

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE HALIFAX HIGH SCHOOL

Halifax

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107566

Headteacher: Jeremy Waxman

Lead inspector: Elizabeth Charlesworth

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 December 2003

Inspection number: 258813

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	604
School address:	Prescott Street Halifax
Postcode:	HX1 2HS
Telephone number:	01422 352 106
Fax number:	01422 383 297
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms P Astwood
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Halifax High School is a small 11-16 comprehensive school in Halifax, a town served by two selective grammar schools, two denominational school and three comprehensives. It is situated in the regeneration area of west Halifax and is the principal provider of education to the ethnic minority population of the town, having 85 percent of its pupils whose mother tongue is not English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, mostly moderate learning difficulties, including those with statements of special educational need is above average. The school has very recently gained agreement for a new building which will be ready by September 2005.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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13762	N Shelley	Lay inspector	
15109	T Comer	Team inspector	Mathematics
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	English
21866	D Tracey	Team inspector	Science
27803	J Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	A Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
24127	J Kidd	Team inspector	History Modern foreign languages
27666	A Lees	Team inspector	Music
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education
32122	J Straw	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Special educational needs
27485	M Sims	Team inspector	English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school with many excellent features. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has united a team with the common purpose of successfully improving teaching and learning to raise standards. He led them from the prospect of closure to become a successful school where teaching and learning are consistently good, pupils achieve very well and take pride in their school. Such was the commitment of the governing body that under the chair's relentless leadership and support from the local education authority the future of Halifax High has been secured together with plans to move to new premises by September 2005. The whole community is rightly proud of the dramatic rise in GCSE results, reflected in pupils' achievement in lessons. The school gives **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has created a very good learning environment where staff and pupils are committed to high achievement.
- Relationships between staff, pupils and the community promote very good attitudes to learning.
- Although standards in public examinations are rising, pupils' literacy skills are holding them back especially at the higher levels.
- Excellent links with schools and colleges means that pupils are very well prepared before they start Halifax High and equally ready for the next stage of their life.
- Very good care and support for groups and individuals, pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English, enable all pupils to make equal progress.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and there is a high level of racial harmony in school.
- The very good governing body is a very powerful advocate for the school in the town of Halifax and central to the school's successful bid to move to new premises in 2005.
- All members of the school community are proud to belong to Halifax High school and increasing numbers of parents are making the school their first choice for secondary education.
- There are formidable barriers to achievement which the school recognises and is working successfully to overcome.

Since the previous inspection the school has made very good progress. Overwhelming is the dramatic rise in results at the end of Year 11, coupled with a very strong commitment by everyone to high expectation and aspirations through consistently good teaching. The school faces many challenges, but is well supported with additional funds, their impact maximised because of the readiness to strive for high achievement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Consistently good teaching, in conjunction with very good care and advice, promotes **very good achievement**, from well below average attainment on entry to GCSE results close to the national average. Though learning is good it is the constancy of week by week good teaching which is overcoming barriers, laying solid foundations on which rising standards are built.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 demonstrate that, though very low, pupils do better in English than mathematics and science, though the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in mathematics was greater than in the other two subjects. Standards in work seen during the inspection in Year 9 are **below average** overall and well below average in science and graphics; though average in art and above average in drama and aspects of design and technology (food technology and textiles) and citizenship. Pupils' literacy standards are holding back their progress, but work in English and drama is helping improve fluency in spoken and written English.

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	All schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	E	D	D	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.*

Results at the end of Year 11 rose dramatically between 2000 and 2003 from 15 to 50 percent 5 A\*-C grades, close to the national average, though the average points score measure is below average. Standards in lessons reflect this improvement although overall are **below average**. In art, geography, history, information and communications technology (ICT), and Urdu standards are average, and above average in drama, food technology and textiles.

Pupils have **very positive** attitudes, expressing pride in school which they eagerly share with visitors. Personal, particularly spiritual, development is **very good**, promoted through assemblies, thought for the day and the two-minute silence, observed meticulously and willingly throughout the school. Behaviour is **good**, and because of the extensive network of support, exclusions are very low. Attendance is improving, because of excellent procedures to support it, from its previous very low level and is now **average**. Despite teachers' encouragement a minority of pupils lack a sense of urgency in getting to school and lessons on time, making punctuality unsatisfactory.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The senior management team, constantly monitoring and analysing teaching and learning ensures that all pupils enjoy the benefit of **good teaching**. It is consistency, built around the Halifax High lesson<sup>1</sup>, which is producing **good learning**. Almost three out of four lessons are at least good and a quarter of those, most markedly in drama, English and religious education, very good. The very few unsatisfactory features observed were associated with a failure to manage pupils' boisterous behaviour and lack of emphasis on developing pupils' independence, mostly in Urdu and graphics.

The curriculum provides **good** opportunities for all pupils. Pupils have complex language needs which the school meets well, from intensive courses for those at an early stage of learning English through to drama for all pupils to develop fluency in spoken English. The range of choices in Years 10 and 11 is extensive and good preparation for the next stage of life. One drawback, especially for the linguistically able, is the lack of opportunity to study more than one language.

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Part of the **very good** advice, guidance and support is the termly meeting between tutor and pupil to discuss progress. Links with other schools are **excellent**: pupils are very well prepared for their transfer to Halifax High school in Year 7 and for their move to the next stage of life at aged 16. **Very good** community links support pupils' learning helping them to continue studying outside the school day.

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is **very well** led and management is **excellent**. The excellent senior management team and extended leadership group ensure standards improve at a rapid rate because of very effective monitoring of teaching and learning, the astute use of assessment information and target setting, and because of the excellent vision for the future shared by all senior managers. The **very good** governing body, with a clear idea of the strengths and significant improvements in the ethos of the school since the previous inspection, recognises the **outstanding leadership of the headteacher** as the major influence. The school manages and uses **very well** its funds, very effectively controlling expenditure.

<sup>1</sup> This is based on the acronym *SOW REAP*, providing: **S**omething to do straight away, **O**bjectives shared, **W**ords which are key to the lesson, **R**ecap from previous lesson, **E**xposition, **A**ctivities for learning, **P**lenary

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

The school respects pupils' views and uses the school council as a very effective vehicle for seeking them. Parents have a high regard for the school. The partnership between school and parents is **good**.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards of fluency in spoken and written English.
- Improve the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in national tests and examinations.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- All statutory requirements are met.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Standards are **below average** and achievement **very good**. Pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 has been consistently well below average for many years. The presence in Halifax of two selective schools accounts for a smaller proportion than is usual of pupils in the higher attainment range. The tables below include the results of pupils who arrived at the school in the two years prior to taking examinations from abroad with no English.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a very significant rise in GCSE results between 2000 and 2003.
- Achievement is very good as pupils make very good progress from their well below average level of attainment entry.
- Fluency in spoken and written English is holding back achievement especially among higher attainers.
- Standards are above average in drama and citizenship.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.9 (29.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	29 (28.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	27.2 (28.1)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 116 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- 1 For several years results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been overall very low. One of the reasons for this is pupils' low standards of literacy. Pupils face difficulties in understanding the nuances and idioms of written English, particularly in science, where they frequently misinterpret what is required in test questions. Because teaching in English is very good and concentrates on the technical aspects of language pupils do better here than in mathematics and science: indeed compared with pupils nationally with similar prior attainment results in 2003 were well above average. Lack of fluency in written and spoken English as well as difficulty in understanding subtleties in the language prevent pupils from reaching the higher Level 6, though in mathematics this is less of a barrier and twice as many pupils achieved Level 6 than in English or science. Achievement nevertheless is very good. The achievement of pupils new to English is very good because they receive effective support in lessons. They are well integrated into school and highly motivated to learn. New arrivals to the school, including asylum seekers join most regular school lessons and are supported with one hour a day's intensive English to reinforce their learning. There is very little difference in the performance of girls and boys, though in mathematics girls are further behind than boys compared with girls and boys nationally.
- 2 Standards in lessons throughout the school are higher than past results as the consistently good teaching takes effect. In drama, and citizenship in Years 7 and 8, subjects which pupils enjoy and where teaching is very good, standards are above average. Higher attaining pupils are able to extract information and draw conclusions in history and religious education, putting across their arguments very persuasively and seeing things from differing view-points. In music standards are well below average but this is because there has been a lack of emphasis on learning basic skills, something which the new subject leader has speedily tackled.

- 3 Progress for pupils with special educational needs overall matches the very good progress of other pupils, because the school ensures that pupils who need extra help have access to a wide range of well- coordinated support that enables most of them to achieve very well in relation to their standards on entry to the school.
- 4 The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented but because these pupils are not tracked separately it is not possible to make an evaluation of their achievement. However, the trainee headteacher, seconded to the school under a scheme run by the Department for Education and Skills, has taken charge of gifted and talented provision and is already aware that the small number of above average pupils are not reaching the highest grades.

**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	50 (38.7)	51.5 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	82 (78)	90.5 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (96)	96.9 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.3 (28.1)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 119 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 In 2000 GCSE results of 5 A\*-C grades stood at 15 percent. The school knew it had to take action and tackled the problem on two fronts: improving the consistency of good teaching and making better use of assessment information to set challenging targets. Together these strategies have worked very well and though still below average, results are rising at a much faster rate than they are nationally. Though there are very few pupils at the higher end of the ability range, as measured by standardised tests, they gain very few of the highest grades of A and A\*. Pupils with special educational needs often do better than expected in GCSE examinations. Most pupils leave school with at least one GCSE grade, though the proportion gaining 5 A\*-G grades is lower than nationally. This is because a small number of pupils do not follow courses which contribute to these grades; instead they successfully follow the Youth Award Scheme, concentrating on basic skills and personal development.
- 6 Compared with pupils who had similar results at the end of Year 9 the 5 A\*-C measure is very high. Results indicate that Asian boys do better than their national counterparts, and better than white boys, although as there are few white boys comparisons are not wholly reliable. There is very little difference overall in the performance of girls and boys compared with girls and boys nationally. Pupils have been particularly successful in GNVQ courses, particularly in ICT.
- 7 The cumulative effect of consistently good teaching means that pupils' achievement continues to be very good in Years 10 and 11 as their standards of literacy improve and they gain greater fluency in English. Standards in work seen during the inspection are overall below average, but in many subjects these are rising so that the improvement in results is likely to be sustained. In art, geography, history, ICT, and Urdu in Years 10 and 11 standards are average, and above average in drama and aspects of design and technology (food technology and textiles).

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

Pupils have a **very positive attitude** towards their learning and their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Behaviour is **good** and attendance **average**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are key elements in the purposeful and caring ethos, which pervades the school.
- Pupils' good behaviour and their very good attitudes to learning in all its forms are leading to continuous improvement in their achievement in all areas of school life.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Procedures to improve attendance are excellent and are effective in ensuring that pupils and parents understand its importance.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is unsatisfactory amongst a significant minority of pupils.

## Commentary

- 8 Pupils speak very highly of their school, of their teachers and other staff and are very willing to share their views with visitors. They respond well to what the school offers them, react positively with industry and enthusiasm to the teaching and are very proud of their achievements. Relationships between pupils of different ethnic groups, including those seeking asylum, are very positive indeed and are a major strength.
- 9 There are excellent procedures in place to improve attendance, which is now average and improving term by term. There is persistent emphasis on the value and importance of good attendance and pupils enjoy the form competitions, the results of which are announced regularly in assemblies. The school is now correctly looking at ways to improve punctuality at the beginning of the day and also at the start of lessons since valuable time is lost because a small minority of pupils lack a sense of urgency.
- 10 The ethos of the school makes all pupils feel valued and respected. There is very good provision for pupils' personal development. Assemblies deal with a range of moral and cultural issues and prepare pupils very well indeed for the two-minute silence observed every morning and together with religious education play an important part in pupils' spiritual development.
- 11 The school's behaviour policies are effective in helping pupils reflect upon right and wrong. Teachers and other staff are very good role models and insist upon high standards of conduct and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. Pupils fulfil their responsibilities as prefects, ambassadors and by helping younger pupils very well, encouraging very good relationships between all members of the school community.
- 12 The opportunities for cultural and multi-cultural development are very good and there are high levels of racial harmony in the school. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate cultural differences, to look in English lessons at the poetry of other countries, for example, and, in citizenship and many other subjects, to reject prejudice and the evils of racism.

## Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.8
National data	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting 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	75	8	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	467	6	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	27	2	

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

- 13 The strategies to reduce exclusions have been very effective indeed in lowering the rate to little more than a handful of incidences.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** standard of education for its pupils. The consistency of good teaching coupled with the way the curriculum is organised to provide for all needs and aptitudes support the rising standards in the school. This is set against a background of a school in very restricted accommodation with very little space around. The management of the school has struck a fine balance between maintaining the existing accommodation at a tolerable level without spending large amounts of money on refurbishment as it awaits the move to new premises.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Assessment is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The successful development of the Halifax High lesson has resulted in teaching that is consistent in quality and meets the needs of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and lesson planning promote effective learning, so most pupils achieve very well.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure a positive climate for learning.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for the development of pupils' skills of independent learning and research.
- Teachers' management of a minority of uncooperative pupils is occasionally ineffective, and so these pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 109 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1)	28 (26)	49 (45)	29 (27)	2 (1)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

- 14 Teaching and learning are good in throughout the school. The needs of all pupils are well met and teachers show a good understanding of the learning needs of boys and girls of different levels of competence. Teaching is good in most subjects and is very good in English and drama. In science, design and technology and in Urdu it is satisfactory. Much work has been

done to achieve consistency in the quality of teaching, and the raising of standards through more effective teaching continues to be a priority within the school's development planning.

- 15 The focus has been on creating the distinctive Halifax High lesson, using the lesson structure advocated in the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. The school has encouraged the development of a variety of teaching and learning styles, together with the tailoring of work to pupils' capabilities, and the whole-hearted cooperation of teachers in the drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning has had a decisive impact on the raising of standards. There has been an emphasis on the observation of lessons by the headteacher and senior management team, together with outside advisers. Teachers show a willingness to share ideas, and are regularly involved in discussions on lesson planning in order to identify more effective ways of implementing the different steps of the Halifax High lesson. As a result of this work, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection; now the number of lessons judged to be good or better is 72 percent compared with half of the lessons seen in 1998.
- 16 Characteristics of good teaching in almost all subjects are teachers' good subject knowledge and careful lesson preparation. As a result, pupils benefit from a variety of well-planned activities and make good gains in their learning. A strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers encourage their pupils to feel confident in taking an active part in the lesson. Most pupils respond well. They want to learn, and feel secure in venturing their ideas because of the very good relationships that they enjoy with teachers and support staff.
- 17 However, in the minority of lessons where learning is less effective, and occasionally unsatisfactory, it is usually because there is a lack of organisation, and classroom management is insecure. A small number of pupils do not conform to the high standard of behaviour set by the school and where teachers do not tackle this effectively learning suffers. Consequently the pace of the lesson slackens, and there is not enough challenge in the tasks set, so pupils do not make sufficient progress. The extent to which pupils become independent learners is limited by a lack of opportunity in the majority of subjects. In ICT, pupils in Years 7 to 9 make unsatisfactory progress in this aspect of their learning, and pupils of all ages are hindered in their independent learning by the lack of homework in the subject.
- 18 Pupils with special educational needs learn well. Teachers are well informed about the range of needs and are successful in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to pupils' requirements. Pupils' individual learning plans give clear targets for improvement in work and behaviour, and classroom support is well deployed and very effective. Teaching assistants have a good rapport with their charges, and they work closely with subject teachers to ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to succeed. Examples of very good support for learning were seen in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, design and technology, and religious education.
- 19 Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of pupils new to English, providing pace and challenge in accessible language without simplifying the subject. Relationships between support teachers and learners are very good. Pupils are confident to ask questions and very willing to come before and after school for additional support.
- 20 Assessment is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. It is very good in English, and satisfactory in mathematics and ICT. It is good in all other subjects. The school has established a policy of setting targets for individual pupils based on careful consideration of prior attainment, tests on entry to the school, and what could be expected. However, the expectation of what pupils might be able to achieve is only a starting point, and it is the ambition with which the school has set targets to which they feel pupils can aspire that is the success story behind the dramatic rise in GCSE results over the last three years. The senior management team is now moving on to refine this even more to take account of the rate of progress of different ability groups. Pupils themselves give examples of their targets in different subjects and explain what they need to do to improve. Marking is regular and

consistent throughout the school, and in most subjects teachers use the results of their assessments effectively in the planning of lessons to ensure that pupils' different needs are met. Detailed assessment records are kept on pupils new to English, enabling pupils to be placed in appropriate groups and subject teachers to plan work.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and meets well the needs and aspirations of all pupils. There are **satisfactory** opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are **unsatisfactory** at present, but the school makes the best of what it has as it awaits the move to new premises.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are successfully guided into one of the three 'strands' in Years 10 and 11 which best meets their needs and aspirations.
- The personal, social and health education and citizenship programmes contribute well to pupils' personal development.
- A weakness is that the provision for more able linguists to study a second language is restricted to after-school sessions.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and has a detrimental effect on standards, particularly in practical subjects.
- The school provides well for pupils to improve their written and spoken English.

### Commentary

- 21 The organisation of the curriculum is good. Because most pupils have had an introduction to the subjects they will study while still at their primary school they are ready to start the secondary curriculum in earnest. To help them settle in further pupils in Year 7 study design and technology, religious education, citizenship, ICT and creative arts in rotation, giving greater stability to their timetable and reducing the number of teachers they meet each week. Extra help is given those pupils who have difficulty in making the transition from primary to secondary education. Drama is taught throughout the school, helping pupils to develop both their creative ability as well as giving valuable openings for improving spoken English. The English department concentrates on teaching technical aspects of writing also emphasised in subjects across the curriculum. However, there is very little provision for the linguistically able to study more than one language which is a weakness.
- 22 In an innovative arrangement pupils in Year 10 are carefully guided into one of three strands where they follow the most suitable course based on their prior attainment and aspirations. Higher attainers take a good selection of GCSE courses, about a third of pupils mix GCSE with work-related courses, while courses which concentrate more on personal development and basic skills, such as the Youth Award Scheme, suit many special educational needs pupils, lower attainers and those who are discouraged with traditional education. The introduction of a vocational course in ICT has stimulated interest, enthusiasm and success in Year 11.
- 23 All statutory aspects of personal, social and health education are covered during the weekly sessions which pupils have with their form tutors. Pupils use the time well to explore personal development such as how they learn, what they eat and the barriers they encounter in specific lessons. Form tutors help them to set targets and show them how to support these targets with careful planning. This method, learnt early on, continues through the school so that Year 11 are well-prepared when they come to make applications and attend interviews for further education and training. The imaginative and successful introduction of citizenship into the curriculum further improves pupils' personal development.
- 24 Pupils with special educational needs and those new to English are taught almost entirely in classes with other pupils. Special educational needs pupils are very well provided for through

effective grouping arrangements across the subjects, very good classroom support, and well focused individual and small group work for pupils with particular learning problems and behavioural difficulties. Daily intensive English lessons support the acquisition of English especially for the asylum seekers who are new to English.

- 25 Provision for gifted and talented pupils is in its infancy, though the Halifax High lesson, with its variety of activities means that their needs are not entirely overlooked. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and have not been developed as well as the rest of the curriculum because the school has focused its efforts on providing extra tuition before and after school for pupils who are falling behind. The physical education department offers GCSE physical education after school, further restricting the scope for recreational sport. However, now that the school is confident in its rising standards its plans for increased out-of-hours activities run alongside the bid for performing arts and language college status which coincides with the move to the new premises.
- 26 Staffing has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The practice of linking learning support assistants to departments allows them to develop subject expertise and be more effective. Learning resources are good for the majority of pupils, contributing to their generally very good achievement. However, mathematics lacks specialist resources for practical work. Numbers of reference books in the library remain lower than in most schools, therefore adversely affecting pupils' opportunities to work independently. Despite improvements since the previous inspection, the accommodation remains unsatisfactory, although the learning support base now offers a welcoming and well-resourced area in which pupils feel secure and make good use of the ICT and kitchen facilities. However, the physical access to science laboratories remains difficult and the lack of suitable accommodation for teaching games continues to adversely affect standards in physical education.

### Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Pupils receive **very good advice, guidance and support**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is consistently very good and sensitive to pupils' needs.
- Pupils are aware of their progress and how to improve.
- Academic and personal support is wide ranging and very effective.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported.
- Advice about and preparation for the next stage of education is very good.

### Commentary

- 27 Pupils feel safe, supported and valued because of the way they are treated by all the adults in school. Staff go to considerable lengths to meet the needs of the pupils and to ensure they live and work in safety. Specialist education and health agencies provide services to the school and public services such as the police participate in a range of supportive activities. The school's participation in the local *Himmat* project is very effective in enabling Asian pupils with behaviour and attendance problems to overcome their difficulties and resume full time education, particularly valuable for supporting pupils who are at risk of exclusion.
- 28 The weekly tutorial monitoring periods enable tutors to review progress with each pupil at least once and usually twice a term. As a result, pupils are well aware of the progress they make and how to improve.
- 29 A full time school mentor together with mentors from public organisations and industry offer support to the pupils. Pupils receive very good advice and guidance about subject choices and post 16 opportunities. Arrangements with other schools and colleges keep pupils well

informed and prepared for the next stage of their careers. The school respects and acts upon the views and suggestions put forward by the school council, undertaking surveys about specific matters from time to time.

- 30 The school gives very good guidance and support to pupils with special educational needs. The quality of the classroom support is very good, and has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. The help given to pupils with behavioural difficulties through the Access provision is very effective in improving their attitudes to school so that they become more cooperative and make better progress. However, the individual learning plans of pupils at the "school action" stage of the code of practice are not used as effectively as those relating to the other stages.

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

Parents have a high regard for the school. The partnership between school and parents is **good**. Links with other schools are **excellent** and the school is developing **very good** links with the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are confident in the school and think very well of it.
- Relationships and communications with parents are very good.
- Parents' involvement in learning and the life of the school is limited.
- Excellent involvement with other schools contributes substantially to raising standards.
- The community is used very well to develop learning.
- The school works closely with the community and particularly religious groups.

### **Commentary**

- 31 Parents are pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They place a great deal of trust in the school and particularly appreciate the efforts made to communicate with them frequently. Many members of the school's staff are able to converse in the parents' languages and a home/school liaison officer and a learning mentor are successfully building constructive relationships with the parents and fostering more positive attitudes towards education.
- 32 Parents' involvement in their children's learning and in the life of the school is limited but most do their best to encourage their children with their work at home or to attend the school's homework club. They respond well when invited into the school to discuss pupils' progress or to support strategies to help improve their children's behaviour. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs, encouraging them to contribute to the reviews of their children's achievement.
- 33 The many curricular activities and projects that are in place with all of the partner primary schools do much to prepare pupils including those with special educational needs very well for secondary school and contribute very well to continuity in teaching and raising standards prior to joining. Collaboration with other secondary schools and colleges very effectively promotes transition to post 16 courses, vocational experiences and development of community involvement. Public services, voluntary organisations and employers provide supplementary support for pupils' academic and personal development and preparation for the next stage of the pupils' careers. Plans to further develop community involvement are secured through the school's links with several other schools, which have specialist status, and the school's current bid for its own specialist status in performing arts and languages.
- 34 Information, including annual school reports, is very good and translated into the home language of parents who require it. A representative group of parents is consulted about



proposed developments and matters of cultural importance. The school keeps parents up to date, for example about the new school building.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The governance of the school, together with leadership of key staff is **very good**, and management is **excellent**. Standards have improved at such a rapid rate because of very effective monitoring of teaching and learning and because of the excellent vision for future development shared by all senior managers.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that there is an ongoing evaluation of the school performance, in all areas of its life.
- The headteacher is supported by outstanding senior managers, who share his vision and who are responsible for establishing effective strategies to raise achievement.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is very rigorous and has the achievement of pupils at its heart.
- Expenditure is very effectively accounted for and funds are used very well to raise standards.
- The governing body understands very well the school's strengths and where it needs to move forward.
- The local community is well-represented on the governing body.

### Commentary

- 35 Pupils, teachers and support staff speak with one voice when they describe the work of the headteacher. They believe that his clarity of vision, his care for all members of the school community and his motivational gifts are the primary reason for the school's rapid improvement. Moreover, he is supported by an outstanding management group who monitor all aspects of what the school has to offer its pupils. The monitoring of teaching and learning in particular is a major strength and senior managers have ensured that heads of department play an important role in this initiative. It has resulted in consistently good teaching for all pupils and rapidly rising standards. Teachers themselves are appreciative of the openness and approachability of the senior team and speak highly of the support and encouragement they receive.
- 36 Leadership and management at departmental level are very good and teachers benefit from focused in-service training, designed to meet the needs of the whole school but also tailored to develop departmental and individual needs. Heads of department in particular feel that they are consulted and they have the full support to develop their subjects further. The programme of annual departmental reviews is very effective in allowing teachers to evaluate their own performance and to understand where improvements must be made if pupils' achievement is to rise even further.
- 37 The quality of leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs has a well-informed understanding of pupils' different problems and gives very good support to the department. Statutory requirements in relation to pupils with statements of special educational need are met, and the specific grant is well used for its designated purposes. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- 38 The governance of the school is very good. The governors are proud of the school's achievements and have played an active role in achieving them. Governors are well-informed and have a very good knowledge of future priorities, with a clear understanding of their strategic role and statutory responsibility. Underpinning this is the strong relationship between the headteacher and chair of governors. There is a good representation from the local community on the governing body and governors pay regular visits to the school. Parent

governors are actively involved in a number of committees which are all served by members of the senior management team. Financial management is good, though the finance committee does not consistently evaluate the effect of previous decisions to determine whether money has been well spent.

- 39 The school receives considerable extra funds because of pupils' needs and the challenging nature of the community that it serves. It uses the available funds to achieve its priorities which are small teaching groups, support for pupils with particular needs, non-teaching time for managers in order to monitor and improve teaching and the provision of a weekly tutorial review period with individual pupils. A substantial amount of staff is involved in pastoral care and family contact, justified because of the nature of the school community. Despite the high cost per pupil, the school is deemed to give very good value for money because pupils achieve very well over time and the school manages this under very challenging circumstances.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,104,952
Total expenditure	2,174,395
Expenditure per pupil	3,623

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	99,072
Balance carried forward to the next	29,628

**Example of outstanding practice**

One the main planks in the school's successful raising of standards is *The Halifax High* lesson. The cumulative effect of good teaching gives pupils a constant experience each and every day.

**The headteacher's excellent leadership unites the school behind him in the drive to raise standards. The senior management team, leading the way by setting a very high standard of teaching themselves, make excellent use of their time in monitoring teaching by focusing on particular features, two or three at a time, then putting their efforts into improving these very features. Pupils have come to expect these high quality lessons, reminded as they walk around the school the 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap'.**

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

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards have risen steadily over the past three years.
- There is very good teaching that contributes to very good achievement for all pupils.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to this subject and work seriously in all years.
- Assessment is very good and pupils know what they have to do to improve.
- There is very good emphasis on the key skills of language and literacy.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

##### **Commentary**

- 40 In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average. The 2003 results were marginally better than those for 2002 and continued the upward trend since the previous inspection. In 2002, GCSE results in English language and literature were below average. In 2003 they improved. Girls performed better than boys but the gap narrowed significantly in 2003. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards in English. A very large proportion of the pupils do not use English as their first language outside school.
- 41 By Year 9 standards are average because very good teaching is now stimulating better standards than past results. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is broadly average. However, a greater than average proportion has well below average standards and fewer pupils reach the higher levels. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are at least average and are a strength throughout all years. They willingly take part in group and whole class discussions. They are very confident but often use a limited vocabulary. They speak at length when appropriate and can draw on their own experiences to illustrate what they have to say. However they do not attain the same standards in their written work. Most significantly, the work of a large minority of pupils contains many errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In a minority of instances the standard of handwriting is poor. While higher attaining pupils adapt what they write for a range of audiences lower attaining pupils restrict themselves to simple sentences. Most know how to shape a paragraph. Standards in reading are average. Pupils understand what they read and have a very good recall of the literature they have studied. Many pupils have difficulty in explaining their responses in writing to the same depth.
- 42 In Years 10 and 11, because teaching is now very good, pupils improve their skills at a rate that their standards are average. Most of the features found in pupils' work in the first three years are improved in Years 10 and 11. The majority of pupils speak in turn, listen alertly and are capable of adding to discussion in a very respectful manner. All pupils improve their basic skills impressively. Higher attaining pupils produce competent, extended writing, although few are able to write concisely to A\* level.
- 43 Achievement is very good in all years. Pupils come to lessons eager and willing to learn and because of these very good attitudes to learning all pupils make impressive progress from their starting points.

- 44 Teaching and learning are very good. All lessons are thoroughly prepared. There is very good variety and pupils are active learners. The teachers use demanding and stimulating materials, often from the great classics of literature. Pupils are taught correct, standard English orally and in writing. There is very good emphasis on the details of spelling, punctuation and grammar. These are taught formally and to a high level. The teachers mark work closely and give clear guidance on how standards can be improved. Assessment is very good and involves self-assessment.
- 45 Within their studies in literature pupils explore emotional issues such as poverty, rejection, patriotism and bullying. These make a very good contribution to their education in citizenship and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 46 Leadership and management are very good. There is very good vision for improving provision in all areas. There is a very strong team, the majority of whom are experienced, senior teachers. There is good mutual support.
- 47 There is good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved by Years 9 and 11. Teaching and learning have improved significantly.

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

- 48 There is a clear strategy for promoting language and literacy across the curriculum. This has been operating for some years under the leadership of a senior teacher. All teachers have had training in implementing literacy strategies.
- 49 Standards are below average. The majority of pupils are confident speakers. There are good opportunities for them to develop speaking and listening skills in most lessons. In all subjects they learn to use the correct vocabulary. In English, drama and history they are helped to structure their writing and to justify their opinions. However, in most other subjects there is no clear strategy used to help pupils to improve their language and literacy skills. The majority of pupils read with average understanding and are able to find information on the Internet and other reference material in a limited way. There is a much greater than average proportion of pupils with poor skills in literacy and this impedes their attainment in the majority of subjects. Not all teachers in all subjects tackle this systematically, nor do they monitor and track the impact of the school's language and literacy strategy on pupils' experience.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**, with some very good features.

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

- Although rising, standards in GCSE examinations are below average in both Urdu and Spanish.
- Leadership and management are good and ensure effective evaluation of departmental performance.
- Pupils achieve well in Spanish in all years.
- Lesson planning and the quality of marking of pupils' work are very good.
- The standards reached by boys are improving, but, in both languages, they do not perform as well as girls.
- There are examples of unsatisfactory behaviour by pupils, particularly in Urdu lessons.

#### **Commentary**

- 50 In 2002, results in both Spanish and Urdu were below average for the higher grades but, in both languages, all pupils attained a grade and there are much larger entries as a percentage of pupils in the year than nationally. In work seen during the inspection in Urdu, standards at the end of Year 11 are still below average but are improving in Years 8 and 9, where pupils are producing average work overall. Similarly, in Spanish standards are still below average

overall in Years 9 and 11 but there are examples of where they are higher than this. Boys do not perform as well as girls, but they are beginning to attain at higher levels.

- 51 From a low literacy base when they begin their language studies, pupils achieve well in Spanish and satisfactorily in Urdu. In Spanish, for example, because of good teaching and because pupils imitate the accents of their teachers, their pronunciation is improving at a rapid rate. In Urdu, achievement is improving in the GCSE years because there are two small teaching groups. In both languages, the range of vocabulary being acquired by pupils is a particularly strong feature.
- 52 In both languages, teachers display a high level of fluency and their preparation to meet the needs of all their pupils is very thorough. Moreover, there is very effective use of in-class support and also of ICT as a learning tool. Marking is of a high standard and teachers give their pupils detailed advice on how they can improve their work. Because of extensive use of the foreign language and also because of skilful questioning, teaching and learning in Spanish are good overall and are very good in a third of lessons. However, because teachers do not always provide enough challenge for their pupils and because there are examples of inappropriate behaviour in lessons, teaching and learning in Urdu are sometimes unsatisfactory, though satisfactory overall.
- 53 The department is well led and pupils' performance in both languages is monitored regularly and effectively. Planning and preparation are very good and there is strong support for inexperienced teachers. High levels of industry, commitment and teamwork are key features in the department and are evident in everything teachers undertake. In addition, display in the teaching rooms is of a good standard, the annual trip to Barcelona is the highlight of the year and the opportunities for pupils to study Urdu at advanced level strengthens languages provision.
- 54 The department has made good improvement since the last inspection particularly in the quality of assessment procedures and in the progress made by pupils in both Spanish and Urdu. Because rigorous monitoring is already fully in place, the department is well placed for continued development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving and most pupils achieve well. The main challenge for the school in mathematics is to raise the performance of the middle attaining classes.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The teaching is good and pupils learn effectively but the marking of their written work is inconsistent.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour significantly help to underpin their learning.
- Instability in staffing owing to long-term absence of a teacher has disrupted the learning of many pupils.
- The teachers do not make enough use of ICT.
- Teachers provide pupils with too few opportunities for practical and applied work.

### **Commentary**

- 55 The National Curriculum test results in 2003 were well below the average of all schools nationally but were in line with the average of similar schools. The results are rising faster than nationally. Although the GCSE results were below the national average in 2003, they were well above the average of similar schools and show that the school is catching up quickly and improving much faster than nationally.

- 56 Standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection confirm the improvement reflected in the test and examination results. Although they are well below average by Year 9, they are now below average, rather than well below average, in Year 11. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school. Although test and examination results show better results for Year 9 boys than girls, and for Year 11 girls than boys, no significant difference in standard could be seen in lessons or the analysis of pupils' written work. Results of the small number of white boys are below those of the school as a whole but the numbers involved are too small to draw valid and reliable conclusions. Pupils achieve consistently well in the higher classes and in the classes of pupils with special educational needs who receive support. Pupils in the middle groups achieve less well, though satisfactorily, and raising the attainment of Year 9 and Year 11 pupils in the middle attaining classes is the real challenge for the department. Pupils' attitudes are good and they behave well.
- 57 Pupils' numerical work has improved since the previous inspection and they achieve equally well in arithmetic, algebra, geometry and statistics. However, pupils undertake little practical work which would add subject appeal, especially for the younger ones, and would assist the less able pupils in their understanding of the subject.
- 58 Teaching is good overall throughout the school and pupils learn effectively. The main strengths are high expectations, especially in the higher classes and in the lower classes which benefit from support, thorough planning, and good management of pupils who are keen to learn and work hard. Pupils are capable of working independently though they have few opportunities to do so. Teachers do not make enough use of ICT, for example, in their approach to teaching and learning of algebra and graphs. The teachers work hard to provide booster classes, homework and revision classes after school and pupils take part in mathematics contests in competition with other schools.
- 59 Leadership of the subject is effective. The head of subject leads by example, taking challenging classes, and has drawn the staff together as an effective teaching team. It is good to see that departmental meetings are about teaching the subject rather than administration. The management of the subject is effective overall. Lessons are monitored to identify how to improve teaching. Although pupils' exercise books are also monitored, the consistency of the marking of written work does not always ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes and know what to do to improve.
- 60 The long-term absence of a mathematics teacher is a barrier to the progress of the subject. The department has nowhere to store practical equipment which would enable teachers to give the subject more appeal to less able and younger pupils.
- 61 The subject has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection. Examination and test results have improved very rapidly, especially at GCSE. Number work and algebra are better, pupils have better attitudes to the subject and teaching has greatly improved.

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

- 62 Pupils' mathematical skills are good enough to allow them to access the numerical and graphical content of all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills effectively, particularly in science, design and technology, art and design, and geography.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are well below average but improving.
- Results for pupils taking separate science examinations in 2003 indicate that these pupils underachieved.
- The consistent use of the 'Halifax High' lesson is helping to improve teaching and learning.
- Staffing is now more stable with a good mix of younger and more experienced teachers.
- Teachers and support staff work well together as a team.
- Assessment of pupils' work is good.

### Commentary

- 63 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2003 were well below average compared to the country as a whole but average for pupils from similar backgrounds. Although science test results are not as good as in English and mathematics they have, nevertheless, improved faster than the national rate in recent years. However few pupils obtain higher levels. In 2003 pupils were entered for a range of GCSE science examinations including separate biology, chemistry and physics. Results in GCSE separate sciences in 2003 were variable and indicate underachievement. For example, less than half the pupils entered for GCSE biology achieved a grade A\*-C. Overall results were well below average for grades A\*-C but below average for grades A\*-G. Results were better in 2003 than 2002, maintaining an upward trend.
- 64 Standards of work in Year 9 are well below average. Pupils enter the school with attainment which is well below average. Literacy skills are weak and this acts as an initial barrier to their learning in science. However in Years 7 to 9 they make satisfactory progress so that their knowledge and understanding of science is what would be expected considering their starting point. As a result the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Standards of work in Year 11 are also well below average. However pupils' knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics continues to improve and their achievement is satisfactory. Skills of enquiry improve across all age ranges due to a good focus on practical work in lessons. However deficits in pupils' linguistic understanding results in their analysis and evaluation skills being weaker. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily because work is structured to their abilities. Where support staff are present, collaboration with class teachers overall is good so that progress is better.
- 65 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. Lessons are well planned to a consistent format which improves pupils' learning. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good with the result that interest and motivation are improved. Assessment of pupils' work is good and shows them how to improve. Behaviour is well managed with the result that most time spent in lessons is productive. However lessons are often dominated and led by the teacher with the result that pupils' independent learning skills are underdeveloped. The summary session at the end of lessons is of variable quality. The main learning aims of the lesson are not always drawn together, though learning was summarised very well using the electronic whiteboard for instance, in a Year 11 lesson on radioactivity.
- 66 Literacy skills are improved by a focus on key words and pupils are encouraged to build up a good technical vocabulary by means of the use of dictionaries. Mathematical skills of formula and graphical work are developed so that pupils' enquiry science skills improve.
- 67 Leadership and management are good. The department has recently had a variety of staffing problems which have affected standards and examination results adversely. However the temporary head of department has clear focus on short term aims necessary for

improvement, having improved the curriculum by stream-lining the courses available to pupils. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is better as a result. There is a good team spirit within the department which is improving the learning environment. The contribution from the seconded trainee headteacher is having a positive effect on raising standards.

- 68 Accommodation is insufficient for the number of pupils in the school. Problems with access and pupils' punctuality result in loss of curriculum time and this has a negative effect on standards. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good: staffing is now more stable, test and examination results are improving, teaching is better with none that is unsatisfactory.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results are above average.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching is good and pupils learn well.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Pupils have positive attitudes that support their learning.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not take enough responsibility for their own learning and rely overmuch on their teachers to show them what to do and when and how to do it.
- The number of computers available for pupil use is below average.

### **Commentary**

- 69 GCSE and GNVQ examination results in 2003 were above average, a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Every pupil entered gained a pass at grade C or above.
- 70 Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average. Although most pupils use word processing and desk-top publishing software to create posters and flyers, few present their work to a high standard. They have below average knowledge and understanding of data handling through the use of databases and spreadsheets. Understanding of electronic communication and how to design a web page is average. Most pupils are unable to work on their own and rely too much on their teachers for guidance and support. However, given their attainment on entry to the school their achievement is good. By Year 11 standards are average overall and pupils continue to achieve well. Standards are above average for pupils following GCSE and GNVQ courses. They have good design skills and apply ICT solutions to hypothetical problems in managing businesses and organisations. Pupils following the key skills course have below average standards, especially in how to use ICT to manage data more effectively through the use of databases and spreadsheets. Their design skills are below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers know who they are, how their particular needs should be met, and ensure that teaching assistants are well deployed to give effective support.
- 71 The quality of teaching is good overall and a significant factor in helping pupils learn well. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Good subject knowledge is a common feature of the teaching and an important factor in motivating and encouraging pupils to learn. Teachers' relationships with pupils are supportive and their encouragement helps motivate pupils to want to learn. Management of pupils is good and little time is wasted establishing control. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and help them learn more effectively. There is insufficient use of homework to support pupils' learning. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not given enough opportunities to learn how to work on their own; they have few self-help resources and rely too much on their teacher directing them onto the next task.



72 The leadership and management of the subject by the programme leader are good. New vocational courses have been successfully introduced and there is a clear focus on raising standards. Assessment procedures and target setting help to motivate pupils and move them on. Since the previous inspection there has been very good improvement, particularly in the standards pupils achieve. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to learn how to become more responsible for their own learning. The number of computers available for pupils to use is below average for a school of this size; this limits the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

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

73 Pupils' competence in ICT is good. In design and technology it is particularly noticeable that as the use of ICT increases rising standards are following. Computers are not used enough in mathematics to support independent learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well from Years 7 to 11 because learning tasks are tailored to their differing needs.
- By Year 11 pupils attain standards in GCSE examinations that are close to the national average.
- Teaching is good because lessons are well planned and structured and the use of an attractive range of resources stimulates pupils' interest.
- Pupils are not yet challenged sufficiently to think for themselves, work collaboratively and learn independently.
- Whilst teachers use ICT well, pupils are not yet making sufficient use of this medium to support their learning.

#### **Commentary**

74 Standards overall are below average but pupils achieve well from Year 7 to Year 11. In teacher assessments in 2003 pupils' standards are below average at the end of Year 9. However, this represents good achievement for pupils whose standards are well below average when they enter the school in Year 7. Standards in Year 11 are average and pupils achieve well. In the 2003 GCSE examinations pupils' results were close to the national average. This represents good achievement when compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9.

75 Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers ensure that the tasks set in lessons are tailored to their pupils' differing needs. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are given well-structured worksheets which help them to plan their writing and use specialist words accurately. Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given good advice on preparing model examination answers and high quality coursework which maximises their chances of success. Teachers plan and structure their lessons well so pupils know where to focus their learning. However, pupils have few opportunities to work collaboratively and respond to open-ended tasks which challenge them to think for themselves. Pupils use geographical terminology correctly and higher attaining pupils explain patterns and processes in geography and make links between them. Teachers use a range of attractive resources and make particularly good use of an electronic whiteboard to enliven lessons and engage pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 11 lesson pupils developed a good understanding of coastlines from a video, maps, photographs and diagrams which

were all displayed electronically. Pupils have yet to use new technology fully themselves to support their learning.

- 76 The leadership and management of the department are both good. Appropriate priorities have been identified for development including the increasing use of a wider range of teaching methods. Resources have been bought and planning is in place to support lessons which encourage pupils to think for themselves, solve problems and work collaboratively. Teaching and learning are monitored well and pupils' work is assessed thoroughly. There is insufficient use made of the results of assessments to plan future learning.
- 77 The department works as a very effective team and improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teachers are willing to embrace new methods of teaching and learning and the department has both the commitment and the capacity to improve further.

## History

The quality of provision in history is **good**, with some very good features.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; there are realistic levels of challenge for pupils and achievement is, therefore, good.
- Leadership and management are good and have led to a good improvement in provision in a short period of time.
- Behaviour, engagement and motivation of pupils are very good and pupils speak highly of their teachers.
- Although standards at the end of Year 11 are improving and are now average, pupils' performance in Years 7 to 9 is below expectations.
- The use of ICT as a learning tool is underdeveloped.

### Commentary

- 78 In 2003, GCSE results were below average and, although two-thirds of boys reached the higher grades, no pupil reached A\* or A and girls' performance was below that of boys'. However, in lessons seen in Year 11 and because of much-improved teaching, standards are average overall and several pupils are demonstrating the potential to attain the highest grades. At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below average.
- 79 Pupils' achievement across all years is good. Because teachers place great emphasis on the early acquisition of historical skills, pupils are becoming adept at imitating how historians work. Moreover, because pupils have many opportunities to consider a range of sources, they are making good progress in refining their understanding of the nature of evidence and in evaluating the usefulness of the documents open to them. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and although they cannot justify their opinions convincingly, they are beginning to see historical events from several points of view. High-attaining pupils in Year 11 discuss quite complex issues, in relation to the Vietnam War for example, with confidence and objectivity.
- 80 Pupils benefit from paired and group work in every lesson. Because they thrive on challenge and have the highest regard for their teachers, they behave very well and demonstrate high levels of engagement with the subject-matter. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and question pupils skilfully, giving them credit for both insight and effort in their answers. Teachers are now looking at more effective methods to ensure a more accurate assessment of National Curriculum levels in Year 9. Nonetheless, teaching is never less than good and in a quarter of lessons very good.
- 81 Leadership and management are good and have evaluated departmental performance rigorously to bring about a rapid improvement in provision in a short period of time. ICT is still

underused as a learning tool but departmental display is a strong feature and the new scheme of work has the raising of attainment at its core.

- 82 There has been good improvement since the last inspection in standards, the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in all years. The department has good potential for future success.

## Religious education

Overall, provision in religious education is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in very good learning and achievement.
- The subject contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- GCSE results in the full course have been well above average for the last three years.
- The department has no real weaknesses but assessment procedures could be used more effectively to guide planning and measure progress.

### Commentary

- 83 When pupils join the school their attainment is well below average and many are not confident in their use of written English. Although they achieve well, it is not enough for them to catch up and standards remain below the national average in Year 9.
- 84 However, during Years 10 and 11 standards improve so that achievement is very good. Many pupils take a full GCSE examination and their results for the last three years have been well above the national average. All other pupils take the short course GCSE examination. Their results are below average but steadily improving. Standards in lessons seen are above average. All pupils, girls and boys, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue achieve very well. Pupils develop good understanding of the nature of religious experience and the central questions, such as the problem of evil for religious believers. Higher attaining pupils offer both sides of an argument before reaching their own conclusions. Lower attaining pupils tend to give one-sided answers which are not sufficiently developed.
- 85 Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are very well planned using the Halifax High School model and are packed with different activities. In most lessons pupils enjoy a good balance between reading, writing, research and discussion. The subject is taught in an academic way and pupils rise to the challenge. Discipline is firm but fair. Pupils respond with great interest and learning is very good. Teachers are dynamic in their approach and know their subject well. Pupils become confident in expressing their views and developing their understanding of the spiritual, moral and cultural issues covered in the syllabus.
- 86 Subject leadership and management are both good. Planning is good, in line with the locally agreed syllabus, schemes of work are thorough and pupils' progress is well monitored. However, as yet the humanities department does not analyse pupils' results in sufficient detail to provide a clear understanding of the relative achievement of boys and girls or pupils from different backgrounds. Teachers of religious education work very well together, sharing good practice and seeking new ways to ensure pupils' learning is enjoyable and purposeful and that it equips them well for life beyond the classroom. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Overall provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strength and weaknesses

- Teachers know their pupils well which helps them meet their individual needs.
- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are good.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work.
- Good practice is not shared across the whole department.

#### Commentary

- 87 Standards in design and technology on entry to the school are well below average. In Year 9 pupils' practical skills are below average and they have very limited understanding of the principles of design. Rates of improvement are slowed because pupils do not always recognise and use knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work when tackling increasingly demanding activities in new situations. Results in statutory teacher assessments have improved steadily but are still below average. In Year 9 standards of work seen overall are below average, but vary across the different aspects of the subject.
- 88 In 2002 GCSE results for all design and technology subjects taken as a whole were well below average. In 2003 there was a mixed pattern of results across each of the subjects. In textiles results were average and in food technology four of the five pupils achieved the higher grades A\*-C. Results in graphics for the last three years, which reflect boys' achievements overall, have been falling and standards are now well below average. Girls' results at grades A\*-C have improved steadily, this representing very good achievement from their well below average standards of attainment on entry to the school. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11 standards are variable: they are good in textiles and food technology and generally low in graphics and this hinders design fluency. Pupils making skills are at least satisfactory and occasionally good compared to aspects of designing, which are less well developed. Higher attaining pupils consolidate skill acquisition through good research, organisation and evaluation and produce course work folders of a good standard. The use of ICT, including computer- assisted-designing and the Internet, are beginning to improve standards of presentation and depth of research.
- 89 The high level of individual support and guidance along with very effective teacher assistant support and opportunities to continue work beyond lessons are all contributory factors to the satisfactory achievement of pupils. Links with industry and business are good, for example in developing understanding of batch production in food technology.
- 90 Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is variable across the aspects and the most effective teaching is in food technology and textiles. Here teachers plan and set realistic but challenging tasks, manage pupils well, insist on good behaviour and work energetically to help them make progress. Unsatisfactory features of teaching occurred when teachers were over directive and the focus for the lesson directed towards the *task*, at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. The lack of organisation, inappropriate management and insufficient pace to challenge or inspire mean that pupils learn very little.
- 91 Leadership is good and educational direction is clear and focused. Management is satisfactory. There are good policies and practice which outline links with industry. The hard-working head of department however does not ensure policies and practices are effectively co-ordinated across all areas. The technical assistant, shared with ICT, makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the department. Accommodation and resources are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall and the department is well placed to improve further.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

Overall the quality of provision in art is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are driving up standards.
- Teaching is effective because of good planning and assessment.
- The use of learning support assistants contributes significantly to pupils' progress.
- There are insufficient opportunities to teach and learn through ICT.
- Standards of observation drawing are below national expectations.

#### Commentary

- 92 GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average but early indications are that they are set to rise.
- 93 Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement for the pupils because their standards were below average when they started at the school in Year 7. Pupils in Year 9 raise the standard of their work by using imaginative ideas. This was seen in a project entitled *Fantasy Shoes*. Shoes made out of papier mache looked like insects and 'block' shoes were decorated to look like layered cakes.
- 94 Standards in the current Year 11 are in line with national expectations. As teaching improves so do standards, which are better than past results. This represents very good achievement in relation to their capabilities measured by tests carried out in Year 7. Pupils on the GCSE course show the ability to develop individual responses in their coursework, for example, using cardboard boxes to construct a surreal artefact, and then drawing it in either chalk or pencil with impressive results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Pupils who are gifted and talented are beginning to be given opportunities to extend their learning through termly workshops. All pupils are given opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- 95 The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. The Halifax High lesson is used well to build on previous learning and set out what is expected of pupils during the lesson. Teachers make good use of examples of completed work to demonstrate to pupils the standard of work expected of them. At the end of one lesson the teacher told the pupils how well each one had done and, importantly, explained how each pupil had achieved the successful effect. Teachers get excellent support from the technician who, on occasions, acts as an additional tutor. The insufficient use of ICT for teaching and learning, coupled with undemanding homework, is not promoting independent learning.
- 96 Assessment is good and the system of setting targets, tracking pupils' progress and telling pupils how to improve is raising standards. Attitudes of pupils are generally cooperative and the majority want to be helpful. Behaviour can be boisterous on some occasions but it is usually dealt with by skilful class management.
- 97 The leadership of art is good. The head of subject has the vision and determination to drive up standards. Rigorous development of the curriculum by revising the departmental scheme of work is one of the outcomes of good management. Measures taken to cope with current staffing issues have minimised their effect on pupils' progress. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Opportunities to work in three dimensions now exist and there is a rigorous assessment system. Measures are in hand to provide more opportunities to use ICT when the present accommodation is replaced in two years time.

## Music

The overall quality of provision for music is **satisfactory**.

### Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy music and in the best lessons there is a real shared enthusiasm for the subject.
- Good teaching has the potential to improve pupils' achievement.
- Standards are currently well below average.

### Commentary

- 98 Good subject knowledge is at the heart of good teaching and learning. Pupils behave very well in class because they are very well managed. The work challenges pupils of differing ability, including those with special educational needs and special talents in music. When the lessons have a clear musical focus, pupils rehearse with determination and pleasure because the music seems real to them. In these lessons pupils make good progress, but without this clear focus, in a minority of lessons, pupils find it difficult to make musical sense of what they are doing. Pupils comment on their performances using vocabulary which relates to the music and to the quality they are achieving. This discussion is good preparation for homework in which they criticise their own performance and give a target for improvement. Pupils however are not totally clear yet what their National Curriculum levels of attainment are.
- 99 Standards in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10 are currently well below average. There has recently been a change in the staffing and as yet there has been insufficient time for teaching to make a noticeable impact on standards. Pupils have little background in playing and composing music before they start Halifax High school, and most pupils find both of these difficult. Listening skills are stronger. However, given their standards when starting the school, their achievement by Year 9 and in Year 10 is satisfactory overall. Standards in teacher's assessments and in the GCSE examination for 2003 were also well below average. In the GCSE results only one of the eight girls taking the course achieved a grade between A\* and C but seven achieved at least grade G.
- 100 Pupils' attitudes to music are good: they enjoy music and think well of the subject and the teacher. The teacher in charge, in the short time in the school, has made a difference, through good leadership and satisfactory management. The developments have been positive apart from the accommodation which is still inadequate. Instrumental lessons and arrangements for the few pupils in Year 10 to have regular access to keyboards are very good strategies aimed at improving standards at GCSE level. There is now one computer in the department and this is a useful resource for pupils' composition in Year 10. Newly acquired keyboards capable of recording further help pupils compose music in Years 7 to 9. There is a small choir and recorder group and more are planned for after Christmas. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## Drama

There is very good provision in **drama**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Drama contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- Standards in lesson and GCSE results are above average.
- Very good teaching promotes pupils' confidence which leads to very good achievement.

### Commentary

- 101 GCSE results have been above average over the past three years. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in all years and achievement very good. In the first three years pupils learn and practise the key skills and techniques associated with drama. These include mime, gesture, voice, characterisation and discipline in movement. They learn how to improvise and create drama given specific topics and situations. They respond very well in lessons, inspired by the teacher's vision and lively ideas for the subject. They are very attentive and responsive and learn the essence of composure that leads to high standards.
- 102 Pupils build well on these skills in GCSE and apply their learning in presenting improvised sequences on a given topic such as war. There is good provision for exploring wide moral, social and cultural issues. There is good use of different languages that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the pupils. Emotional topics such as relationships, bullying, hate, and violence are studied in good depth, always with a clear focus on the consequences. These studies make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their education in citizenship.
- 103 Teaching and learning are very good, with very good vision, interest and expertise in the subject. Lessons are planned and structured in very good detail. Pupils are guided in how to make creative and imaginative responses to the situations being studied. Teaching is very effective in giving pupils confidence from Year 7 onwards. Pupils understand the criteria for assessment and this contributes to their success in GCSE.
- 104 There is very good leadership and management. Drama is being well used to make links with the local community and with the business and commercial world in a bid to gain specialist performing arts college status.
- 105 Standards in GCSE have improved since the previous inspection. All the good features reported then have been maintained.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Accommodation for teaching games is poor and adversely affects standards and the quality of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching is good, promoting pupils' moral and social development.
- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Information from assessment is not used well enough to plan the next stage of learning.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach higher levels of the National Curriculum for physical education.

### Commentary

- 106 The quality of the outdoor teaching accommodation for physical education is poor. This governs the breadth and quality of the games curriculum which can be provided. Consequently, pupils' learning and achievement are adversely affected, despite good teaching and the fact that the majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- 107 A small number of pupils take the GCSE examination course in physical education as a voluntary extra-curricular activity. Both pupils who were entered for the examination in 2003 did well to achieve the grades obtained. Results have improved consistently over recent years. Standards of theoretical work of Year 11 pupils currently following the examination course are close to average.

- 108 Standards in Year 9 are well below average. Pupils lack experience in playing the full form of outdoor games and so team play and skilled performance are well below average. Girls make good progress in dance and netball, where the learning is not constrained to the same extent. Consequently, more girls than boys reach expected standards. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and suggest and sometimes lead, warm up activities. Given the constraints on the provision, pupils' achievement is, nevertheless, satisfactory in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 7.
- 109 In Year 11 standards are below average, although boys reach average standards in basketball and achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 10. In Year 10, girls continue to make good progress in netball and higher attainers reach average standards. Again, taking into account the impact of the accommodation on their learning, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
- 110 The quality of teaching is good. Learning, constrained by the poor accommodation, is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well, using the Halifax High lesson. They use the concluding discussion of learning particularly well, to assess what and how well pupils have learned. This acts as an effective springboard into the next stage of learning. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning and are good role models for pupils. The work of learning support assistants is well managed and, in most lessons, they make an effective contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who have learning difficulties. Teachers use their knowledge and understanding well in lessons to analyse performance. Pupils know how well they are doing but do not always understand what they need to do to reach higher levels of the National Curriculum for physical education. However, GCSE theoretical work is marked thoroughly in a way, which helps pupils to see how they can improve.
- 111 Leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum is well organised in a way which makes the best of the available accommodation, including off site provision. However, accommodation remains a problem and continues to have a detrimental effect on standards, a situation which will only be remedied when the school moves to its new premises, where there are plans for extensive indoor and outdoor facilities. Because of this, insufficient progress has been made since the previous inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved so that they make similar progress to other pupils, and the curriculum is now enhanced with the successful recent introduction of dance.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS**

- 112 The school provides a variety of vocational courses, which are a central part of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The subjects offered include GNVQ in construction and the built environment, manufacturing, ICT, and applied GCSE in health and social care, all at foundation and intermediate levels. The school also offers a key skills course in ICT at levels 1 and 2.
- 113 The ICT GNVQ course was inspected in depth and is reported in the main ICT section. Lessons were sampled in health and social care and construction and the built environment.
- 114 In 2002, all pupils entered for the GNVQ full award in health and social care, achieved the equivalent of four GCSE grades C or B. All but one of the pupils entered for Part 1 certification passed, the majority achieving the equivalent of two GCSEs, grades C or B. In 2003, the results were equally good. In the GCSE applied health and social care course, two lessons were seen, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. In Year 10 the standards of the mostly lower attaining pupils were below average, but pupils were making good progress as a result



of the good teaching. In the Year 11 lesson, standards were above average, the teaching excellent, with pupils making very good progress.

- 115 In 2002, half of the pupils taking GNVQ construction achieved the equivalent of GCSE grade B. In 2003, the results were not as good as in the previous year. In a well-taught lesson seen during the inspection, Year 11 pupils were reaching average standards.

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

### **CITIZENSHIP**

Overall, provision in citizenship is **good**.

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

- Good teaching in citizenship is resulting in good learning and achievement.
- Pupils enjoy the work they do in citizenship.
- The introduction of citizenship into the school has been well-managed.
- Self-assessment is well established and pupils clearly know how well they are doing.

#### **Commentary**

- 116 Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average, especially in Years 7 and 8 where citizenship is taught as a separate subject. In Years 9, 10 and 11 citizenship is taught within the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils clearly enjoy their work and achieve well. During the inspection Year 7 pupils were very successful in understanding the ways in which society makes judgements about people by their appearance, rather than their worth. In Year 8 pupils were learning about pressure groups and the role of the media in forming public opinion.
- 117 In Years 10 and 11 standards are in line with the national average. Many pupils follow citizenship modules as part of a general course on key skills and decision-making. They achieve interim certificates at the end of Year 10 and full certificates at the end of Year 11. Boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue achieve well because work is well adapted to their needs.
- 118 Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The teachers are enthusiastic and committed to what they are doing. Creative and effective teaching strategies are used to engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm and to help them to learn to think for themselves. Independent learning is positively encouraged. The pupils enjoy their studies and develop confidence. Emphasis is placed on literacy skills and teachers plan lessons where ICT can be used both for research and the presentation of work. Homework is set and marked regularly with positive comments. Marks for individual pieces of work are not given, but an overall assessment is made at the end of each unit of study. There is good involvement with the local and wider communities. Pupils have spent time with the Mayor and local Member of Parliament as well as other important representatives of the community such as charity workers, magistrates and liaison officers. Pupils have been involved with the Youth Parliament elections for the last two years.
- 119 Leadership and management are good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9. The training of staff and preparation for the course have been thorough and effective. Good textbooks have been purchased as well as numerous resources from different political and charitable organisations. There is a real commitment to the subject and potential for citizenship to become a strength of the school.

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

Overall, provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils use the time well to reflect on their strengths and where they need to improve.
- The curriculum covers all statutory aspects and is good preparation for pupils' future.

### **Commentary**

- 120 Pupils have one period per week with their form tutor which is used well to support their personal development. Pupils' very good relationships, especially the racial harmony which exists, arise out of the high quality of discussion which they engage in. They follow a structured programme which takes them through learning about themselves, how to make choices and how to plan for the future. By the time they reach Year 11 the whole process of setting goals and planning to reach them is second nature.
- 121 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils understand the purpose of their work and that it is relevant to their progress and development. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher draw the class's attention to how successful one of the girls had been in securing a place at the college of further education by outlining her medium-term plans – the very topic the class had been discussing over the previous few weeks.
- 122 Good leadership and management ensure that an interesting range of visitors complement the good teaching so that pupils enjoy stimulating and active lessons. Lessons are planned in accordance with the Halifax High lesson. Pupils' low levels of literacy provoke teachers into finding other ways to aid understanding. Drama is a very powerful method which is skilfully used to encourage pupils to think through, for instance, the consequences of their choices and the tensions created by peer pressure.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	1

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