectively as it is small and sometimes used as a classroom, which therefore limits access.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for its pupils well. It provides them with very good support, advice and guidance. Health and safety and child protection procedures are properly in place. The school makes satisfactory provision to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils receive very good personal and academic guidance.
- Teachers know their pupils very well, and their concern for individual pupils is an important strength.
- A good start has been made in involving pupils in decision-making; this could usefully be further developed.

But...

- A more systematic day-to-day approach for identifying hazards is required.

Commentary

33. This is a small, caring school where pupils and their families are known well by form tutors and heads of year. Parents praised the school's caring ethos where each child is valued.

The school's concern for individual pupils is a key feature in helping them reach their potential. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are well integrated into the school.

34. Child protection procedures are properly carried out; however, training for teaching and non-teaching staff to increase awareness would strengthen the provision. The child protection policy has been updated and currently awaits approval from the governors.
35. Supervision around the school is good and there are good arrangements for medical attention and first aid care when required. Inspectors discussed some health and safety issues with the school and consider that the day-to-day protection against identified risks needs to be more systematic. For example, the stage which is used to teach drama is too cluttered, presenting potential hazards and blocking the fire exit. Some parents were concerned that the lunchtime arrangements were rushed. The inspectors agree that the accommodation in the hall for lunch is cramped and not ideal, but the pupils cope sensibly and well with its limitations. The toilets for the pupils have some broken locks and are not always equipped with soap.
36. There are very good strategies to support pupils. Teachers often stay behind after school to help pupils with their work. Induction procedures at the start of Year 7 enable pupils to settle quickly into the school. Tutors sign and monitor the pupils' journals and this gives them an oversight of academic progress. The year heads work closely with form tutors and with parents, to ensure that all pupils who are having difficulties with work or behaviour or difficulties of a more personal nature are supported, cared for and helped to improve academically and, if necessary, in terms of behaviour. The school has identified the need to review the role of head of year. This would be beneficial as, although they support their teams of form tutors well, some are also heads of major subject departments, which means their capacity to be proactive on pastoral matters is restricted by their dual commitments.
37. The school has recognised that a few pupils in Year 11 are not as well motivated as they should be and put into place weekly group mentoring for the whole year group. This is proving successful in helping pupils to focus on what they need to do to achieve their targets. Year 11 have benefited from an external study skills course. Some extended work related placements have been set up for selected Year 11 pupils, which are beneficial in raising their motivation and self-esteem.
38. Most pupils feel that their views are listened to. Pupils are able to contribute their views about school matters through the elected school council. Some of their ideas are being adopted and they are given fair reasons if their ideas are not acted upon. However, their influence is at an early stage of development, and there is potential for pupils to be more involved in decisions and the running of the school.
39. The pupils with special educational needs benefit from the distinctive level of care shown by all people in the school and their maintained links with the learning support assistants is very important to them. The ongoing assessment procedures of these pupils need improvement.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The home-school partnership is good and effective. Links with the local community and with other schools and colleges are also good and benefit pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard and give very good support to their children's education.
- There is frequent contact between school and home and good information on pupils' progress.
- The effective links with other schools and colleges mean that new pupils are keen to come to the school and older pupils can make informed decisions about post 16 choices.

Commentary

40. Parents are very satisfied with the school. They are particularly pleased with the high academic success, the teaching and management. Parents also appreciate the individual care and attention given to their children. In turn, parents ensure that their children attend school regularly, support homework and the vast majority attend the consultation meetings with teachers about their children's progress. Their support has a positive impact on their children's results. The "Friends of St. Thomas More" give good support with social and fund raising events, recently providing school benches and furniture for the library. Several parents help with sports coaching and transport for school outings.
41. Effective links are established early on. All families and their children are invited to an individual interview where they are provided with useful information about school routines. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school and are kept well informed about the school and its successes with a fortnightly "STM News." The annual written reports on pupils' progress are clear and informative. At the time of the last inspection the school also provided an interim report on progress through the pupils' journals. This is no longer done in all year groups, which some parents regret, as they would welcome some more information about progress during the year. However, parents are confident that staff will contact them in cases of concern and appreciate the letters of praise they sometimes receive about their children. The pupils' journals are used effectively in other respects and contribute well to home-school dialogue.
42. In general, parental involvement with matters directly concerning their own children is good, but the involvement of parents with school policies and consultation is still developing. For example, some parents would like more information about the implications of proposed specialist status for the school and about school policies. The school is starting to consult parents more widely and has commissioned an independent telephone survey of their views. The school responds to parental views and recently helped to secure shorter bus routes to school, which has improved pupils' behaviour on the buses.
43. The school has good links with the community and its parishes and it uses these well in enhancing pupils' experience and overall educational provision. Pupils raise money for local charities. Representatives from local businesses come to school to run mock interviews for Year 11. Speakers from local hospitals and universities visit for the school's annual science week. Pupils undertake work experience in the local area. There is a good range of visits and links in this country and with European countries with foreign exchanges, skiing trips and visits, such as to the Belgian battlefields.
44. The transfer of information about pupils with partner schools is efficient and helps transition. The school has Beacon School status and, as part of this, staff share expertise with other schools to promote good teaching and learning. Teachers from the school take some lessons in the primary schools in, for example, design and technology and physical education. Pupils enjoy good sporting links with other schools, and there are also positive links with post-16 education providers, who visit to provide pupils with information on courses. Year 10 pupils enjoy a three-day taster course at the local college which helps them decide upon their future options.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. It identifies a vision to provide excellence for Roman Catholic pupils in Crewe. There is a clear focus on sustaining pupils' very good achievements and attitudes and further improving standards and results. This small school is managed well and is moving towards converting the vision into reality with relatively few shortcomings. The work of the governors is good and they are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a strong commitment to provide a good quality of education.
- Leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff is good.
- Teamwork at all levels is effective with a focus on improving standards and results.
- The commitment to knowing and providing the very best for boys and girls of all abilities is the core of the school's Christian ethos.
- There is a strong focus on self-evaluation and the quality of teaching ensuring that pupils achieve very well.
- The identification and sharing of best practice is a key strength of management.

But...

- The school has a legacy of a number of features which impede the pace of change, including wide-ranging responsibilities for senior staff.
- A very small number of lessons are not good enough.
- The curriculum could be improved, for example, in provision for citizenship and PSHE.

Commentary

45. Governance of the school is good. Governors are committed to providing a high standard of education for all pupils. Through regular meetings they monitor the work of the school effectively, check regularly on standards and the quality of education, and have a thorough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Statutory requirements are met and policies are reviewed. Appropriately challenging targets are set for the headteacher and the school. A recent initiative has been the appointment of a part-time consultant to assist them and the headteacher to steer the school through a period when capital and equipment costs will be high.
46. The leadership provided by the headteacher is good. Under his guidance the school is moving rapidly towards seeking specialist status as a mathematics college to raise standards further. His open and collaborative style has involved all staff, for example, in writing the development plan. This has successfully motivated staff and there is a shared vision of improving the quality of education. The leadership team has been extended and teamwork at all levels is now more effective. Leadership and management are very good in mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science, and are good in all other subjects except citizenship and for special educational needs, where they are satisfactory. A strong feature of leadership is the commitment to knowing and providing the very best for boys and girls of all abilities. As a result, care and guidance are good and each pupil is well known. This feature is the core of the school's Christian ethos.
47. Management is good and a strong feature is self-evaluation of the school's performance. This self-evaluation is accurate and accords very closely with the inspection findings. Annual reviews of each subject department include a rigorous analysis of examination results. In the core subjects these are considered alongside evaluation from the local authority. As a result of these detailed reviews, targets are set with reference to performance management so that individual and whole school targets are co-ordinated effectively. Teaching and learning in departments are observed by senior staff and in addition time has been created for teachers to share good practice. This rigorous use of data and self-evaluation has had a major impact on standards and results because they have improved throughout the school at a higher rate than nationally. However, there is still a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching that needs to be eliminated and a whole raft of initiatives has not yet been successful at raising standards in English to those of mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9.
48. A group of staff are currently reviewing the organisation of the school day to look at the optimum learning time for most subjects. At present, the amount of teaching time is lower than in many schools. The very short time for citizenship and PSHE in the daily tutorial time needs urgent consideration. The school also has a legacy of a small number of features,

common to small schools, which impede the pace of change. For example, specific job descriptions are not up-to-date, heads of major subjects are also heads of year giving them very wide responsibilities, and the deputy headteachers have a heavy teaching load giving them little time for strategic planning.

49. Despite these shortcomings improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The issues identified for improvement have been tackled effectively. GCSE results last year placed the school in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally, that is, for schools with similar prior attainment.
50. The new special educational needs co-ordinator is actively reviewing the pattern of provision but accommodation is a severely limiting factor. Resources are old, and the use of ICT is at an early stage of development.

Financial information for the year April 2000 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,953,726	Balance from previous year	144,894
Total expenditure	1,965,427	Balance carried forward to the next	133,193
Expenditure per pupil	3,129		

51. The school's systems for managing its financial affairs are good. The surplus has been prudently carried forward to help to finance new building and refurbishment. The principles of best value are applied very well and the school provides good value for money.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In this curriculum area, the focus was on English, English literature and French which were inspected in depth. The school offers German, in addition to French, to selected pupils in Year 8. German was sampled also – two lessons were seen in Years 9 and 11 and samples of work analysed. Standards were well above average in the lessons seen, and pupils were achieving very well in response to very good teaching. GCSE results in 2003 were very high in German with more than half at A* grade.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in both English and English literature are usually well above average.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour in Years 10 and 11 contribute well to their good achievement.

But...

- There is some unsatisfactory teaching.
- Teachers do not use National Curriculum level information effectively in Years 7-9 to help raise standards.
- There are some weaknesses in the written work of lower attaining pupils.

Commentary

52. Year 9 national test results in 2003 are above average for all pupils, with girls doing better than boys, as they do nationally; however, in comparison with schools with a similar ability intake, the results are well below average. The GCSE English and English literature results in 2003 are above average but represent a slight decline on those of previous years. Boys are beginning to close the gap on girls in Years 10 and 11 and all pupils leave school with passes in both subjects.
53. Overall standards of work seen are above average in Years 9 and 11. Speaking and listening skills are well above average because pupils have regular opportunities to use talk in lessons to develop, refine and share their ideas. Most pupils speak confidently and well. Reading is above average. Pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment and to develop their deductive and inferential skills. Writing standards are also above average, though there are frequent

errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar among lower attaining pupils in all years. Creative writing is often lively and entertaining and is stronger than critical writing which, especially in Years 7-9, tends to be descriptive rather than analytical with argument undeveloped. In literature, the lower attaining pupils do not show a close awareness of writers' techniques and how these influence readers, but the department, which includes experienced examination markers, is working hard to rectify this. These pupils enjoy narrative writing but, because of their limited vocabulary and experience of a range of formal writing styles, they have difficulty when writing to instruct and inform.

54. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11 where teaching is generally at its best and pupils are harder working and focused. Because all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow GCSE courses in both English and literature, they acquire a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge, as well as developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through, for example, the study of poetry from other cultures and traditions. All pupils use ICT to improve their writing and research skills, though not as regularly as in many schools because of the limited facilities. Those with special educational needs receive good quality individual support and guidance from their teachers and teaching assistants who work very well together to ensure that they make good progress.
55. Teaching and learning are good overall. In a quarter of lessons, they are very good. In these lessons, teachers clearly identify the skills and understanding which they wish to develop and fully involve pupils in evaluating their own learning. Pupils are thereby challenged and encouraged to be independent: their learning is exciting and enjoyable. When teaching is unsatisfactory, learning objectives and planning are vague, there is a limited range of suitable teaching methods and pupils' behaviour is not well managed: consequently, their progress is not good enough. The department has successfully researched how boys learn and how to motivate them. Revised seating plans, new novels and more non-fiction texts, together with new teaching schemes, are helping to raise their standards. However, there is a weakness in assessment in Years 7-9. Teachers do not yet regularly share the National Curriculum level criteria with their pupils; hence they do not know exactly what they need to do to reach higher levels. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of advice is good, though middle and lower attaining pupils would benefit from being given more examples to show them how to improve.
56. Leadership and management are good. Dedication is strong, communication good and the team is committed to the raising of standards. Teaching is carefully monitored and more effective ways are being sought to share the very good practice which exists in order to ensure that the quality of learning experiences is consistent for all pupils. Priorities for development are clearly identified and new staff well inducted. Recent test and examination data have been well analysed and appropriate action plans drawn up with the help of the LEA Advisory Service. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The overall quality of teaching and ICT provision have improved: new 'boy-friendly' and multi-cultural texts have successfully been introduced and accurate spelling and wider reading are now better promoted: however, teachers still make insufficient use of assessment data in their daily lesson planning and marking.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. English language and literacy skills are above average. Speaking and listening are well above average because pupils have frequent opportunities to discuss, and to use talk to make decisions, solve problems, share ideas and make presentations. Reading and comprehension skills are well taught, but there is a lack of a systematic, graduated scheme in the special educational needs department, although all pupils obtain a GCSE pass in English. Few teachers consider how they can make best use of the library's book resources, or the librarian's expertise: however, there is a book club and annual Readathon which help to promote private reading. All teachers ensure that pupils know and use appropriate subject vocabulary and the whole school correcting policy is clearly displayed in teaching rooms. Most departments provide prompts to help less able pupils to structure their extended writing,

but few encourage creative writing tasks. Overall, there is some very good literacy practice, particularly in science, geography, history and modern foreign languages.

58. The management of literacy is good. Staff are kept up to date about best practice and new initiatives through a regular literacy bulletin, and heads of subjects monitor planning, quality and consistency. The school has yet to consider how it can best use the library and ICT to support literacy.

Drama

59. The standard of work seen in Years 7-9 is average: this represents good achievement, given the limited experience of the pupils on entry, and their only having one weekly lesson at this stage.
60. Teaching and learning are very good, in spite of poor resources and accommodation and the short lessons in Years 7-9. The teacher demands and receives high standards of behaviour and co-operation from all pupils. They respond very well, and enjoy the creative challenges, problem-solving and decision-making opportunities of group work.
61. The leadership and management of this relatively new department are very good. Careful planning ensures that drama makes a considerable contribution to pupils' personal and social development, particularly in Years 7-9. All lessons cover the very important areas of trust and teamwork, and involve pupils in evaluating their own and others' performances in an objective, supportive and positive way. Consequently, self-confidence and esteem are developed and pupils help and learn from each other. A developing programme of productions, theatre visits and a thriving drama club are doing much to promote creative and expressive arts in the school.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strength and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has established a very good climate for learning.
 - Teaching is very good and supports all pupils very effectively.
 - Use of assessment supports learning very well.
 - Resources are very good, allowing pupils to work independently.
- But...
- More pupils could benefit from access to the second foreign language.

Commentary

French

62. All pupils take a modern foreign language with the great majority taking GCSE French. GCSE results in French were in line with national averages in 2002 but well above average in 2003. Boys' results, though lower than those for girls in the school, were well above the national average for boys. A small number of low attaining pupils successfully completed Entry Level requirements in French in Years 10 and 11.
63. Although some pupils have studied French in their primary schools, this has made little impact on their overall standards in Year 7. Pupils achieve very well in their first three years. One Year 8 class seen (detail below) could already carry out role play conversations such as they might encounter in higher level GCSE. In most Year 9 classes at the time of the inspection pupils were already above average in their ability to use a full range of tenses. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is slower, but nonetheless, satisfactory.
64. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to achieve well in French to maintain high standards up to GCSE. They respond well to advice from staff to extend their spoken and written responses beyond the minimum so as to gain more marks. They have clear ideas about grade boundaries and what they have to do to cross them. Some extended writing seen shows that they are able to express themselves very well.
65. Half the lessons seen were very good (one excellent), and the rest were good. Imaginative departmental planning lifts teaching into the very good category through the weekly half hours scheduled for sharing good practice. Teachers have planned how they can best encourage pupils to work independently, for example, by ensuring that all have books of their own. They have, in particular, developed successful strategies for involving boys. All teachers are skilled in using interactive white boards, and there will shortly be two more to supplement the one which is already in place. Carousel lessons, necessary to allow manageable groups of pupils to use the six computers, also bring in planned reading experience as well as pupil controlled listening activities. Pupils know that lessons are interesting and come prepared to learn. Relationships are very good, and pupils can have confidence in speaking or writing knowing that any mistakes will be put right. More of them would welcome the opportunity to take German in addition to French, as older pupils told inspectors.

Example of outstanding practice

High Standards in French in Year 8

One outstanding lesson was seen. The opening verbal exchange between teacher and class demonstrated the pupils' ability to use verbs in the perfect tense as well as structures relating to the near future. Most had confidence to use a range of vocabulary that would have taken them to good standards at GCSE. Words learned recently about medical needs enabled pupils to respond well to inspirational teaching, resulting in role play conversations between "doctor" and "patient" which brought out unexpected dramatic talent.

66. Standards have risen considerably over the past five years. Standards in Year 9 were average at the time of the previous inspection and are now well above. All pupils take a language in Years 10 and 11. An important key to this has been diligent analysis of assessment data to promote better learning. The social and cultural development of pupils is also firmly on the agenda, and a new exchange link with a school in Bavaria, as well as study visits to France, have considerable potential to promote excellence in language learning. Increasingly good use of ICT is being made to help improve standards further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
 - Leadership is very good.
 - Assessment is used very effectively to promote good learning.
 - Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good; pupils work hard and are keen to do well.
 - Pupils achieve well and higher attaining pupils very well.
- But...
- Teaching in Year 7 does not sufficiently challenge pupils.
 - The curriculum for some lower attaining pupils is too narrow and does not meet their needs.
 - There is insufficient use of ICT by pupils to support their learning.

Commentary

67. In 2003, results in National Curriculum Tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9 were well above average compared with the country as a whole, but well below average when compared with similar schools. Results over the past four years have improved at a rate above the national trend. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are also well above average by the end of Year 9, with both girls and boys achieving well. However, achievement of pupils in Year 7 and some lower attaining groups in Years 8 and 9 is only satisfactory. By Year 9 all pupils have a good basic knowledge of geometry and algebra; higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge of Pythagoras' theorem to 3-dimensional problems and use a variety of methods to solve equations. Standards of numeracy are above average. The presentation of pupils' work is of a high standard with neat, accurate graphs and constructions.
68. GCSE results in 2003 in mathematics were well above average when compared with all schools nationally and also well above average compared with similar schools. Almost all pupils in the year were entered for GCSE and achieved a graded result. The number of pupils achieving a higher grade (A*-C) is very high, with over a quarter of the year group achieving A* and A grades. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average, and there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. By Year 11 pupils have consolidated their knowledge and understanding of number, algebra, geometry and statistics. They represent data in a variety of ways, constructing frequency tables and graphs and calculating averages. Higher attaining pupils solve quadratic and cubic equations, calculate areas and volumes of compound solids and use Euclidean proofs in geometry. Pupils are articulate and can explain their reasoning effectively. Boys and girls achieve equally well, and higher attaining pupils achieve very well.
69. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also good in Years 7 and 11, and satisfactory in Years 8, 9 and 10. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well, and benefit

from enrichment activities for gifted pupils through the mathematics challenge and its link with Liverpool University.

70. Overall, teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Teaching in Year 7 is only satisfactory because there is insufficient challenge in some lessons. It is also satisfactory in some lower attaining groups, where the teaching is predominantly of number work and there is insufficient coverage of geometry and statistics, particularly in Year 8, whilst in Year 10 there are insufficient opportunities for these pupils to apply their numeracy to everyday situations. Lessons are well planned, building on prior learning. Teachers use questioning skilfully to develop understanding and pupils are usually given opportunities to discuss their methods and explore alternatives. Great care is taken to build pupils' confidence and expectations are usually high. Teachers effectively use laptop computers with projectors to prepare board work in advance and hence ensure good use of time in the lessons. They also use mathematical software to enhance the teaching of algebraic graphs.
71. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is only partly implemented; some lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 begin with a starter activity, and the sets of individual white boards are used well for whole class work. Plenary sessions are not yet well developed. Teachers employ a limited range of teaching strategies, relying on the textbook scheme as their main resource. However, it is usually applied well and there is a clear focus on preparation for examinations which is very successful. There is insufficient use of ICT to extend pupils' learning. Assessment is used very well in class to monitor progress and to inform teaching. Regular tests inform pupils of how well they are doing and pupils complete a review sheet to which parents add a comment. Appropriate homework is set and marked regularly. Teachers set and maintain high standards of behaviour, relationships are very good, and teachers give their time generously outside lessons to give pupils extra help. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and are very well motivated. They take a pride in their work and set it out neatly and accurately.
72. The department is very well led and effectively managed. Teachers work together as a team and are well supported by the head of department who provides very good leadership. The rigorous analysis of examination results informs the priorities in the departmental development plan, but monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is informal and lacks rigour. Although teachers mark books are monitored regularly, teachers' lesson plans and pupils' work are not systematically checked and little lesson observation takes place. The department uses information on pupils' prior attainment to set individual pupil targets and group targets. The department is well resourced overall, but there is limited access to the ICT suites.
73. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to improve. Accommodation has improved; the department is equipped with interactive white boards, laptop computers and digital projectors for teacher use, but there is still insufficient use of ICT by pupils. Overall improvement is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Standards of mathematics in other subjects are above average overall and well above average in science. All teachers have received training on the use and teaching of mathematics across the curriculum and a curriculum audit has taken place. However, at present there is no planned whole school approach. There is good planning for the teaching of mathematics in science, ICT, design and technology, social science and geography. Other subjects make a contribution to pupils' mathematics skills when the need to use mathematics arises, but this is generally incidental.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement.
- Examination results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above average.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupil progress are very good.

But...

- The use of ICT by pupils is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' investigative skills need improvement.

Commentary

75. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average and there was a good improvement in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels; however, compared with schools with a similar ability intake, the results were well below average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. GCSE results were also well above average with a high proportion of A and A* grades. Boys performed better than girls.
76. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall and the achievement of pupils is good. Those with special educational needs do well, owing to the support that they receive in lessons. Pupils in Year 9 are able to describe the process of photosynthesis and write a word equation for it; higher attainers are able to write a symbolic equation. Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the role of biotechnology in everyday life and can discuss the effect of temperature on the rate of chemical reactions. Pupils display competency in literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to the science curriculum. Behaviour during lessons is very good and pupils rise to challenging questions.
77. Teaching is good in all years and pupils learn well because of this. Lessons are well organised and teachers have good subject knowledge, enabling them to give clear explanations to pupils to enhance their learning. Relationships in lessons are very good. Number skills are successfully practised in the use of scientific formulae and the drawing of graphs necessary in science. Good attention is paid to literacy, with emphasis on new terminology. ICT is used in lessons but the use of data-logging equipment by pupils is underdeveloped, due to a shortage of equipment and access to computers. Pupils need to practise investigative skills and this is an area that the department intends to develop, although they handle apparatus and chemicals with confidence in all years and listen attentively and remain on task well during written and practical work. Work is always matched well to the needs of the pupils. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Pupils' work is carefully marked and annotated with clear guidance on areas for improvement. Pupils know their learning objectives at the beginning of each topic so that they can monitor their own progress.

78. The department is very well led and managed and the head of department has a clear sense of direction and is keen to continue improving standards and results. Assessment, recording and monitoring are very good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, being old, scattered and with some lessons taught in classrooms; however, work is due to commence on a new science block in the near future. The interesting displays of pupils' work are informative and help to improve their learning environment. There are good links with external agencies which provide speakers for the annual 'science week'. The department receives good technical support. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because the same high standards have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high.
 - Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- But...
- Resources and accommodation are insufficient and need further improvement.
 - Teachers need to focus more on skills rather than content in Years 7, 8 and 9.
 - Pupils in Year 7 are underachieving.

Commentary

79. When pupils join the school in Year 7, their standards in ICT are below average due to the variations in their previous experiences. The teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are above average, particularly in desktop publishing and data handling, and these standards are confirmed by inspection evidence.
80. GCSE examination results in 2003 are in line with those achieved in 2002 and are very high with a very high proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. Current standards seen in the inspection in Year 11 are well above average.
81. The achievement of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is varied, but is good overall. Pupils in Year 7 make too little progress owing to the lack of suitable accommodation and inadequate resources which limit the effectiveness of teaching; their achievement is unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils in Years 8 and 9, however, is very good and results in above average standards. Pupils make very good progress in Year 8 and 9 because they benefit from the use of a dedicated computer suite and good teaching. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 taking the GCSE course continue to progress quickly and are achieving very well. They are very well motivated and resources are good for this course.

82. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good, with a sharp, effective focus on examination requirements. Teachers accurately assess pupils' work and provide extra support for pupils, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs whose subsequent achievement is very good.
83. Teaching and learning in Years 8 and 9 is good. Where it is less satisfactory, in Year 7, the teaching takes place in the library and pupils have to share computers. This is not helping pupils who are starting from a very low skills base. In Years 8 and 9 pupils have access to a much better use of the interactive whiteboard and pupils do not have to share computers. In Year 9 pupils are set challenging work, for example, constructing a relational databases. In Year 8 a very good interactive multi-media presentation by the teacher stimulated pupils' interest and stretched their imaginations. In both years the very high expectations of the teaching are leading to rapidly improving standards and progress. Across Years 7, 8 and 9, however, more attention needs to be given to the identification and consolidation of skills rather than to the inputting of data. Attention should also be given to the presentation and storage of work so that pupils' work can be more easily assessed and their progress monitored.
84. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a determination to ensure pupils achieve their potential, and systems are in place to monitor both teaching and pupils' work. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards remain consistently high and there has been an increase in the number of higher grades gained. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 continues to be a strength. Resources, however, require still further improvement, particularly for Year 7.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. There has been an improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum since the last inspection - teachers have benefited from in-service training and improving resources. Subjects have all identified where they would use ICT in their courses, but are not yet realising their plans. Provision overall is satisfactory but varies from subject to subject. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards in business studies, modern foreign languages and history. In music, ICT is used well for sequencing and composition. In geography spreadsheets are used effectively to enhance pupils' learning on rainforests and fieldwork patterns. Pupils in physical education are beginning to make use of digital cameras to record and analyse their practical work and design and technology are developing CAD/CAM. In other subjects, such as mathematics and art, access to computers remain a problem, whilst in science the use of data logging is underdeveloped.
86. The provision made for using ICT in subjects is audited in Years 10 and 11, but the progress that individual pupils are making is not currently monitored and this remains a weakness.

HUMANITIES

In this curriculum area, the focus was on geography and history. The school also offers GCSE social sciences in Years 10 and 11, and initial results in 2003 were well above average. One social sciences lesson was inspected and samples of work were analysed. Standards are above average, teaching is good and pupils are achieving well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching is well planned with a focus on literacy ensures that pupils achieve well.
 - A variety of good learning resources, including ICT, are used effectively to capture pupils' interest and engage them in their learning.
 - Pupils' very good attitudes support their good progress.
- But...
- Skills of map reading and fieldwork are not consolidated and developed in Years 7-9.
 - In Years 7-9 the syllabus restrains pupils' understanding, achievement and standards.

Commentary

87. In 2003, GCSE results were above average and all pupils passed. Girls did better than boys at the higher grades. Although pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course, they did less well than in their other GCSE examinations.
88. Currently, in Year 11 standards are average. These standards represent good progress over time in relation to those pupils' below average attainment in geography at the start of the GCSE course. Higher-attainers describe and explain the problems of urbanisation and produce detailed case studies of Calcutta that are above average. Lower attaining pupils draw accurate population graphs but they do not recognise the impact of war or male emigration on population structure.
89. In Years 7 to 9, standards are average, but represent good achievement by pupils because their attainment in geography is below average when they join the school in Year 7. Higher attaining pupils use computers very well to research and present work on the impact of modern farming techniques on the landscape, although these do not include maps, diagrams or photographs. Middle and lower attainers' reports on the development of rainforests are comprehensive but these pupils are less confident at drawing and interpreting climate graphs. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, achieve equally well using materials that are carefully matched to their needs and with effective help from classroom support assistants.
90. The programme of work in Years 7 to 9 does not consistently link geographical topics and, therefore, limits pupils' understanding, achievement and standards. Also, skills of map reading and fieldwork are not consolidated and developed in each of these years.
91. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Very good teaching is well planned with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. Starter activities, like explaining the 'odd one out,' place a good focus on technical language and consolidate prior learning. The

best teaching then challenges pupils to work independently. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 use computers and a variety of other resources to investigate case studies of earthquakes and to develop their understanding of the use of renewable sources of energy. Clear guidelines enable all pupils to produce good quality written work that is logically presented. These methods fully engage pupils in their own learning and capture their interest. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and the very good response of pupils to their work makes a substantial contribution to their good achievement. Less effective teaching concentrates on one learning activity. This, together with long lessons, causes some pupils to lose concentration, and time is not always used as effectively as it could be. Gifted pupils achieve well, but their learning is sometimes consolidated by more of the same work rather than being taken forward further by more challenging activities.

92. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are experienced and work very well as a team sharing good practice to improve the consistency teaching. The work of the department is reviewed, results are analysed in detail and there are clear ideas of how to improve teaching. Improvement since the last inspection is good: as a result, there is now much more use of computers to support and enrich learning, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school, learning resources are good, and accommodation no longer restricts learning styles. Planning concentrates on teaching but does not include a specific focus on raising standards and results.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality of teaching ensures pupils achieve well.
 - The clear vision of the head of department.
 - The development of literacy skills is very good.
- But...
- The curriculum provision for low attainers needs to be improved.

Commentary

93. An important success of the department is that almost half of all pupils entered for the GCSE examinations in 2003 achieved A* or A passes. Overall the results were above average and over time show a rising trend. Those pupils with low level literacy skills achieve well and successfully complete the course.
94. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good and they enter into the different activities with enthusiasm. This can be seen at every level because they are willing to go beyond the minimum and explore a wide range of historical topics and themes. At GCSE the pupils produce a wealth of material about the 20th Century which reveals competence and a desire to learn.

95. By the end of Year 9 overall standards are above average. All pupils achieve at least average standards and many produce very good work. This is exemplified in imaginative extended writing about historical characters, such as Elizabeth I. Pupils' analytical work and confident use of ICT reflect the good quality of the teaching. Teachers work closely as a team and devise a wide range of stimulating methods which involve, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards. This adds challenge and sharply focuses pupils' interest. As a result, the GCSE course is a popular option for many pupils.
96. Teaching and learning are good across the school. A major strength of the teaching is the way that literacy and presentation skills are developed. For example, when Year 9 pupils of average ability were asked to compare the life experiences of slaves in the West Indies and factory workers in Britain, some quietly went to the computers whilst others worked from books using high quality writing frames to guide their investigations. They had built up a useful, large visual Venn diagram to support their visualisation and understanding of the plight of the two sets of workers. They quickly illustrated their integrated understanding by their extended written accounts. Pupils appreciate support both in their class work and assignments. Those who do not have good literacy skills initially do well with the range of experiences, such as the 'History Day' and visits, but gradually the lower level skills result in lower achievements and a degree of demotivation. This is the department's major cause for concern.
97. Leadership and management are good. The head of department leads her team effectively. As a result, the team co-ordinates its efforts as efficiently as the limited accommodation permits. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection: the standards of teaching and learning have been sustained well, and are leading to improved standards and examination results.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	High
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards improve steadily through the school and are high in Year 11.
 - The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11.
 - Pupils respond very well to the teaching showing a high level of interest and commitment.
- But...
- The lack of an appropriate classroom restricts achievement in the design aspects of resistant materials.

Commentary

98. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were high, representing continued improvement from the well above average level in the previous year, with boys gaining better results than girls in courses overall. Very high results were achieved in food technology and graphic products, with those in resistant materials and textiles being well above average.
99. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge and skills in all four areas of the design and technology curriculum are above average. Pupils work with skill and precision in resistant materials to a high standard of finish. In food technology, pupils show an equal regard for organisation and successful completion in their work. In Years 10 and 11, the tradition of methodical working and good workshop practice continues alongside pupils' confidence in developing their own ideas. Work is supported by some excellent drawing illustrating the stages of production and underlining very good achievement.
100. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, and is very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers in the department share an appropriate concern for disciplined, orderly working and this is reflected in the approach developed, in consequence, by pupils. A strong feature is the very good quality of teacher-pupil relationships, which generates a very good working atmosphere and underpins the progress made. Confidence is evident in pupils' handling of tools and equipment, and they are able to use computers effectively in modelling and developing their ideas. The nature of individual GCSE projects demands an independent approach to designing and making and provides, in turn, for the maximum progress by pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs.
101. A good feature of the management of the department is its sensitivity. This underlies both the very good relationships between staff and also the very good quality of the teaching. Documentation is comprehensive and thorough and the members of the department show a united spirit with shared aims. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection is good because standards have been maintained and examination results have improved to a high level.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In this curriculum area, the focus was on art and design which was inspected in depth. One lesson in drama was also sampled. In this very small Year 11 group, standards were average, and pupils were achieving very well in response to very good teaching. GCSE results have been very high for the past two years.

During the inspection, the school's only specialist music teacher was absent due to long term illness. In agreement with the school, work in music was not inspected in depth. Five music lessons were sampled during the inspection and a representative sample of recorded work was analysed. Standards are average by Year 9, and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. GCSE standards are above average by Year 11 where pupils are achieving well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy music and respond well to the good extra-curricular opportunities available. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits the range of teaching and learning opportunities. The most recent GCSE results in both 2002 and 2003 were very high.

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and is very good in the GCSE course.
- There has been significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.

But...

- The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- The size of many teaching groups is too large for a practical subject.

Commentary

102. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 are well above average but show a slight decline from the outstanding, very high results of the previous year; girls attain better results than boys.
103. By the end of Year 9, pupils show above average creative skills in art and design, and their achievement is good. A strong feature of their work is the ability to develop design ideas through a series of stages to a very good standard of finish and presentation. They use art historical material very effectively in furthering their own compositions. They also use a wide range of materials adventurously, particularly in relief modelling. Very good use is made of sketchbooks, which are annotated and provide a good record of progress. The language of the subject is explored in discussion of the work of major artists and art movements, and work in perspective and pattern helps to reinforce the development of numeracy. Computers are used in research and presentation, but lack of resources limits development in this area.
104. In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from carefully and imaginatively designed projects. A good range of teaching strategies is used, including the organisation of group working in which pupils collaborate in the production of large-scale work. This is an aspect of learning which has wider implications than simply developing creative skills, in that pupils learn to accept the ideas of others in a joint enterprise.
105. In Years 10 and 11, the very good level of subject expertise possessed by the teacher finds its fullest outlet. Pupils are given individual help and encouragement and develop confidence in making decisions about the direction of their work. The quality of individual tuition here, and at the earlier stage, enables talented pupils, and those with special educational needs, to make good progress and achieve well. Progress in the use of ICT is limited by sparse resources both in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE work in Years 10 and 11.
106. Despite resource limitations, poor accommodation and some large teaching groups, the department has raised standards since the previous inspection. This is a consequence of resolute management and leadership combined with a very high level of commitment. Overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, curtailed only by the shortcomings in accommodation and resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress, despite inadequate accommodation, because teaching is good overall.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; they are enthusiastic and hardworking in lessons and very supportive of the extensive extra-curricular programme.
- Leadership and management are very good and data is analysed rigorously to track pupils' progress.

But...

- The time allocation in Years 10 and 11 restricts the range of pupils' learning experiences, and is holding back standards.
- More use could be made of ICT to help pupils in Years 7-9 evaluate their performance.

Commentary

107. The GCSE results for 2003 were well above the national average, reflecting a significant improvement from the previous year. Boys and girls did especially well, and overall achieved better results than in their other GCSE examinations.
108. By Year 9, pupils reach above average standards and are achieving well. In games they understand the principles of defence and attack, and know how to implement complex team strategies. In lessons across the years the examples set by the more able pupils often help raise achievement of the whole group. Generally, pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their performance and these evaluative skills would be further strengthened through a more extensive use of ICT in Years 7-9.
109. By Year 11 pupils reach average standards in both GCSE and core physical education lessons. In core lessons they can construct their own fitness programmes and use these to record their progress. Pupils are able to master complex skills such as the set in volleyball and quickly progress towards combining skills and techniques with control and fluency. They are achieving well at this stage, but their standards are constrained by the limited time given to the subject at this stage.
110. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7-9 is very good. Teaching is consistently challenging, lessons are well planned, and tasks are progressive enabling pupils to build on their understanding. In an excellent Year 9 basketball lesson, all pupils mastered a range of different passes through a series of progressive drills, and learned how to apply them in

response to defensive tactics. The teacher challenged pupils beyond this, encouraging them to think about and incorporate more advanced concepts such as decision-making and timing.

111. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10-11 is good. Pupils make good progress, although time limitations reduce the potential impact of both teaching and learning. Teachers plan very well for pupils of all abilities and, in a Year 11 volleyball lesson seen, pupils of varying levels of experience made very good progress towards incorporating new skills within the game. They were enthusiastic and worked hard to improve their performance. Indoor accommodation is very limited and this, together with time constraints, restricts the extent of pupils' learning experiences, particularly in core physical education. There is a flourishing extra-curricular programme; this is well supported by staff and pupils, and is helping to raise standards.
112. Leadership and management are very good. Pupils' progress is monitored well through rigorous use of data and constructive, ongoing assessment. The vision for the department, together with its good improvement since the last inspection, is reflected in its development plan, which includes the induction of the newly appointed school sports coordinator. This post will serve to increase the opportunities for, and provision of, physical education and sport in the future through-amongst others-increased community links and the introduction of the junior sports leadership award. Self-evaluation is evident through regular monitoring of teaching and there is a realistic grasp of strengths and weaknesses. Staff work as a cohesive team and good support is provided for students in initial teacher training.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

In this curriculum area the school runs an applied GCSE course in business studies (double award). This has replaced the successful GNVQ part 1 course. It was not possible to inspect the subject in depth, but one lesson was sampled in which teaching and learning were very good. Pupils were completing coursework reviewing the interests of various stakeholders and analysing job roles in business organisations. Criteria for the highest marks were clearly discussed along with the importance of meeting deadlines. Each pupil was interviewed to ensure that they knew exactly what to do in order to reach the highest grades and maximise their achievement. Pupils responded very well, working independently and very competently on computers demonstrating a high level of interest in their work. Results in 2003 were above average; all 11 candidates passed the examination including four with distinctions, the equivalent of an A* and A GCSE grade.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

In this curriculum area, citizenship is taught partly as a separate subject by form tutors within the school's personal development course, and partly through identified elements of other subjects.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Improvement since the last inspection	N/A	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for teaching aspects of citizenship in other subjects have been carefully identified.
- Opportunities for pupils to participate in community activities are good.

But...

- The time allocated to the subject does not allow the subject to be taught in sufficient depth; as a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- A more effective assessment system needs to be put in place.

Commentary

113. Standards of attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are average, but pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because the subject is not taught in sufficient depth. Most pupils understand the principles of citizenship, but do not always understand the connection between these and related topics they study in different subjects. In geography, pupils in Year 11 show clear understanding of the global moral implications in their responses to learning about the effects of commercial development on third world economies. In history, pupils develop an understanding of the need for improvements to employment laws as they learn about the social conditions during the Industrial Revolution, but do not relate these sufficiently closely to present-day conditions.
114. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. There is some inconsistency between those lessons taught by form tutors in allocated time, where teaching varies between very good and unsatisfactory, and those taught within different subjects, where teaching is good. Most lessons taking place in dedicated time are well prepared and taught with authority and commitment and so pupils engage with the issues and achieve well. A Year 9 class quickly came to terms with the concept of manipulation and persuasion in different forms of news reporting, and were prepared to express and justify their own opinions. Occasionally, when planning does not ensure that issues can be discussed sensibly, pupils' attitudes deteriorate, their achievement is unsatisfactory and the object of the lesson is lost. The quality of marking is not consistent enough: some work, but not all, is marked although comments do not explain what makes written work successful or otherwise, so that pupils are not always clear how to improve.
115. Leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has worked successfully with other departments to identify which aspects of the programme of study can be taught in other subjects. However, not all departments use the system for verifying the extent of coverage consistently, and in other areas, opportunities to relate issues, such as co-operation and exercising responsibility, to the citizenship programme of study are missed. The management of citizenship is unsatisfactory. Although there is a scheme of work for lessons taking place in tutor periods, the time available does not permit the subject to be taught in sufficient depth, and some important topics are not covered. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment are not clear. There are no on-going records of attainment in work completed in form time, whilst in other subjects, pupils' attainment in elements of citizenship is not separately assessed. The department has been successful in providing pupils with opportunities to take an active part in democratic procedures and community affairs. Secret ballots are held for the election of school council representatives, who meet regularly with a member of staff to discuss concerns and propose ideas. Pupils are eligible for election to the Youth Parliament, and through visits to the Town Hall and meetings with local councillors they develop insight into the workings of local government. By organising and participating in various charitable fund-raising events, pupils become aware of the needs of disadvantaged people. Whilst initial progress has been made in establishing citizenship as a National Curriculum subject in the school, it has been insufficient to ensure requirements are properly met.

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	2
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	3
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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