

INSPECTION REPORT

THE HOLLINS TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Accrington, Lancashire

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119757

Headteacher: Mr F Havard

Lead inspector: Ms J Jones

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd January 2004

Inspection number: 258817

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	780
School address:	Hollins Lane Accrington Lancashire
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Telephone number:	01254 233500
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Pitman
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Hollins Technology College is smaller than the average 11 to 16 school. Pupils are drawn from the town of Accrington and its surroundings; the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average and their attainment when they start school is below average. In some years in the past it was well below average. The school gained technology status in 2001 and governors have decided not to apply any form of selection at present. Most pupils are from white British homes; approximately eight per cent of pupils are Asian British, mainly with a Pakistani heritage. Although some pupils are bilingual, very few are at an early stage of learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** and **effective** school and gives **good** value for money. Leadership is good and the school's effectiveness has been improved since the previous inspection.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has vision and energy that has enabled the school to take full advantage of its status as a technology college.
- Good teaching and learning in most lessons leads to good achievement overall. There is very good achievement in mathematics.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, mainly because there is insufficient time to study religious education and citizenship in sufficient depth.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used, both in ICT lessons and across the curriculum.
- There is insufficient provision for a small number of pupils who do not respond well to the school's code of conduct and are repeatedly excluded.
- In some subjects there is insufficient emphasis on literacy.

Changes since the previous inspection

Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The school now has technology college status and benefits from this are evident throughout the curriculum. Test results at the end of Year 9 have risen faster than the national trend. GCSE results have improved, although the most recent results have dropped. Current standards in Year 11 are higher than the 2003 results indicate. Science provision has improved greatly. Monitoring of departmental management has improved. The quality of spiritual education has not improved significantly. The length of the school day is still below the recommended time for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The premises are in better condition.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	D	C	D	C

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

Achievement is **good** in all years. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were average overall and well above the average for similar schools. The drop in GCSE results in 2003 was due in part to those pupils' lower than usual attainment when they started in the school, and to staffing difficulties last year. There are now enough teachers and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils in last year's Year 11 entered school with attainment that was below average overall, with a below average proportion of higher attainers. The attainment of a significant proportion was well below average.

Standards seen in the inspection are below average in English, average in science and above average in mathematics by the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards in most other subjects are average, but are below average in religious education and well below in citizenship because neither subject has enough teaching time. Standards are also below average in geography and modern languages. Standards are above average in history and music by the end of Year 11. Overall, this is evidence of good achievement in view of pupils' starting points in Year 7. Below average literacy standards throughout the school are a barrier to further improvement for some pupils.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is satisfactory. Whilst there is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11, the teaching time is below the recommended 25 hours and not enough time is allowed for religious education in Years 7 to 9 and citizenship in all years to cover them more than superficially. These subjects are not reported at the end of Year 9. The structure of the school day leads to quirky timetabling and long lessons in which some pupils have difficulty concentrating. The curriculum for physical education is not fully met because indoor facilities are insufficient for the full range of courses to be followed by all pupils.

Pupils' personal development is **good**. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, and their moral social development is good. Care and guidance for pupils are good. Partnerships with parents are good and with the community very good. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, although there is a small number of pupils who do not observe the code of conduct or respond to the most severe sanction which is exclusion.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Governance of the school is good. Leadership by the headteacher is very good, and that of senior managers and other staff with responsibilities is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are positive. They are happy with teaching and the way their children's work is assessed. They feel the school encourages their children and helps them develop self-respect and confidence. Most pupils like school and are proud of it.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Restructure the school day and improve timetabling so that all subjects, especially religious education and citizenship, have enough teaching time.
- Arrange better provision for pupils who do not conform to the school's code of conduct and are resistant to the school's normal sanctions.
- Improve standards of literacy by ensuring that all subject departments give them sufficient priority in their teaching.
- Meet statutory requirements to cover the full National Curriculum for physical education in Years 7 to 9.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement overall is good. In all years, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English, good in science, and very good in mathematics. However, achievement in citizenship and religious education is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management in mathematics, and consistently high expectations, enable pupils of all abilities to make very good progress.
- Standards in science have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- The time allowed for both citizenship in all years and religious education in Years 7 to 9 is too low to cover the course for each in sufficient depth.
- Results are rising rapidly in tests at the end of Year 9, but GCSE results in 2003 dropped, in part because the school was unable to staff the English department fully.
- Pupils' literacy skills are below average and this holds them back in a number of subjects.

Commentary

Standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9

1. Pupils' attainment when they start in Year 7 varies year by year but over the past six years has been at best below average. Most pupils enter school with a limited range of vocabulary and do not construct sentences grammatically when speaking, or punctuate accurately when writing. They make progress and improvement is evident, but they do not make up all the lost ground. Achievement in English is satisfactory and test results in 2003 were close to the national average. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 9 is below average, reflecting the difference in ability of this year group when they entered the school. Achievement in mathematics and science, where literacy is less significant, is better. Pupils achieve well in science, and standards, both in tests and in the work seen during the inspection, are average. In mathematics, pupils achieve very well; above average standards in lessons are echoed in test results at the end of Year 9. Standards in most other subjects are close to average. Exceptions are history, music and physical education where standards are above average, and geography and modern foreign languages where attainment is below average. Overall, results in tests in English, mathematics and science are average and well above the average for similar schools.
2. The time allowed for religious education does not allow teachers to explore all the topics of the locally agreed syllabus in enough depth, so pupils' knowledge is generally superficial; achievement is therefore unsatisfactory and standards are below average at the end of Year 9. Similarly, citizenship is squeezed into the personal and social education programme and is not well planned or integrated into the curriculum as a whole. For this reason, pupils do not value the lessons and standards are well below average, both by the end of Year 9 and in Year 11.

Standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11

3. The attainment of pupils who took GCSE in 2003 was well below average when they started in Year 7 and the school set appropriate targets. These were reached on the whole, but nevertheless the school was disappointed, because there were staffing difficulties in English last year and results were significantly lower than in mathematics and science. Overall, results in 2003 were in line with those of similar schools. Attainment in the current Year 11 is

higher and is average overall, and the standard of work seen and coursework in English and other subjects is high enough to make the school's more ambitious targets for 2004 achievable. Achievement in mathematics is very good and standards in Year 11 are above average across the full range of mathematical skills. Achievement in science, art and design, design and technology, ICT and music is good over these two years; standards reached are average in spite of pupils' lower starting points. Achievement in history is very good. Although achievement in English is satisfactory, standards of written and spoken language are below average. Achievement in religious education is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards are just below average, and this is due in part to the low starting point at the end of Year 9.

- The school analyses the results of pupils with different ethnic origins and there are no significant differences between these pupils. The difference between the achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar to that found nationally.

Achievements of pupils with special or exceptional educational needs

- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. GCSE results for 2003 illustrate the good levels of achievement of pupils. Many considerably exceeded expectations based upon their attainment as assessed on entry to the school (14 pupils gained between four and nine passes with an average of six passes).
- Almost all pupils who speak English as an additional language are competent users of English. This represents good achievement. One girl, now in Year 7, has been in this country for one year and is already fluent in spoken English although she spoke no English on arrival. With additional help, her reading with understanding is developing well.
- Pupils, regarded by the school as being most able, achieve well and reach identified targets because they work hard and are well taught by subject teachers. There are examples of pupils being entered much earlier than usual for examinations and being encouraged to extend their learning in art and design and mathematics. The recently appointed co-ordinator is planning a whole-school programme to enrich the learning and raise the aspirations of those considered capable of benefiting.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.6 (33.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.1 (36.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.2 (34.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 152 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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	31.0 (40.3)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	86.0 (84.0)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (95.1)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.4 (32.5)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 151 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behaviour is also good. Relationships are positive. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The benefits from having technology college status are helping to raise pupils' aspirations and improve their motivation.
- Pupils behave well and relationships are good.
- A small number of boys are resistant to the school's range of sanctions and support. Better provision needs to be made for them.
- Attendance is improving, although it remains just below average.
- Thought for the day, although challenging, is sometimes too complex for teachers to deliver in the short time available.

Commentary

8. Becoming a technology college has been an important catalyst for change at Hollins. Pupils are much more motivated and enthusiastic because they are being taught using the latest technology, which makes learning more interesting. The oldest pupils particularly notice and appreciate the changes which have taken place and the good access to computers they now enjoy. The school is very involved with the community and this brings different learning opportunities (such as the opportunity to gain a food hygiene certificate). This too is helping to improve pupils' attitudes as well as playing an important part in their social development.
9. Behaviour is good because the school has high standards and there are a number of established systems in place to deal with those who misbehave. The recent appointment of assistant heads of year has brought in another strand of support, and monitoring of individuals is good. This is in addition to the informal 'walkabout' practices of senior staff, who regularly visit lessons, both to praise and reprimand. This results in a school which promotes a strong moral dimension to its work.
10. The inspection team used the school's own recent survey of pupils' views rather than the standard Ofsted questionnaire. In this, a significant number of pupils had concerns about behaviour in class. However, in conversations with inspectors, pupils said they felt behaviour was improving and this concurred with inspectors' view of it being good. There is a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys, who often cannot cope in lessons and display extremes of challenging, and sometimes aggressive, behaviour. A few of these have been excluded repeatedly by the school. The school needs to arrange better provision for these pupils who need specialist help.
11. The way the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Moral and social development is stronger than cultural and spiritual development.
12. Relationships are good throughout the school and the atmosphere is positive and friendly. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds work well together. During the inspection, which took place over three and a half days of non-stop rain, pupils had to stay inside. They remained good natured and coped well. In addition to encouraging positive relationships, the school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to take responsibility and become well-rounded young adults. For example, prefects help with younger form groups by offering friendship and someone to talk to if they have any worries.
13. A very well-established link with a local special school enables youngsters from both schools to work together, and Hollins' pupils treat their less able peers with kindness and respect.

14. Assemblies and tutor times are focused around ‘thought for the week’. These are carefully planned to cover a range of topics, although some ‘thoughts’ are easier to deliver than others. During the inspection week, the thought ‘when I look at the stars, the work of your hands, what are human beings that you show care for them?’ proved too complex and challenging for some pupils and teachers to explore in the short time available. However, on some occasions the theme was handled well, for example, in the assembly encouraging pupils to ‘look up into a starry night and reflect on why we are here’.

Attendance

Attendance is improving and is hovering slightly below the national average. However, the school is working hard to increase their figures and there are some good systems in place which are having a positive effect.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	90.9	School data	1.7
National data	91.7	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	709	100	4
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	56	12	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11	3	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	2		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good in almost all subjects and pupils learn well as a consequence. In most subjects pupils’ work is assessed well, but assessment is unsatisfactory in music and citizenship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Teaching in mathematics, history and ICT is very good.
- Teachers make very good use of ICT across the curriculum.

- Some teachers do not plan effectively enough for the long lessons, so that the pace slows and pupils stop concentrating.
- Systems for assessment in citizenship and music are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

15. Teaching is good overall, and even in religious education and citizenship where pupils underachieve, the fault does not lie with the teaching, but with the curriculum and timetable. Inspectors found no difference in the quality of teaching across the school – whether it was to younger or older pupils or to those with different needs and abilities. There is a high degree of consistency in the way teachers manage their classes and in the high expectations they have of pupils' attitudes to their work. In this atmosphere, pupils learn well because they know the classroom routines. They know they are expected to work independently but that teachers will help when needed, and they trust teachers to do their best by every pupil. The best example of this is seen in the mathematics department where every teacher – from those with many years' experience, to the least experienced – has the same purposeful approach, and pupils respond with enthusiasm to the sense of achievement they get from lessons. The good results in mathematics bear this out, but similar qualities are evident across all subjects. It is not just the most able pupils who feel supported and encouraged; in a science lesson where many pupils had serious learning difficulties there was the same sense of purpose because the teacher's enthusiasm and structured planning meant that all pupils, some with sensitive guidance by a teaching assistant, knew what to do and shared the sense of achievement as they discovered the difference between series and parallel circuits.
16. In some subjects, particularly in science and geography, written work consists mainly of sentences or single words and there is little requirement for pupils to write at length in their own words. This restricts their opportunity to extend their use of written English. Neither do teachers expect pupils to speak and discuss at length in some subjects. In mathematics pupils can describe what they do but in unsophisticated terms such as 'times' instead of 'multiply' even in Year 11. Given the low standard of literacy overall, there is insufficient concentrated focus on widening pupils' ability to express themselves in speech and writing.
17. Teaching in history, in particular, encourages pupils to think for themselves and become good historians. Geography, in contrast, is taught with greater concentration on facts, and does not give pupils enough opportunity to investigate evidence and understand the processes by which geographers learn more about the world.
18. The move to technology college status has had a big impact on teaching throughout the school. Teachers are confident with their equipment because they have their own laptops and are adroit at presenting work in effective and interesting ways, without allowing the mechanisms of the ICT to dominate or get in the way. Diagrams, questions and quizzes are presented efficiently, with short video clips or simulations dropped in to illustrate such points as the processes of respiration. Teachers of many years' experience without this technology have taken to it with enthusiasm and pupils appreciate the way it is helping them, both by taking some of the tedium out of routine tasks, and by illustrating difficult or new ideas.
19. The lessons are long, and on the few occasions where teachers' planning is not tight enough, pupils find it hard to concentrate and a certain weariness creeps in. On these occasions, they learn no more than they would in a shorter lesson, and the school's plan to move to shorter lessons is a good one.
20. Work is assessed thoroughly in most subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In most subjects, work is marked carefully. Pupils are usually given realistic targets to aim for and know what to do to improve. However, this is not done sufficiently in English, and in citizenship and music the systems for assessment are ineffective overall. Testing is usually accurate and teachers use information from assessment well to predict results and identify pupils needing more help. Assessment is excellent in ICT in all years, and the system for

assessing and monitoring progress in ICT in Years 10 and 11, where many students get their ICT entitlement through other subjects, is exceptionally good. Against this has to be set unsatisfactory arrangements for assessment in music and citizenship, and for this reason assessment, for all its strength, is judged satisfactory rather than good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 112 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (3%)	29 (26%)	49 (44%)	28 (25%)	1 (1%)	1 (1 %)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly in the past few years. They give pupils of all levels of attainment a chance to succeed.
- The broad and imaginative curriculum for ICT is having a positive effect on standards.
- The length of the school week for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is shorter than that recommended nationally.
- The low allocation of time given to religious education and citizenship in Years 7 to 9 continues to affect pupils' achievement adversely after the age of 14.
- The school is not meeting fully its National Curriculum obligations in physical education because of the lack of suitable indoor spaces. This is a statutory breach of requirements.

Commentary

21. The school provides a good curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and has moved a long way since the previous inspection. This has in part been spurred on by the award of technology college status. The range of courses on offer in these years is now broad, balanced and, most importantly, geared to the needs of individuals. For example, higher-attaining pupils can take a GCSE science course that is appropriate to their capabilities and an extra GCSE after school in statistics. The choice of options in design and technology is very broad. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, pupils can – and several of them do – choose a vocational or work-related course at the local college of further education. Pupils for whom a predominantly academic programme is inappropriate are guided towards the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) youth award scheme, a well-accredited course in life skills designed to help them cope in the world of work. Nearly half of the pupils of this age choose to follow a course in ICT. The rest receive their entitlement to ICT through other subjects. The ICT department is most effective in monitoring this and ensuring that it happens.
22. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has a number of deficiencies and is currently unsatisfactory. In many respects it is sufficiently broad and balanced and there are notable strengths. For example, the courses provided in design and technology and ICT are broad and challenging. In mathematics, the arrangements for grouping pupils allow teachers to cater well for their individual needs. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 study two foreign languages. However, the current timetable does not allow enough time for religious education and, as a result, pupils are not reaching a suitable standard by the time they start on the short GCSE course in Year 10. In citizenship, also, there is too little time set aside to cover the work required. The arrangements for teaching history, geography, music and drama are unsatisfactory. The rotation of pupils around music and drama in nine-week 'blocks' of time

undermines achievement because the pace of learning is interrupted and pupils inevitably forget much of the knowledge and lose the skills they have learnt. The complicated arrangements in history and geography make it difficult for teachers to compare standards across different groups. The National Curriculum requirement for all pupils in these years to practise gymnastics is not met, especially in the case of boys, because this activity is restricted by the inadequacy of indoor areas.

23. In the 1998 inspection report, mention was made of the short working week and the 70-minute lessons. Since then, the college has made adjustments, such as a more efficient way of registering pupils, that have added to overall teaching time. However, there is still a shortfall of about 60 minutes each week compared to the recommended time of 25 hours for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Also, in a number of subjects, particularly English, French and Spanish, the 70-minute period is often too long to sustain the concentration of some pupils. In such cases, a similar quantity of work would be covered in a shorter lesson. The college is now actively engaged at senior level and with the governing body in producing a new curriculum model for the next academic year based on five daily lessons of 60 minutes.
24. Careers education is satisfactory and prepares pupils appropriately for the next stages of their life. Pupils themselves speak well of the advice they are given.
25. The programme of extra-curricular activities offers pupils satisfactory opportunities to be involved. Sporting opportunities feature strongly and a good proportion of pupils take part in one sport or another. Pupils keen to continue work on design and technology and ICT can readily do so in their spare time because staff are generous in making the rooms and facilities available, as well as their own time. This work helps to extend pupils' learning experiences, as does the programme of visits to places of interest and trips abroad.
26. Overall, resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Accommodation is satisfactory, most departments have suites of rooms, but indoor accommodation for physical education and sport is inadequate and means that the school cannot fully meet the National Curriculum for boys' indoor activities. Resources generally are good and, in ICT in particular, are very good; the ratio of personal computers to pupils is twice as good as that seen nationally.
27. Staffing of the curriculum is good overall, and very good in mathematics and history. At present the staffing of the modern foreign languages department is unsatisfactory because of recruitment difficulties. Technical support is satisfactory overall and very good use is made of the technician in design and technology as an instructor. The one technician in ICT gives expert support but he cannot cover all the work required.

Provision for pupils with special or exceptional educational needs

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, and pupils are given good support by teaching assistants. However, there are some weaknesses. Targets included in individual education plans are too vague to motivate pupils or to support their progress in the short term. There is no effective system for the management of education plans with a clearly identified sharing of responsibilities for their management. The register of pupils with special educational needs does not include all the pupils who actually receive additional help from the learning support unit.
29. The school is at an early stage of identifying pupils with particular gifts and talents, and in this respect provision is unsatisfactory. However, where it is clear that pupils have exceptional abilities, the curriculum is altered appropriately to allow, for example, a bilingual pupil in Year 7 to join Year 11 Spanish lessons, where she is a valuable addition to the class, and to take GCSE at the end of the year.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare and safety is good. Pupils are given a satisfactory level of support, advice and guidance. The school involves pupils well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is careful attention to ensure pupils' care, health and safety.
- Involvement of pupils in school life, by seeking their views and responding, is good.
- Introducing a review day, where Year 10 pupils and parents set targets with form tutors, means monitoring of their personal and academic progress is now carried out more closely.
- A new mentoring system for some Year 11 pupils, is helping to keep a closer eye on how they are progressing.

Commentary

30. There are effective systems in place ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils and teachers have good relationships and pupils are happy there is someone they can go to if they need help. The pastoral system provides good support for the individual, especially now the position of assistant head of year has been created, to strengthen the team further.
31. Pupils' views are sought via a comprehensive survey undertaken each year. The results were used as part of the inspection evidence. Pupils point to improvements such as televisions in the covered area and refurbished toilets as proof that the school does listen and respond to their views. This will be even more effective when the new school council becomes established.
32. The systems for seeing how pupils are progressing during their final important year at school are more stringent than they were previously. This was spearheaded by a new Year 10 review day in the summer, when pupils and their parents met with form tutors to review progress and set targets for Year 11. Pupils and teachers found this day useful. However, in the rest of the school, the form tutor's role remains largely pastoral and they are currently not involved in regular monitoring of pupils' academic progress.
33. The extra guidance for Year 11 pupils is being reinforced by a new mentoring system involving up to a third of this year group. They meet regularly with senior staff who check how they are getting on and provide support and advice. Whilst these systems are too new to gauge their levels of success, signs are promising.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality reports provide parents with a clear picture of how their children are progressing.
- The headteacher has been inspirational in raising the school's profile in the community. The school is now popular and well regarded.
- There are very good links with the community and these are providing a wide range of extra opportunities for pupils.
- The school has established very strong partnerships with a number of schools, especially in design and technology and ICT.

Commentary

34. The school has a positive relationship with parents, who hold it in high regard. It is a popular choice in the area, with many more applications than there are places.
35. Parents are kept well informed about school life. In particular, the annual report they receive about their children's progress is very helpful. It contains a good amount of information in a straightforward format and teachers' written comments clearly focus on what pupils need to do to improve.
36. It is in the school's role in the community that real strengths lie. The headteacher has been inspirational in the way he has raised the school's profile, both locally and in the county. Undoubtedly, becoming a technology college has given the school a huge boost and all members of the school welcomed the chance to work with businesses with open arms. Links stretch from the local allotment society to national names who have established significant partnerships with different departments. These are providing numerous extra opportunities for pupils. Basic food hygiene courses are taught by a local hygiene technology company and an unusually high number of Year 11 students gain the CREST (CREativity in Science and Technology) award by working on a health and safety project, in partnership with a major manufacturer of meat pies.
37. There are currently no initiatives helping to raise parents' aspirations by encouraging them to develop their skills and so strengthen their beliefs in the benefits of continual learning. A recent attempt at providing computer classes for the community elicited a disappointing response.
38. There are also very strong partnerships with local schools, again, made more effective through technology college status. There are strong links by several departments with primary schools and the local special school. These are noticeably improving pupils' standards of attainment in design and technology and ICT, although the school have yet formally to measure the impact on standards. One main area they have focused on is in building up resources that they loan to primary schools. One example involves primary pupils gaining their sewing machine 'driving licence', made possible because the school has invested heavily in more machines so primary pupils can become familiar with them before they start at Hollins. The new GCSE course in engineering is another good example of the way the productive working relationships between school and local college is working well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed by a headteacher who is a very good leader and by effective senior managers and governors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear view of the way the school should develop, and has the ability to make it happen.
- Leadership by senior and middle management is good.
- Some aspects of management – mainly relating to the curriculum – are not as effective as they could be.
- The governing body shares the headteacher's vision and adds an independent and enthusiastic aspect to the school's leadership.

Commentary

39. The headteacher provides very strong leadership. He is fully committed to raising standards of attainment and is succeeding in doing so. To this effect he was the prime mover in seeking technology college status as a way of raising the aspirations of the whole school community. He excels at transmitting his vision in formal meetings and by being constantly seen on the corridors and in other areas of the school, talking to pupils and adults alike. The 'walkabout'

system ensures that he and other members of the leadership group have a close knowledge of what is happening in classrooms. There are, however, important details of management which do not receive enough attention. For example, the introduction of citizenship has not been successful and the exclusion system is not entirely satisfactory.

40. The three deputy headteachers ably support the headteacher and carry out their own specific responsibilities efficiently. The quality of leadership of heads of department is good. There is very good leadership in design and technology, drama, history, mathematics and physical education. In all these cases there is a clear vision and well-developed ideas for raising standards. Management at this level is also good. It is very good in history, drama and mathematics. Particularly noteworthy is the excellent system for monitoring and assessing pupils in ICT. However, management in music is unsatisfactory.
41. The school has a well-documented system for identifying the training needs of all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, through performance management. Staff new to the school, particularly those new to teaching, follow a detailed planned induction programme with its supporting documents. Student teachers following the initial teacher-training course or the graduate training programme are helped and supported by designated experienced staff. Many of these students remain at the school and become permanent members of staff.
42. The governors fulfil their role well. They have very good knowledge of the school and understand its place in the community. The system of sub-committees makes good use of the expertise of individual governors and keeps effective oversight of major areas of the school. For example, the finance committee controls the budget well while delegating the day-to-day management to one of the deputy headteachers. Similarly, the curriculum committee shows detailed knowledge of the curriculum and is aware of the need to make a strategic decision about a new model. There is a good relationship between the headteacher and governors. Governors support the headteacher well but also ensure he is accountable. They have met all the key issues for action listed in the previous inspection report except that the school week still does not meet national guidelines regarding the number of hours of teaching.

Financial information

The deputy headteacher and the bursar manage the school's finances effectively. Day-to-day organisation is efficient. The governors' finance sub-committee meets regularly and receives reports to help it monitor progress against the budget. The chair of the committee also meets the deputy headteacher regularly to discuss and monitor financial matters. The school's accounts and the school fund were audited within the last year. All audit recommendations are being put into effect and nearly all have been completed. The school makes well-informed decisions about purchasing, carefully balancing cost, quality and service. It also uses local education authority information well to compare its costs with similar schools.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,210,732
Total expenditure	2,830
Expenditure per pupil	2,830

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	22,927
Balance carried forward to the next	57,700

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are improving although the GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average.
- Pupils learn well because teaching is good.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Comments on pupils' work are not always helpful enough.
- The department does not make enough use of data to improve its performance.

Commentary

43. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average, having followed no consistent pattern over the past three years. Although girls do better than boys the difference is not as much as in most schools. Standards in the work seen in Year 9 are below average. This reflects changes in the attainment of pupils on entry to the school and their achievement is satisfactory. In their writing, most pupils make fairly basic errors although the highest attainers write very accurately with some flair. Overall, results are above the average for similar schools.
44. Results in the GCSE examinations in both language and literature in 2003 were well below the national average. Girls performed better than boys in both subjects with boys' results being particularly weak in literature. Results fell sharply after rising in the previous two years. This fall is largely explained by severe staffing difficulties caused by long-term sickness. The position is now much more stable and the work seen in Years 10 and 11 is better than the 2003 results indicate, although standards are still below the national average. Most pupils are more successful in speaking and reading than they are in writing. The highest attainers benefit from the high expectations of teachers and achieve well. They write almost flawlessly and are very skilful in their analysis of literature. The achievement of most pupils in this age range, however, is less good but still satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with expectations.
45. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. Consequently, standards of work are improving. Teachers plan lessons well although the level of challenge for pupils in the middle and lower sets is not as pronounced as it is in the higher sets, even allowing for differences in ability. Similarly there is greater challenge in Years 10 and 11 than there is in Years 7 to 9. Teachers insist on good behaviour and pupils respond well, although many find that 70 minutes is too long to sustain concentration. Comments on pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 do not give them enough advice on how to improve. In Years 10 and 11, the helpfulness of comments varies from the very detailed and helpful to the bland. There is no system of setting targets to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Consequently, although pupils know the level they are working at, they do not understand clearly how to move to the next level.

46. The department is well led and managed. The head of department provides an excellent role model and there is a very clear focus on raising standards. However, monitoring of teaching has not succeeded in raising all standards to the level of the best. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved. Curriculum planning is better and there is a sound development plan. All teachers are given a bigger part in formulating policy. Teachers are much more confident in their use of ICT so it features in the work of all pupils. However, the department does not make enough use of the available data in order to assess its success, detect areas of weakness and improve its performance.

Literacy across the curriculum

47. The school makes satisfactory provision to raise standards of literacy across the curriculum. But in view of the limited language skills when pupils arrive at the school, there is a need for greater than average emphasis on developing these skills in all areas. Although there has been a programme of training for teachers, more is now required to meet the needs of newly appointed staff and to add fresh impetus. All departments have written policies and place some emphasis on literacy. Most show some awareness of the importance of literacy in their teaching but in some cases this does not go much beyond ensuring that pupils use the appropriate technical terms. Other than in English there is strong emphasis only in history and standards overall are below average. Most subjects do not provide pupils with enough opportunities for discussion. Similarly, only in English, history, physical education and religious education is sufficient importance given to helping pupils explore and develop their ideas by writing at any length.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in French at GCSE have risen since the previous inspection.
- In the past two years high attaining pupils have gained an above average number of grades A* and A at GCSE.
- Many pupils have difficulty speaking and pronouncing French or Spanish.
- The temporary staffing situation is placing strains on the department and holding back standards in a few cases.

Commentary

48. In 2003 GCSE results in French were below average and not quite as good as in 2002. However, the majority of pupils achieved well, especially higher attainers who gained an above average number of grades A* and A. Girls did better than boys by more than the national difference. Results in Spanish were very low and reflected changes in staffing in 2002/2003.
49. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average overall. Higher attaining pupils have good understanding of spoken and written language in French and Spanish. Many of them, particularly girls, also write accurately. The majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily because they are well taught and have positive attitudes to learning. A number of lower attaining pupils, however, are currently underachieving and have low standards. This is because of teaching that does not successfully manage their behaviour and leads to poor attitudes. A common weakness is the speaking and pronouncing of the foreign language.
50. In Year 9, standards are below average overall. However, pupils' achievement is satisfactory given their attainment when they entered the college. High attaining pupils in French and Spanish, boys as well as girls, are above average in their understanding and writing of the

language. As in Year 11, however, all pupils struggle to form full sentences and to pronounce accurately when they are speaking. Pupils with learning needs are under-achieving in French because of inappropriate teaching that demands very little of them. Pupils of Asian heritage achieve as well as the others.

51. Teaching overall is satisfactory and so is the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers have good command of their language. They use it consistently so that pupils learn to listen and understand. Much of the teaching is good or very good. In these lessons there is a strong, brisk pace and pupils are busily involved in vivid activities, such as competitions and pair-work, that help them learn through practice. The new electronic whiteboards are put to very engaging use and, together with other use of ICT, are proving a strong aid to learning. Marking of pupils' work is encouraging, but could be more rigorous in expecting corrections. A minority of teaching, by temporary or inexperienced staff, fails to engage pupils or to manage their behaviour appropriately. This results in low motivation and very little learning. In all cases, except with the youngest pupils, teachers give pupils too few opportunities to practise spoken language systematically.
52. Leadership and management of the department are both satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department sets a very good example to staff and pupils, providing good support where it is needed. She in turn is well supported by the second in the department and by senior staff. The current temporary staffing situation, however, takes an undue amount of time and energy so the head of department is unable to devote herself to the central challenges facing the department, such as how to raise pupils' standards of speaking. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory. The department's resources and use of ICT have improved significantly. GCSE results in French have also improved, especially in the award of high grades. The 70-minute period, however, is still too long for most pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching, too, is still eroding standards and pupils' achievement in a minority of cases.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is much better than expected.
- Very good leadership sets high standards for teaching and learning.
- Teaching from a strong team of specialist teachers is very good. Teachers have very high expectations which lead to very good learning by pupils.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and they work very hard.
- There are no significant areas of weakness.

Commentary

53. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are generally below average, though pupils' competence in mathematics is better than in English or science. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were average, but with a higher than average percentage of pupils gaining at least a Level 5 (the level expected nationally). In relation to pupils in similar schools, the results were very high. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average and pupils have achieved very well. Lower attainers develop a secure foundation across all aspects of mathematics, especially in basic number skills to underpin later work. Higher attainers move quickly on to develop more abstract thinking such as the concept of proof.
54. In 2003, GCSE results were in line with national averages and well above those of similar schools. The results were not as good as in 2002, nor as good as they are predicted to be in 2004. Staffing problems last year were a key factor in this dip in performance. Standards of

work seen in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve very well. The cumulative effect of consistently good teaching and pupils' hard work and positive attitudes lead to this very good achievement in both Year 9 and Year 11.

55. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils have developed very good analytical and algebraic skills and they apply these well to problems. Many of these pupils go on to study mathematics at A-level. Lower attainers can competently carry out standard calculations; needing support when having to apply their skills in unfamiliar situations. Virtually all pupils take GCSE and receive a pass grade.
56. Test and examination results have shown some fluctuation over the past few years but generally there is an upward trend in both Year 9 and Year 11.
57. There is no significant difference in achievement by gender or ethnic group in work seen during the inspection, or shown in test and examination results. Clear policies for pupil grouping, based on prior attainment, coupled with very good teaching and pupils' desire to learn, are instrumental in this. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well. Good learning support and smaller classes are positive factors in this.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In all the lessons observed, teaching was at least good and in the majority was very good or excellent. All teachers share common high expectations of pupils' work (in class and for homework), and of their behaviour. Classroom routines are well established and no time is wasted. This consistency of approach is important as it results in pupils coming to lessons prepared to work hard. The recent improvement in ICT resources has had a big impact on teaching and learning. For example, Year 8 pupils learnt about plotting co-ordinates in all four quadrants through clear diagrams projected on a whiteboard with a data projector. The visual impact and the ability to move shapes around captured their interest and made it easier for them to remember key points. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They take pride in their work, as is shown in their exercise books and they are prepared to try hard with difficult concepts. The Key Stage 3 Strategy¹ has had a positive impact on the variety of teaching and learning styles used.
59. The leadership and management of a specialist team of teachers are very good. High expectations for all areas of the department's work are explicit and very good use of performance data highlights areas for improvement. The method of grouping pupils for mathematics, using prior attainment across the whole year group, is a strong factor in the very high standards reached by the most able pupils, as well as the degree of support given to lower attainers.
60. Standards have improved since the last inspection, especially in Year 9. There has been a big improvement in the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Pupils' competence in mathematics is above average and makes a good contribution to their achievement in other subjects. In design and technology, most pupils' skills are sufficient to help them make progress, but some are not measuring accurately enough. Pupils' graphical skills are good. They can use these in physical education to illustrate improving levels of fitness, and can identify 'rogue results'. Pupils can use formulae in spreadsheets in ICT to check results. In science, pupils can carry out necessary calculations, for example energy transfer and movements, although some find the latter difficult.

SCIENCE

¹ A government initiative to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests and examinations are much improved and are in line with national averages.
- Pupils achieve well from their starting points.
- Good teaching leads to good learning.
- The progress pupils make is assessed in detail.
- Teachers do not give sufficient emphasis to developing pupils' literacy skills.

Commentary

62. In 2003 test results at the end of Year 9 were average and in line with the target set by the school. Over the last three years, results have been in line with all schools and above the national trend. In relation to pupils in similar schools, results are above average. Standards seen up to Year 9 are average, with pupils able to use scientific terms correctly and explain simply how things work. However, many have difficulty in writing at any length. Most pupils achieve well from their starting points in Year 7. Those with special educational needs achieve particularly well when resources and teaching methods are matched to their needs or they are helped by teaching assistants.
63. GCSE results for science in 2003 were broadly in line with all schools nationally. Most pupils took double award science and there was a drop from previous years in the number attaining the higher grades. Boys attained better than girls. However, based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 9, pupils achieve well. Standards of work seen are average overall.
64. Teaching is good overall and is very much improved since the last inspection. In three quarters of all lessons, teaching was good or very good, whereas at the last inspection over half the teaching was poor. Pupils learn well because teachers plan lessons to include many different activities, including animated projections and practical sessions. This keeps pupils interested and involved over the long double periods. Lessons start with a review of previous work and where the new lesson's work fits in. Pupils know what to expect from the lesson and learning is reviewed at the end. Relationships between all the teachers and pupils are very good and much encouragement is given both verbally and in the marking of books. All teachers, including those newly arrived or temporary, expect and receive high standards of behaviour. This results in well-ordered lessons with a real sense of purpose. However, in some mixed groups teachers do not provide extension tasks for more able pupils to challenge and deepen their understanding.
65. Regular assessment of pupils' progress is an integral part of the work of the department. Targets are based on individuals' prior attainment and this allows both staff and pupils to track progress and take action if needed. The head of department has also done an analysis of examination results to identify areas that can be improved.
66. Where learning is less effective, pupils are not kept fully occupied throughout the lesson because they are given too much time to complete a task. Occasionally, some resources do not help learning, such as inadequate sets of pulleys or projected photographs that are too small. What pupils write is restricted to answering questions and there are not enough opportunities to develop these skills further by writing longer pieces of work about science. Only occasionally do pupils discuss with one another what they are learning or what they have found out.
67. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has been in post just one year and despite some staffing difficulties is building a very effective team. Most

of the staff are new both to the school and profession but all are subject specialists and support one another well. New courses have been introduced, including vocational applied science at GCSE. All these contribute considerably to the learning and achievement of pupils and the very good improvement since the last inspection.

Applied science

68. The applied science course is proving successful for many pupils across a range of abilities. Less able students appreciate the way their learning relates closely to their own experience. For example, a group of students whose attainment on entry to the school had been very low made striking progress in understanding the difference between different kinds of respiration when the teacher based the lesson on the needs of footballers and dancers. However, some pupils of average ability do not yet appreciate the need to work independently to produce the quantity of high standard coursework required. Teachers are doing their best to bring this home to pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are imaginative, innovative and challenging schemes of work in place for all years.
- There is very good teaching, especially by the specialist staff.
- Assessment and monitoring are excellent.
- Pupils' achievement over time is good.
- Standards are set to recover from the low point of 2002/3 caused by the unsatisfactory provision during that year, and are now around average.
- The school is now very well equipped with hardware and software.

Commentary

69. Standards of work seen are average, both at the end of Year 9 and in Year 11, with pupils following challenging and stimulating schemes of work. Pupils use a wide range of software including desktop publishing and presentational software to communicate information. Pupils use appropriate spreadsheet software to create simple models of real situations, which they then use to answer 'what if' questions. Younger pupils use complex queries to interrogate databases, whilst the older pupils design their own quite sophisticated systems. Pupils use appropriate software to create sequences of instructions by which real devices are controlled. Pupils with special educational needs use an integrated learning system to good effect in improving both their literacy and numeracy skills.
70. Pupils' attainment on entry to the college is below average, but they achieve well and by the end of Year 9 have reached average attainment. They have good capability in ICT that enables them to make effective use of ICT in all areas of their learning. Staffing difficulties during 2002/3 meant that provision was unsatisfactory with the consequence that results in the GCSE examinations were well below expectations. The situation has since been remedied and this year's cohort is achieving well and is on target to attain standards around national expectations.
71. Teaching is very good overall. Lesson planning is good and pupils are clear about what is expected of them. Pupils are able to access the course modules on the college Intranet and this helps them to become more independent. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic with pupils, making sure that they are involved in lessons and have high expectations. As a consequence, pupils are well motivated and enjoy their ICT lessons. Homework is consistently well used; relevant work being set and marked regularly. However,

the backlog of underachievement due to unsatisfactory provision in 2002/3 has prevented standards rising any higher.

72. Assessment and monitoring are excellent. The head of department has implemented a computerised system whereby every piece of work by every pupil is assessed at a National Curriculum level and recorded, giving a clear picture of all pupils' progress to date. The monitoring of progress of those pupils who do not opt for ICT in Years 10 and 11 is extremely sound. Accreditation either by Key Skills (Level 3) or by certificates of competence (or both) is available for these students. Their ICT work in all other subjects is clearly mapped onto the requirements for these qualifications which meet National Curriculum imperatives.
73. ICT resources are now very good. There are approximately 250 networked computers for pupil use giving a pupil to PC ratio of better than 3:1. There are very good printing facilities in each of the five ICT suites, along with data projectors in most classrooms and good use is made of the several interactive whiteboards in the college. There are scanning facilities and digital cameras which are also well utilised. However, the systems which are now very extensive and sophisticated cannot be adequately maintained by just the one highly competent computer technician.
74. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides clear guidance to all staff about what is to be taught and strategies for delivery. The non-specialist staff have been well supported by planned professional development and are now confident with the curriculum content and assessment procedures. There is a clear Internet access policy; effective systems have been created to minimise misuse and protect pupils from unsuitable materials.
75. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Technology college status has been gained and, as a consequence, the quality and quantity of the ICT resources has increased considerably and these are being put to effective use to improve the pupils' learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is good overall, and there are examples of excellent use of ICT, for example in history. All teachers have been provided with a networked laptop computer which they use for administration, and this has given a huge impetus to the teachers' use of ICT in lessons. ICT is now very well used by almost all teachers in the delivery of lessons in almost all subjects. Particularly impressive is the use of presentational software and data projectors. Pupils are confident users of ICT and make effective use to improve the presentation of their written work in all subjects. Access to resources out of school hours is provided – the computer suites being well used, especially at lunchtimes.

Example of outstanding practice: the use of ICT in a history lesson

A group of Year 9 pupils, most of whom have special educational needs, were considering the question 'in World War One, what was trench warfare like?' The teacher used a very well-planned and prepared computer presentation which enabled pupils to make a list of observations about the battlefield which they had noted from the visual material in their text books. This was displayed in the form of a spider diagram on the interactive whiteboard with spelling automatically corrected! The class then watched with rapt attention a DVD sequence from 'All quiet on the western front' which evoked incredibly powerful images of what life in the trenches must have been like. The pupils' reactions moved through shock and disgust to complete horror at the conditions. One pupil sought reassurance – 'It's only a film' he said. The lesson then moved seamlessly onto a literacy task in which pupils participated in an exercise differentiating between the use of **there** and **their**. Pupils again used the interactive whiteboard to insert the correct word in gaps in sentences relevant to the images they had just been considering. These are pupils, many with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and all with very short attention spans, who were engaged totally in the learning experience created by the teacher's imaginative use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching styles lack vitality and favour knowledge acquisition more than its application to deeper issues; monitoring is not systematic.
- Pupils have too few opportunities for extended talk, independent thinking and making decisions.
- In all years, pupils have very good graphical skills and interpret visual material and numerical data well.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good study skills and demonstrate commitment and responsibility.

Commentary

77. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average. Pupils have accurate knowledge of how weather and climate, physical features and population affect a country's development. They confidently plot and retrieve information using various types of maps, graphs, statistics, diagrams and ICT because of tightly planned teaching and high expectations about presentation. Their facility with geographical terms and ICT, issues at the previous inspection, have improved and contribute to the development of literacy. In expressing judgements and personal responses through writing or speaking at length, pupils are not fluent enough. These activities are particularly important for incorporating challenges for high attainers.
78. Achievement is satisfactory, given low standards on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they have appropriate tasks.
79. GCSE results for 2003 are well below average, reflecting too many D grades and absence problems. The number of pupils choosing geography has fallen over the last four years. Action to raise attainment includes targeting pupils at risk, special revision packages and changes to teaching coursework. Therefore standards of work seen, while still below average, have improved.
80. Study skills, annotating to improve their work, impeccable presentation and understanding their targets, consolidate pupils' commitment and responsibility. Fieldwork demonstrates good interpretation and evaluation. High attainers make well-informed judgements about how human intervention creates incompatible effects and hardship.
81. However, in all years there are too few opportunities for pupils to use knowledge for solving problems, such as confronting conflicting ideas in order to judge economic development in the context of justice.
82. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. ICT presentations have enriched the quality of visual material and 'starter' activities. Lesson planning and teachers' subject knowledge is very clear and takes account of the needs of the lowest attaining pupils. Learning is also satisfactory rather than good because, in many lessons, there is only one pace, controlled by the teacher where factual information is the focus. Good practice was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils worked in pairs on characteristics about weather. This excited them because they had to use the terminology, find links and make decisions together. They could then provide well-explained answers to the teacher's questions.

83. Management is satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Strategies to raise standards are in place but there has not been a significant change in teaching styles and this is still needed. Leadership is good. Colleagues praise the quality of support they receive from the head of department. She now has a clear vision of priorities centering on revitalising learning.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has brought new life to provision and raised standards all round.
- Imaginative, inspired teaching stimulates creative and enthusiastic collaboration from pupils.
- Teachers' ICT skill accelerates learning and broadens the range of stimuli and support for speaking and writing.
- Pupils need to use history skills outlined in the National Curriculum to target their improvement.

Commentary

84. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are average overall. Pupils have good study skills enabling them to extrapolate information from different types of sources, construct annotated timelines and diagrammatic forms for organising information. They exploit the possibilities of ICT. These devices clarify learning for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils' interpretation skills are unusually well developed because they use knowledge of events as a springboard for confronting important issues, (Queen Victoria; Cool or Cruel?). They illustrate and reason through their judgements in writing and confident speaking. Higher attaining pupils are sharp in accounting for the different viewpoints.
85. Learning is very good in lessons; long-term achievement in Years 7 to 9 remains only good because timetabling arrangements interrupt continuity.
86. While pupils know their National Curriculum levels and evaluate progress in general terms, they cannot explain exactly which skills they are achieving or need to improve.
87. In 2003, although GCSE results were above average, one class of pupils did not do as well as in other subjects. Recent new leadership and the teamwork of two very talented teachers account for above average standards of work seen in Year 11, and increased popularity of history at GCSE. Predictions for 2004 are comfortably above average because of thorough monitoring of progress, coupled with support and regular interviews with pupils. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
88. At this stage, efficient note making, concept mapping and essay planning allow pupils to cope with extensive, complex detail. Year 11 pupils have well-developed skills for teasing out significant links between causes and consequences of political and economic decisions, to account for the Cold War in Europe for example, or the disastrous effects of the Wall Street crash. In one lesson, pupils in groups sustained a 40-minute discussion about events leading to World War Two.
89. In writing, pupils who have literacy problems benefit from guidance about paragraphs, introductions and conclusions. Higher attaining pupils succinctly acknowledge the human cost of history, exemplified in coursework on the evacuation of children from cities during World War Two, using terms such as 'separation trauma' and 'agonising decisions' with understanding and authority.

90. Teaching is inspiring; consistently very good, at times excellent. Teachers are passionate about history and dedicated to developing imaginative and challenging learning, that brings history off the page and engages pupils. Consequently, learning is also very good because pupils are animated collaborators, in groups or in whole-class activities. Teachers' impressive skill with presentational software and interactive whiteboards drives lessons along, strengthens the impact of images and text, supports pupils with guidance and keeps lesson objectives in view.
91. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is an excellent role model and clear sighted. In a very short time his strategies have realised very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient teaching time.
- Good teaching encourages pupils to appreciate the subject.
- The short course at GCSE for all pupils offers support for their personal development as well as knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

92. Standards are well below national expectations at the end of Year 9 because insufficient time is allocated to the subject in Years 7 to 9. In 2003, GCSE results were below average. Between 2001 and 2002 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades rose to average, but not all pupils took the examination. In 2003, the whole year group took the examination and standards fell to well below average. Results were also affected by staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Standards seen during the inspection were just below average in Year 11.
93. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is difficult for pupils to build up a capacity to appreciate different religious views in the time available, in spite of good teaching. The use of homework is good, and, although brief, pupils maintain notes and write sensitively about what they have studied, such as Anne Frank's life. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils build on their experiences and can speak and write competently about religions, but most find it difficult to express ideas or analyse concepts. This is in part due to the superficial coverage of the agreed syllabus in Years 7 to 9. This does not give pupils a sound enough basis for the GCSE course. In spite of this, achievement is satisfactory and the contribution the subject makes to pupils' spiritual, cultural and moral development is a significant strength.
94. Learning was good in lessons because teaching is at least good, and sometimes very good. Teachers use a wide range of good resources and assess pupils' work well. Well-structured lessons, concentrating on reading and writing skills, help all pupils to learn about religions. Pupils lack opportunities to discuss aspects of their work, for example attitudes to important issues such as prejudice and discrimination. However, in a very good lesson in Year 11 all pupils were taken through poetry and a witness report to a very thoughtful and profound recognition of the impact any death has on family and friends, and the range of beliefs people have about dying.
95. Leadership and management are satisfactory with significant strengths in the management of teaching and learning. The new head of department has made a good start, building on existing strengths, and the department is set to become successful when more teaching time is allowed in Years 7 to 9. The opportunity for a trainee teacher to team teach with the

usual teacher gives pupils a good idea of what it is like to study the subject beyond the age of 16, and this is managed very well by the head of department. The curriculum provided at GCSE for the short course and for pupils to opt to study a full GCSE is appropriate, ensuring knowledge of at least two major religions.

96. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The strengths are the introduction of GCSE short course for all, and development of assessment. Weaknesses include the insufficient use of ICT in the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in resistant materials, textiles and food are above average.
- Leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the continual development of the subject.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in standards and quality of work throughout the school.
- Links with a local special school make a significant contribution to pupils' sense of responsibility and awareness of others' needs.
- Standards in GCSE examinations in graphics and systems and control are below average.

Commentary

97. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are average overall and this is confirmed by recent teachers' assessments. From below average attainment on entry, pupils make at least satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9. Pupils' learning is satisfactory and occasionally good in resistant materials and textiles. Here, good imagination is evident in design and pupils' confidence in the use of ICT reflects the emphasis recently placed on the development of computer-assisted design and manufacture and the school's status as a technology college. Designing is imaginative, but sketching and drawing as elements in the development of a design, are comparatively weak. Pupils do not always recognise and use the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly demanding design and making activities in new situations. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily, with good quality practical work.
98. Standards achieved in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below national averages. Currently, standards in Year 11 are average across the different branches of design and technology. Since achieving technology college status, the different specialist subjects have experienced varied success, with resistant materials, textiles and, to some extent, food technology performing particularly well. Results in systems and control and graphics were well below average with pupils performing significantly less well than in their other subjects. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall, but unsatisfactory in graphic products. Here there is limited evidence of a thorough and detailed designing and making process in coursework projects.
99. Relationships between teachers and pupils are usually good and this is reflected in pupils' attitudes towards the subject. Pupils talk confidently about their work and many have understanding of how well they are performing; self-evaluation and target setting are less well developed.
100. Teaching and learning are good overall, with variations across the subjects. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but in some instances pupils did not learn fast enough. Here the focus for the lesson is directed towards the task at the expense

of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. Good and very good teaching was characterised by well-organised lessons with appropriate high expectations so that pupils understand what is expected of them, with clear deadlines. Teachers work well with classroom assistants and the technicians are extremely effective in the smooth running of the department.

101. Leadership is very good. The head of department provides the vision for the subject and sets the standards for the quality of teaching and aspirations for pupils' work and achievements. This has a positive impact on the teaching throughout the department. There is a clear view of the department's strengths and areas for development and a culture of continuous improvement. Management is good, monitoring of teaching, however, needs a sharper focus on the way pupils learn and needs to include sharing good practice.
102. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The improvements in accommodation and more recently resources, are very good. Links with industry are good and so are opportunities for pupils to continue their work during out-of-class hours.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 10.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils enjoy music.
- Assessing pupils work and using this to improve standards is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils would make better progress if there was a weekly lesson for music throughout the year in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

103. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 are average overall. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in a limited amount of time. They play confidently on glockenspiels and their own instruments, for example in a performance of *Wimoweh*. They work together as a class to produce a good ensemble by listening carefully. Their compositions are not quite so well developed. Pupils do not use the computers sufficiently often as an aid to this. There are now three computers in the department, however, and these need to be brought into full use as quickly as possible. More computers are needed.
104. In 2003, one pupil took GCSE music and achieved a grade B. There are currently no pupils in Year 11 studying music. In Year 10, standards seen during the inspection are above average. Pupils' achievement is good. Nearly all the pupils play an instrument; most learning in school. These pupils are taught to use the computers for their compositions although many still try out sounds on the keyboard until they are happy. Their compositions are well constructed, inventive and pleasing to listen to.
105. Pupils make good progress in music because the teaching is good. They know at the beginning of each lesson what they have to learn because the teacher makes this clear to them. Lessons are well planned for them to achieve this. The lessons involve a great deal of practical work and the teacher is very good at providing all pupils with face-to-face advice and assistance. Sometimes this involves demonstrations by playing or singing. Pupils learn quickly when this happens. There is appropriately challenging music for all pupils to play. Higher attaining pupils move themselves on to more difficult pieces when they are proficient.

When needed, pupils work well collaboratively and in most lessons they work with concentration and interest. In one lesson, pupils lost interest at the end of the long lesson because there were no opportunities to refocus through listening to, and talking about, the work that other pupils were doing. Reflecting on their work is not a regular feature of lessons, but should be. Pupils need to know what a good performance or composition is by listening to others and talking regularly about the quality of what they hear each other do.

106. Pupils do not have a clear idea of what their National Curriculum level is, as these are not used confidently yet by the teacher. Assessment generally is unsatisfactory. The information which could be gleaned from this is not yet used to help improve standards by developing teaching and learning. Although this aspect of management is unsatisfactory, and leads to unsatisfactory management overall, the leadership is satisfactory and satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. There is insufficient time for pupils to develop their musical skills in Years 7 to 9 because they only study it for nine weeks before moving on to drama. When they resume, many skills have drifted and take time to re-establish. Lack of time compels the teacher to press on, sometimes at the expense of developing composition skills sufficiently.

Drama

107. Drama is a fairly recent addition to the curriculum throughout the school, and a very beneficial one. Through it pupils are developing many personal and social skills such as collaboration and listening carefully to others. Pupils really enjoy drama. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching and learning were very good. Pupils are achieving very well. In Year 7, in a lesson with pupils with special educational needs, all the teacher's strategies were designed for pupils to develop self-control, work together well and listen carefully. This was very successfully achieved, so much so that the final circle time was calm, reflective and all pupils were able to speak about what they had done. In Year 11, standards of acting are high. Pupils assume roles realistically and sensitively. They work with interest and engagement through the lesson. They are highly committed to the subject and are choosing to study the GCSE examination in increasing numbers. In the GCSE examination in 2003, ten of the 20 pupils achieved a grade between A and C. All pupils achieved a grade between A and G.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising as a result of the appointment of a new course leader.
- Teaching and learning are good, pupils achieve well as a result.
- ICT is used very well to support and extend pupils' work.
- Too much work is on too small a scale in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' experimental work is rather hesitant, and lacks confidence.

Commentary

108. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils' achievement is good, and they make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their colour work is lively, and they create bright paintings based on a study of Australian Aboriginal art. Gifted and talented pupils visit local woodland and create sensitive wall hangings as a result. Pupils also use ICT very well to create attractive patterns, which explore geometric shapes. However, too much of their work is on too small a scale, and their broader handling skills are not fully developed as a result.

109. In 2003, results in the GCSE examination were below average; a sharp fall compared to the previous years' results. This is because of staff illness. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 are average. This is an improvement on results in 2003, and a result of the changes made by the new course leader. The range of materials and processes used has been improved, and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good, and they produce exciting oil pastel studies from observation of seashells and animal bones. They create very colourful textile pieces, which are well made and highly decorative. Pupils also use ICT to distort digital portraits, and they produce unusual oil pastel studies as a result. However, their experimental work is rather hesitant, and they lack the confidence to really let go when working with unfamiliar materials.
110. Teaching and learning are good. In lessons, ICT is used very well in introductions to raise pupils' interest levels. Teachers also emphasise the links between making art and learning about the work of other artists. For example, in a lesson investigating the art of a variety of cultures, the teacher gave a highly professional illustrated introduction. Pupils were shown high quality images of African masks and Maori tattoos, using a data projector. They then went on to design their own masks, developing ideas they had seen, and producing lively and bright work. Because their interest levels were high, they tried hard to succeed, and good learning was the result.
111. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed course leader has made many changes in a short time. The curriculum has been improved, and pupils now work more often in three dimensions, in printmaking and in textiles. The shortcomings identified in the previous inspection have been successfully tackled and standards are rising. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' achievement, has improved. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach good standards in the activities they experience.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Unsatisfactory indoor accommodation limits standards and restricts the curriculum.

Commentary

112. Inclement weather resulted in only one lesson being taught outdoors during the inspection. Loss of the hall to examinations increased the difficulties. Classes had to be combined in the available indoor spaces or taught practical skills in classrooms.
113. Standards of work seen are above average by Year 9. This represents good achievement since many pupils enter the school with limited understanding and experience. In fitness training sessions, pupils understand how different exercises improve stamina and agility. From Year 7, they learn to use appropriate technical language, and become able to recognise what they are doing well and how they might improve. These skills were evident in girls' gymnastics lessons. Boys have too few opportunities for gymnastics but their ability to develop good understanding of rules, skills and strategies was evident in their analysis of a film of volleyball in a classroom-based lesson in Year 8. A good proportion of pupils improve their levels of skill through participation in a range of sporting activities outside lesson times.

114. Results at GCSE in 2003 were just below the national average as was the case in 2002, the first year in which pupils were examined. High standards of performance in games and athletic activities achieved by both boys and girls are illustrated by the successes of teams and individuals at district and county levels with one girl being a member of the national netball development squad. Overall standards in the core lessons for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Reduced allocations of time and limited accommodation are reflected in reduced levels of achievement. Students following the GCSE course achieve well. They demonstrate good levels of practical skill. Written work is mostly well organised and clearly expressed. Higher attainers develop their ideas fully but others provide partial or shallow answers with frequent errors of spelling and punctuation.
115. The quality of teaching is good overall, and is often very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed to helping pupils at all levels of ability to enjoy their work and reach their potential. They explain tasks clearly, ensure full understanding and praise generously. Very effective use is made of demonstrations, film and photographs. Good humour is always matched by serious purpose and high expectations. Good learning is evident in the clear recall pupils have of earlier work and in improving standards. Learning is good because all pupils have positive attitudes, work hard and want to improve. They are proud of their own successes and applaud those of others.
116. Leadership of the department is very good. It inspires the strong culture of success which dominates the department's work and values. Management overall is good. Teachers form a strong team. Strengths noted in the previous report continue and improvement overall is satisfactory. A course leading to GCSE has been established. Lack of sufficient indoor accommodation continues to limit the range and quality of the curriculum particularly in Years 9 to 11 where the requirements of the National Curriculum cannot be met.
117. The school is not yet involved in the development of the national strategy for physical education, school sport and club links. Independently, within the limits of its accommodation, the school already exceeds the strategy's targets for the proportion of participants aged 11 to 14.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

118. The school provides a good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. These include applied science (reported on within the science report), engineering, hair and beauty, childcare, and business, as well as the ASDAN youth award.
119. The inspection team sampled several subjects and found the overall provision to be good. Pupils enjoy the courses and work hard. They are taught well and take pride in their work.

Engineering

120. Three lessons in the course run with the local further education college were observed. Standards are average overall and pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory. The provision at the college complements the work done in school very well, and pupils cope well with the long teaching sessions that are part of the college routine. The dual provision is well managed and pupils are mature and sensible both in school and at the college. Relationships with teachers and college tutors are good and pupils make good progress in lessons in school and at college where they are able to use heavy equipment not available in school. Overall this is a successful course that enriches pupils' experience and prepares them well for the next stage in their education.

Business education

121. Three lessons were observed. Pupils are achieving well because lessons are well taught and often closely related to local companies and businesses. Standards in the lessons observed were close to average in the lessons seen in both Year 10 and Year 11. Pupils apply their competence in ICT and mathematics well to business problems such as cash flow forecasts, and can draw out and evaluate significant features of business documents. Good teaching give lessons a sense of urgency and purpose, to which pupils respond well. Teachers have high, but realistic, expectations and pupils respond enthusiastically. Year 10 pupils spend part of their time at college and, like the engineering students, they enjoy the different atmosphere and approach.

Youth Award

122. Two lessons were seen. Pupils are developing basic skills in a stimulating and motivating environment. They are supported effectively and encouraged to be independent and self-reliant. They take pride in their work, and enjoy working through a range of challenges, often basing work on their outside interests, such as horse riding or sport. They use ICT skills well in the presentation of their work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is still in the early stages of development, and the subject covers the theoretical part of the National Curriculum superficially.
- Assessment arrangements are poor, and pupils are not sure how well they are doing, or how to improve.
- There is not enough time allocated to cover topics in enough depth.
- A good range of active citizenship activities are on offer to pupils.

Commentary

123. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are well below average. Pupils take part in a range of active citizenship activities, for example a waste-watching project that helps them learn to avoid waste and recycle materials as much as possible. They also elect representatives to the school council, which raises issues of interest to pupils. However, their knowledge and understanding of how to be informed citizens is weak. They are not sure what the main elements of the subject are, and they cannot talk for long about the topics they have studied. In addition, written work is very brief, and covers topics at a very basic level. This is because the school has not allocated enough time to cover the topics in enough depth. As result, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, and they do not make as much progress as they should in this subject.
124. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average. Pupils continue to build on their strengths in active citizenship activities, for example, organising concerts for good causes, such as the local maternity unit. They learn about democracy and the voting system, and take part in debates and question and answer sessions with local celebrities and councillors. However, their workbooks contain only very brief notes, and their written work does not reflect the complexity of the topics that they study. They are not gaining enough knowledge and understanding of the subject, and their achievement continues to be unsatisfactory. Again, a major factor is the lack of time, which means that pupils cannot extend their knowledge of topics beyond a basic level.

125. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, lesson by lesson, but the curriculum arrangements do not enable pupils to consolidate this learning satisfactorily and they forget because they have to move too swiftly from one topic to the next. Lessons are well planned, and the best move at a good pace, encouraging discussion and debate. The school makes effective use of outside agencies, such as the local police force, to add variety to lessons, and to give pupils opportunities to meet community figures and raise issues of concern. However, in some lessons, quieter pupils are not drawn into discussions enough. In addition, assessment arrangements are poor, and there is no clear system in place. As a result, pupils do not know how well they are doing, or how they can improve.
126. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Not enough has been done to establish citizenship as a National Curriculum subject, or to develop suitable assessment arrangements. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for the recently appointed course leader to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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