

# INSPECTION REPORT

## RUSKIN SPORTS COLLEGE

Crewe

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111417

Headteacher: Mr P J Mottershead

Lead inspector: Mrs W Hola

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 258827

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:	696
School address:	Ruskin Road Crewe Cheshire
Postcode:	CW2 7JT
Telephone number:	(01270) 560514
Fax number:	(01270) 650248
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Minshall
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ruskin Sports College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It is smaller than other secondary schools and has 696 pupils (356 boys and 340 girls). The number of pupils has been rising steadily: there were 581 in 2000.

The school is situated in the centre of Crewe in Cheshire. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds that are less privileged, on the whole, than in many parts of the country. Pupils' attainments on entry vary greatly and are below average overall but pupils leave with above national average attainment.

The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is above the national average. Ninety per cent of pupils have a white British heritage and the main minority ethnic group is Asian, mostly Bangladeshi. The proportion of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is very low, less than one per cent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well below the national average and the proportion with statements of SEN is broadly in line with the average.

The school received the School Achievement Award in 2000, the Sportsmark and Citizenship Award in 2001 and the NIKE Girls in Sport Award in 2003. It has been a specialist sports college from September 2002. The school is part of an 'Excellence in Cities' cluster of schools in Crewe.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4359	Mrs W Hola	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector	
15312	Ms K Lord	Team inspector	Physical education
12356	Mr R Dickason	Team inspector	Science
13101	Mr M Kell	Team inspector	Special educational needs
19867	Mr M Pettitt	Team inspector	Art and design History
17854	Mr R Crawford	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30648	Mr B Skelton	Team inspector	English
1759	Mr G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
33019	Mr S Aspinall	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
30996	Ms A Higginbotham	Team inspector	Mathematics
31889	Mr M Thomas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education
33014	Mr A White	Team inspector	Music

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**Ruskin Sports College** provides a **good** education for its pupils and **good value for money**. Pupils generally achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning supported by good leadership and management. Many pupils enter the school with below average attainment and, by Year 11, reach standards that are currently above national averages overall.

### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision in English, mathematics and science is very good and a main strength of the school.
- Good teaching and learning have been and are being successfully developed through many national, local and school-based strategies and because most staff are keen to extend their skills.
- Pupils know that teachers expect them to work hard and do their best.
- Leadership and management are good overall but some links between layers and lines of accountability are not clearly established. Plans for school improvement show clear vision, embrace many strategies but are varied in their overall quality as working documents.
- Shortcomings exist in art and music. There are gaps in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and too little time is allocated for religious education (RE) in Years 10 and 11.
- Attendance was below the national average in 2002-2003. In the current year, a third of pupils have attendance of less than 90 per cent. The number of exclusions is high for a school of this size.
- Accommodation is attractive in many ways but is unsatisfactory overall particularly in relation to the library, dining area and some general teaching spaces.
- Relationships are very strong, supported by a very effective personal development programme.

The school has made **good improvement** since its last inspection in April 1998. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have risen faster than in other schools. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have also risen but not as fast as nationally. The overall quality of teaching has been improved. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development has been improved. Development planning has improved but still lacks some clear detail in places. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has improved but some shortcomings remain in provision. The school still does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The extent to which improvements have been made in subjects varies greatly from very good to unsatisfactory.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Ruskin Sports College performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

### Standards are currently above average and achievement is good overall.

- Test results in 2003 for pupils in Year 9 were average in English, mathematics and science.
- GCSE examination results in 2003 were above average for the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more grades A\*-C and average when looking at pupils' average point scores.
- Pupils' achievements in tests and examinations were very good because results were considerably higher than in similar schools (ones whose pupils had similar starting points).
- Standards seen during the inspection were above national expectations or averages overall.
- Across Years 7 to 11, pupils have good skills in English language and literacy and also good competence in mathematics. Pupils' skills in ICT are generally satisfactory.
- Pupils with SEN achieve well. The achievements of gifted and talented pupils are sound but could be better.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall.** Most pupils behave well and have good attitudes to work. They are generally courteous towards each other, staff and visitors. Lesson disruption by poor behaviour of pupils was rare during the inspection. The school sets very high expectations of pupils' conduct. The number of exclusions is high; reasons for exclusion seem appropriate. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The current systems for monitoring attendance, whilst good in parts, are not effective in identifying pupils whose attendance is beginning to fall below 90 per cent. Punctuality is good. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory and their moral and social development is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. Teaching is good.** Teachers plan lessons very well and most make good use of assessment. Allocated tutor time is not generally used well. Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory but with some limitations in staffing and accommodation. The school provides many good opportunities for enrichment. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is generally good. Accommodation and resources have some shortcomings. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is sound and pupils are provided with good support, advice and guidance. Good links exist with parents and the community. Links with other schools and colleges are very good, including those in connection with Sports College work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are good.** The headteacher provides a strong lead. He has assembled an effective senior management team that displays many strengths because he recognises and encourages talent. Together with staff and governors, he has steered the school successfully through a period of uncertainty, through acquiring specialist sports college status and has articulated a clear view about its future as part of the local learning community. Leadership of the three core subjects is very good; music and art have shortcomings. Governance is good although governors have not ensured that RE has been allocated sufficient time in Years 10 and 11. Management systems are generally good.

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

The school is popular. Parents and pupils support it and appreciate the encouragement many teachers provide. The school seeks and values pupils' views as part of its good self-evaluation processes. Most parents state that their children are making good progress and that staff expect pupils to work hard. About a fifth of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not feel well informed about their child's progress and disagree that the school seeks the views of parents. Some parents would like to be kept better informed about what is happening in the school. Most pupils feel that Ruskin is a good school to be at. Many are enthusiastic about sports activities. Inspectors agree with parents' and pupils' positive views. They feel that reports are reasonable but could give more information about what pupils can do to improve. They also feel that the school could improve on its general information for parents.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- strengthen leadership and management in art and music to improve provision;
- review and revise the ICT curriculum to ensure that all required elements are properly covered and that pupils' achievements in ICT are fostered and evaluated across the curriculum;
- continue to improve accommodation, particularly in relation to the library, for pupils' lunchtime arrangements and for some other areas, most notably ICT and art.
- improve attendance and reduce exclusions;
- review and improve the use of time allocated for tutor time;
- strengthen links and lines of accountability between layers of management to ensure a consistent approach to school improvement; make some plans clearer so that all staff understand the part they play in them and within what timescales;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide sufficient time for RE in Years 10 and 11; and
- provide a daily act of collective worship.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

**Standards are above average and achievement is good.** Pupils' attainments on entry to the school vary considerably but are below average taken as a whole. Standards in the end of Year 9 national tests have risen in recent years, at a faster rate than nationally. Standards in GCSE examinations have also risen but not as fast as those nationally.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average, taking account of the last three years results.
- GCSE examinations results are above average, based on the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A\*-C.
- Compared with similar schools (those with pupils with the same prior attainment), test and examination results in both 2002 and 2003 were very high.
- Pupils generally achieve well at each stage and in most subjects, except in art and music in Years 7 to 11 and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9, where achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils have good skills in English language, literacy and mathematics and their competence in ICT is sound.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress but the progress of pupils who are gifted and talented is sound rather than good.
- Pupils' speaking skills are sound but are not being developed systematically in and beyond lessons.

#### Commentary

1. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated greatly in recent years but have risen overall at a faster rate than nationally. Results were below average in 2000, well above average in 2001 and average in 2002 and 2003; the school 'three-year' average is above the national 'three-year' average. In 2003, the proportions of pupils getting above expected levels in the tests were best in mathematics, then in science and third best in English. The test results in 2002 and 2003 show that pupils' achievements over Years 7 to 9 were very good in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, taking account of pupils' lower than average attainment on entry to the school. Results in 2003 were broadly in line with the school's targets.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.5 (34.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.8 (34.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.8 (32.3)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 137 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Standards in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection were above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, German and citizenship. They were average in most other subjects except music, where they were below average and in ICT, where they were well below average.
3. GCSE examination results in 2003 were above average overall and have improved in recent years but not as fast as those nationally. Results in science and design and technology were significantly above the national average in 2003 but results were below average in French. In other subjects, GCSE results were broadly average. GCSE results in 2003 exceeded the school's 2003 target.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (52)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.7 (34.7)	35.4 (34.7)

*There were 139 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. In 2003, compared with other subjects that pupils took at GCSE, results were relatively strong in design and technology and business studies but particularly weak in art.
5. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were above average overall. They were well above average in science and above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, German and citizenship. They were average elsewhere except in art, French and music where they were below average.
6. Achievement, that is, pupils' rate of progress in relation to their capabilities, is good in all years overall and in most subjects. The school has worked successfully to improve teaching since the last inspection and this has contributed significantly to enabling pupils to achieve well. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 because teaching has taken account of the National Strategies for teaching and learning for this stage and built very well on pupils' earlier skills and knowledge. Achievement is less than satisfactory in art and music because leadership and management in these areas have some shortcomings so that pupils' skills are not developed in a steady and assured way to cover all the required elements. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievements in ICT are also unsatisfactory because the curriculum provided has some gaps and because pupils' skills are not fostered as they could and should be across all subjects.
7. Pupils have good skills in English language and literacy and in mathematics, mainly because these skills are developed so well in English and mathematics lessons and also, to a lesser extent, because they are nurtured in some other subjects. Literacy skills are generally promoted well because teachers have been helped to understand how this can be done in all subjects although pupils' oral skills do not develop as well as their reading and writing skills. Pupils generally respond with short answers and are reticent to develop answers further. It is more a reluctance and a lack of confidence than a lack of ability, but it is affecting achievement in activities that require verbal explanation, presentations or dramatisations. Some groups in drama activities were reluctant to perform. Skills in mathematics are not promoted quite so well and there are many missed opportunities because teachers are not as adept at recognizing them. Pupils' skills in ICT are developed reasonably well because staff have the skills to do this but easy access to computers is still too limited.
8. Girls performed better than boys in the 2003 end of Year 9 tests but, taking the last three years together, the difference is not significant. Generally, pupils of all ages with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils in the different subjects of the curriculum but their achievements are not related closely enough to the poorly defined contents of these pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). Pupils who are gifted and talented make reasonable progress but they are not always provided with sufficiently challenging tasks. Pupils from minority ethnic groups or who have English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers; they achieve well and their progress is carefully monitored.

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

Pupils' attitudes are **good** and the behaviour of pupils is **good**. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is **good**. Pupils' attendance is **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Celebration of achievement is a positive feature of the school's culture.
- The attitudes of the majority of pupils towards their learning are good and sometimes very good.
- Most pupils behave very well but the number of pupils excluded from the school is high.

- Relationships between pupils and with staff are good.
- Pupils' personal development is supported well by a very effective personal development programme and many opportunities to take responsibility in the school community.
- A significant number of pupils have attendance of below 90 per cent.
- Pupils do not acquire sufficiently well the awareness and appreciation of the many different cultures and traditions that exist in Britain.

### Commentary

9. Since the previous inspection the school has changed its culture to one of celebration of achievement and this has resulted in pupils' good confidence and self-esteem and contributes significantly to their good attitudes and behaviour. The strong relationships between pupils and teachers contribute well to pupils' positive attitudes. When stimulated by lively and interesting teaching pupils' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes very good. They are interested in their studies and are able to sustain their concentration well. In the relatively few lessons where teaching is less effective and pupils' interest is allowed to deteriorate, pupils demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm for their work with the consequent lack of progress in learning during the lesson. In some lessons, even where teaching and learning are sound overall, pupils are too dependent on their teachers and are not encouraged to develop, or use, their independent learning skills. There are a few pupils throughout the school who show an indifference to education and teachers have to work extremely hard to motivate them.
10. The behaviour of pupils is good and often very good. Pupils are well behaved and generally courteous towards each other. Relationships between pupils are good. Lesson and lunch times are socially and racially harmonious occasions. Lesson disruption by the poor behaviour of pupils was rare during the inspection. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is high for a school of this size. Reasons for exclusion seem appropriate and are for incidents of serious misconduct. Some parents express concerns about the standard of behaviour within the school; based on the evidence of the inspection week these would appear to be unfounded, but concerns may be related to exclusions and hence valid.

### 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	624	80	4
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	3	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	24	11	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	1	0

Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	10	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

11. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. It is not, however, consistently planned for in all subjects.
12. Spiritual development is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Religious education provides good opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and opportunities also exist and are sometimes taken in other subjects.
13. The moral and social development of pupils is good. Pupils are well aware of what is expected of them. They are able to demonstrate an understanding of right and wrong and of the effect of their actions on others and this is expressed well in their concern for others in the wider community. The school council provides a forum for encouraging pupils to play an active role in future developments affecting the school community. Pupils also serve the school community by acting as peer mediators and prefects.
14. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They are aware of their own cultural heritage but less so of those that differ from their own. Whilst some subjects, such as religious education and English, have a well-planned element of multicultural education in lessons, others have not approached this in a systematic way. Pupils do not acquire sufficiently well the awareness and appreciation of the cultures and traditions that exist in this country.
15. The school provides a programme of assemblies that contain an act of worship but does not comply with the statutory requirement for this to take place daily.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	0.6
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

16. Attendance is unsatisfactory and is below the national average for all schools. Good and improving attendance is rewarded and most pupils respond positively to this. The school takes some effective action with pupils whose attendance is very low, below 80 per cent. However, about a third of pupils attend school less than 90 per cent of the time. The current systems for monitoring attendance are not effective in identifying pupils whose attendance is beginning to fall below 90 per cent. Not all parents work in partnership with the school to ensure the regular attendance of their child. Punctuality to school and lessons is good.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils are taught and learn well** in very well-planned lessons mostly with high expectation and challenge. **The curriculum is sound** and includes a **good range of enrichment opportunities**. Pupils have access to **good advice, support and guidance**. The school has **sound overall procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety**. **Accommodation is unsatisfactory** overall although it includes some good features. **Resources are adequate**.

### Teaching and learning

**Teaching and learning are good overall** and have been positively influenced by the National Strategy for raising standards to include a wide range of well-planned learning activities. Pupils come to lessons prepared to work hard. The school's systems to **assess** pupils' work and progress are generally **good** but not uniformly well applied.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most lessons are planned very well with a wide range of activities to engage pupils' interest.
- The level of teachers' expectation and challenge is very high in most lessons, although not quite as high for gifted and talented pupils.
- Pupils arrive to lessons ready to work hard and they apply themselves with concentration.
- Pupils' skills of independent learning are sound but could be better.
- Pupils' use of speaking for learning, either in pairs or groups or to the class as a whole, is limited in many lessons.
- The use of ICT for teaching and learning is still rather limited.
- The ends of lessons (plenaries) are not generally as effective as they might be.

### Commentary

17. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in the proportion of high quality teaching. In 1998, 15 per cent of teaching was very good or excellent and the figure now is just under a third, with most teaching in this group being very good rather than excellent. The percentage of teaching that is good or better has increased from just over a half to about three-quarters. These figures show the outcome of the school's very successful work to raise the quality of teaching and, with it, pupils' achievements. Improvements in teaching have been very well supported by the National Strategies, by the school's management of the improvement process and because of the staff's willingness to learn and develop their teaching skills.
18. The most striking and positive features of teaching are very good lesson planning, high levels of encouragement and engagement of pupils in many lessons and an insistence on high standards of behaviour. Lesson planning in most cases takes account of the recommendations of the National Strategies in that a three- or four-part lesson structure is used and with the inclusion of a wide range of teaching and learning styles to provide pupils with interesting and engaging learning activities. Although most teachers have received training in the use of ICT, this is still used in a rather limited way across the curriculum. Most teachers have good questioning techniques but, in general, not enough is demanded of pupils in terms of speaking so that pupils' oracy skills are not being promoted and developed as well as their listening, reading and writing skills. Lesson endings are very variable in quality; some include specific activities through which the teacher can gauge very accurately which pupils have learned well and how much. In many lessons, the plenary is rushed and is no more than a reiteration of the learning objectives shared at the lesson start with no real opportunity to explore the extent of pupils' understanding or to point to future learning.
19. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in a few lessons seen during the inspection, mostly in art and music, because pupils' skills were not developed in a systematic way to ensure that learning built upon earlier work and to cover all the required elements of the programme of study. In addition, the task set did not match pupils' needs and capabilities.
20. Any variability in the quality of teaching and learning is linked to the work of particular subjects rather than to differences in pupils' ages or year groups. Teaching and learning enable most pupils to achieve well; pupils with SEN achieve as well as their peers but pupils who are gifted and talented are not always provided with sufficiently challenging tasks and achieve soundly rather than well as a whole. Teaching is very good in English and science and good in most other subjects but unsatisfactory in art and music.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (2%)	30 (28%)	49 (46%)	19 (18%)	5 (5%)	2 (2%)	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.*

21. Excellent teaching was seen in a Year 8 drama lesson, as part of the English curriculum, in which pupils built up a tableau with a focus on facial expression and in a Year 11 lesson on study skills. In both lessons, the teachers' own passion for learning and sharing the delight of it was infectious and inspired pupils to think and reflect deeply and to articulate their thoughts in words or facial expressions in very moving ways.
22. Pupils learn well because they have positive attitudes and work hard. They come to most lessons well-equipped and ready to learn. When encouraged to do so, they pose their own questions and conduct research. In the main, however, pupils undertake tasks dutifully and rely on teachers to determine the line of enquiry. Pupils' independent learning skills are reasonable and they are able to make use of computers if required. The school library is an inadequate resource and does not contribute greatly to developing pupils' independent learning skills.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are included well in lessons. The most skilled teachers provide activities that meet their needs by building on pupils' prior learning through interesting activities that enable them to acquire new skills and understanding in a planned and progressive way. Teachers are well supported in their work by teaching assistants who make an important contribution to promoting learning. However, the school employs far too few teacher assistants for all pupils who need support to receive it at the appropriate time.
24. Assessment of pupils' work is mostly good. Marking is helpful and, in most cases, gives pupils a reasonable understanding of how well they have done. Teachers' written comments and also their verbal comments in class are good and, in the main, pupils know what needs to be done to improve. Target setting is generally good but inconsistent across the curriculum. Assessment and target setting are particularly effective in promoting pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science. They are inadequate in art and music.

### The curriculum

With some weaknesses, **the curriculum is satisfactory** and is enhanced by **good extra-curricular opportunities**. Staffing levels and expertise are good. Accommodation and resources have some positive features but are unsatisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good.
- The curricula in English and physical education (PE) are very good but in art and music they are unsatisfactory and linked to weaknesses in leadership and management of these two areas.
- The ICT curriculum covers elements like data-logging and control systems in only a very limited way and the use of ICT across the curriculum is not well coordinated.
- The school prepares pupils well for their next stages in education.
- Enrichment and support activities are well planned to add much diversity to the curriculum.
- Poor accommodation in some areas has adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Insufficient time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Insufficient use is made of tutor time, especially in relation to monitoring pupils' academic progress.
- Arrangements for citizenship do not yet result in accurate evaluation of pupils' achievements.
- The school's status as a Sports College is beginning to have a positive impact on successful curriculum development in several subject areas.
- The individual education plans for pupils with SEN are far too general and cannot be used to evaluate progress.

### Commentary

25. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education is covered in Years 7 to 9 but too little time is allocated to covering its contents in Years 10 and 11 and hence requirements for religious education are not met for this latter stage. The school does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship although the good quality assemblies do include an act of worship.
26. There is a satisfactory range of academic courses that generally meets pupils' needs and prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. The curriculum has strengths in English and in physical education because the range of activities in each is very good. There are curriculum shortcomings in art and music and to a lesser extent in ICT, because some aspects of work are barely adequately covered. French and German are offered as modern foreign languages. Pupils can opt for Business Studies at GCSE but there are no other vocational courses. All pupils receive careers education and work experience is organised for pupils in Year 11. A very good personal, social and health education programme is provided. The few pupils with English as an additional language receive some support from the nearby college. Citizenship is taught thematically through subject departments. Arrangements for recording and evaluating pupils' overall progress are sound but have yet to be fully implemented.
27. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils at the stage of School Action receive additional support lessons to develop their literacy skills and are encouraged to attend morning shared reading sessions and the lunchtime spelling club. The contents of these pupils' IEPs are not useful because the targets are too vague. It is not possible to establish clearly from them how each subject is to provide the right tasks so that pupils' progress is assured. Nevertheless, even without clearly written IEPs, pupils with SEN are generally receiving appropriate provision.
28. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is variable and broadly sound. Subject departments identify gifted and talented pupils and are responsible for providing suitable enrichment or extension work. This is well done in mathematics, German, geography and science, but less well in other subjects. The school coordinator for gifted and talented pupils monitors the progress and organises some good activities for them.
29. Opportunities for enrichment are good. The successful bid for Sports College status has led to substantial development of the curriculum in some areas, particularly in the extension of enrichment and support activities for all pupils, with some particular emphasis on the curriculum for lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. A good range of clubs and activities support pupils' learning. There is a good programme of visits, outdoor pursuits and trips abroad. The curricula in art and music have not developed as much as in other subjects. The school has plans to introduce a performing arts course with a view to improving the overall quality of provision in these areas.
30. The organisation of the PSHE curriculum is excellent. A very good comprehensive programme is taught to each year by teams of teachers, each one an expert in his or her topic. Study skills are taught. Good use is made of visiting speakers, including representatives from ethnic minorities. The sex education programme covers several years so pupils encounter ideas appropriate to their maturity. The PHSE programme makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
31. Links with other sports colleges in Sefton and Oldham as part of the '*Carpe Vitam*' project are being used to develop the curriculum. The research project involves Year 8 pupils who aim to identify effective learning styles and present their findings to governors.
32. Time is generally used well across the curriculum. The time allocated for tutor periods, however, is not used well in most cases. Tutors are not sufficiently well guided in how the school expects this time to be used. Some tutors state that it is for monitoring pupils' academic progress and others that it is mainly for social purposes. Too often, the valuable first 20 minutes of the day are not used purposefully and are spent, perfectly cordially, with pupils chatting amongst themselves. Some tutors monitor pupils' homework diaries but this is not done consistently well across the school. The school should review and improve the use of this time.
33. There is generally a good match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum. There is a good balance between experienced and more recently qualified teachers. Staffing is strong in English and science. The special educational needs department does not have enough teachers or teaching assistants. The school has been successful in developing teachers' skills in the use of ICT but the impact of this training is still

too limited.

34. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are very good in English and good in mathematics, science and geography. The school has fewer computers than expected nationally for its size and many subjects make only little use of ICT.
35. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Accommodation in the English block and for food technology is very good and contributes to the positive ethos in these areas. Modern foreign languages, history and geography have satisfactory accommodation in spacious rooms with adequate storage space. Elsewhere, accommodation is unsatisfactory, mainly because teaching spaces are small or inappropriate and adversely affect the quality of learning in drama and science, for example. Deficiencies in the teaching areas for art and ICT were identified in the last inspection but have not been addressed effectively. The art room is inadequate; it is too small, is poorly lit and lacks storage space. The ICT suite is too small and ventilation is poor. Facilities for physical education are satisfactory but currently are not of sufficient quality to match the aspirations of sports college work. Accommodation for the special educational needs coordinator to work with pupils is too small to permit role-play, pair work or group discussions. This limits pupils' opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem and has an adverse effect on their personal development. Places for pupils to eat or to meet socially are poor. Classrooms are used as additional dining areas with associated problems of hygiene, litter and supervision.
36. The library is inadequate. It is poorly sited on the third floor. It is small, unwelcoming and inadequately furnished to support learning. Access to ICT and the Internet in the library is inadequate. Recent improvements to the stock of books will go part of the way to address shortcomings. The school has plans for a Learning and Resource Centre which are in their early stages and which are exciting and place the proposed centre at the heart of the school.

### Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is **satisfactory**. The support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, pupils receive is **good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Heads of houses are strongly committed to developing a high quality pastoral provision for individual pupils.
- Good additional academic support is provided for underachieving Year 11 pupils.
- The school frequently seeks pupils' views on many aspects of its work and development.
- Pupils with SEN do not have well defined individual education plans (IEPs).
- Good careers guidance helps pupils make informed choices for their next stages in education.
- All subjects do not systematically and rigorously monitor pupils for underachievement and set targets for improvement.
- The use of tutor time is variable and too often it is wasted.

### Commentary

37. Since the previous inspection the pastoral system has been restructured; the school has recently changed from a year system to a house system. Heads of house have a strong commitment to developing high quality pastoral support for pupils. They have set in place good foundations on which to build and have a good understanding of what still needs to be done to support pupils in raising their levels of achievement in all subjects.
38. The responsibility for monitoring the academic progress of pupils and, in particular, to identify underachievement, lies with subject leaders and teachers. The quality of this monitoring and target setting for improvement, varies between subjects and is generally good. Very good practice is evident, for example, in science, mathematics and English and the high standards that pupils achieve in these subjects is due in part to this. Practice elsewhere varies and is particularly weak in art and music. Additional lunchtime sessions are offered to pupils in Year 11 who are underachieving to help them raise their level of performance in GCSE examinations.
39. Tutors stay with their group throughout their time in school. They are able to build strong and supportive relationships with the pupils and their families. Use of the morning tutorial is variable. Where good practice

exists, a range of activities prepares pupils well for their studies and provides support. In many morning tutorials, however, pupils chat to their friends and the time is not used profitably.

40. Pupils experiencing difficulties in school are well supported by the Learning Mentor. Pupils interviewed were confident that they would be able to ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal.
41. The induction arrangements for pupils entering the school in Year 7 are satisfactory. There are many opportunities for primary pupils to visit the school and they benefit from two induction days in the summer term before they transfer. Pupils new to the school are carefully supported. Information about pupils' attainments on entry to the school is good for the core subjects but limited in other subjects and aspects.
42. A good careers guidance programme, much supported by Connexions, prepares pupils well for option choices at the end of Years 9 and 11. All pupils in Year 10 benefit from four days of taster lessons at the local college of further education.
43. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are satisfactory. Child protection procedures are in place and meet requirements. Welfare and first aid arrangements ensure that pupils' are well cared for. A recent health and safety audit by the local council identified issues that have not yet been fully dealt with by the school.
44. The school is working hard to involve pupils more in its daily life and to provide an effective forum for their views to be expressed. This aspect of the school's work is very good. Under the various self-evaluation initiatives undertaken by the school, pupils' views have been sought and acted upon. An increasing consultation role is developing for the school council and other groups of pupils. The school council is becoming more proactive and involved in the day-to-day life and running of the school. Representatives to year and school councils are elected by their peers.
45. Annual reviews of pupils' statements of SEN and transition planning in Year 9 are carried out in line with statutory requirements. However, these do not result in objectives being set for the forthcoming year and therefore these pupils' progress cannot be evaluated against specific targets at the following review. Consequently there is no structured and coherent long-term approach to meeting these pupils' needs through the production of increasingly challenging targets that build on pupils' academic and personal development. The school's individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with SEN fail to remedy this shortcoming in the lack of annual targets as they have many deficiencies. In particular, the targets set in one plan may have no links whatsoever with those set in the previous or subsequent plan. Therefore, there is no continuous and systematic approach to addressing pupils' needs through IEPs that links together over time. An inherent problem with the IEPs is that they fail to contain small and specific targets against which pupil progress can be judged easily. In the worst instances, the targets are so imprecise that the IEPs would seem to suggest that pupils have failed to make any progress as the targets have remained unchanged for two years. This simply demonstrates the poor quality targets rather than the pupils' lack of progress.

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

The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is **good**. The quality of the school's links with the community is **good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good links exist with other schools through the Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG), Excellence in Cities initiatives and the 'Carpe Vitam' international project.
- Good links with local industry have supported the school in its Sports College application and enrich the curriculum.
- Curriculum bridging links are not in place to ease the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school.

### **Commentary**

46. The school's partnership with its parents is good. A recent survey carried out by the school showed that the school is well regarded by its parents and this was borne out during the inspection. There is a commitment by the school to continue to improve its links with parents. School Association membership has increased in the last year. Annual consultation meetings are held for all parents to discuss the progress of their child. Annual reports to parents are clear and most give them a good understanding of what their child has studied and how they are achieving. Not all set targets to help pupils improve their work. If problems occur, parents attend meetings with school staff to look at ways forward and to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Workshops run by staff under the parent/school partnership programme help parents to share in their child's learning.
47. The quality of the school's links with the community is good. The school benefits from effective links with local business and industry. These provide a source of sponsorship and placements that give pupils' experience of the world of work. Members of the community support the school well in its personal, social and health education course by providing specialist speakers on a range of topics. The Central Community Group, an organisation that is instrumental in promoting good inter-racial community relations, recently organised a black history week and sports and arts festival in which pupils took part. There is increasing use of the sports facilities by the local community and there are plans under the specialist sports college brief to develop this area further.
48. There is a very good partnership with other schools and colleges. There are close, consultative, working relationships with primary schools. The mechanisms for the transfer of pupils into school are good but there are no curriculum bridging units in place that support the continuity and progression in their learning. Physical education staff are working with primary teachers to develop their skills and schemes of work. Pupils from Year 6 attend for weekly shared reading sessions with Year 7 pupils. Through the LIG initiative, Excellence in Cities scheme and 'Carpe Vitam' project, partnerships with other secondary schools have developed which aim to benefit pupils. Pupils from a local special school are sharing dance and drama lessons with Year 10 pupils. The school is very responsive to requests from both primary and special schools to share their facilities with them. A long-standing partnership exists with the local further education college and the majority of pupils transfer there for post-16 education. A four-day taster course in Year 10 prepares pupils well for transition. Under the 'Aim Higher' initiative, pupils attend summer schools at universities and other events and they are encouraged to consider entering higher education to extend their choice of career.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher's leadership is good. The senior leadership team provides the school with a clear sense of direction with a strong focus on teaching, learning and achievement. Management is **good**. Governance is **good** overall.

Statutory requirements are not met for the provision of a daily act of corporate worship. Too little time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher presents a clear vision for the school's future and constantly strives to achieve the highest possible standards in the school.
- Governors play a decisive role in supporting the headteacher in shaping the direction of the school.
- Most staff are keen to improve the school and their own skills for the benefit of pupils.
- Many high quality self-evaluation processes have been adopted by the school.
- Sports College status has enriched and benefited the whole school.
- Some links between different levels of management are not sufficiently clear for lines of accountability to be clearly established.
- Some development plans lack information about how and when their objectives are to be achieved.
- Although the school has improved well since the last inspection, some areas of work, most notably in art and music and also in ICT, show unsatisfactory improvement because identified shortcomings have not been rectified speedily.

## Commentary

49. The school's standing in the community has risen as have the standards pupils achieve in external tests and examinations. This is largely due to the high quality self-evaluation processes adopted by the school.

The senior leadership team works hard to implement the outcomes of the self-review processes that take account of the views of teachers, pupils and parents.

50. The headteacher's vision for the school has led it through a change of culture and involved it in many new initiatives. These include obtaining specialist status in sports and involvement in Excellent in Cities and Leadership Incentive Grant programmes and the 'Carpe Vitam' international research project looking at leadership and learning in secondary schools. With staff and governors, the headteacher has also led the school through a period of uncertainty in recent years while the local education authority considered a school reorganization in Crewe. Morale is now high amongst the school community, understandably so and this is mainly due to the pupils' good overall achievements, both personal and academic.
51. Governors are active in supporting the school and bring much management expertise and community knowledge to support its developments. All are well aware of the schools' strengths and weaknesses and share the vision for continual improvement. However, governors need to ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and that sufficient time is allocated for religious education in Years 10 and 11. They also need to ensure that identified weaknesses are rectified as fast as possible.
52. The senior leadership team of the school has been restructured and extended. Senior staff are responsible for various aspects of the school such as curriculum, assessment and teaching and learning. Links between senior managers and subject areas are in relation to specific tasks or projects. Though this has been a successful approach in some respects it has led to a lack of clarity in lines of accountability in ensuring that all the school's identified objectives for improvement are consistently met and that all subject areas are regularly and routinely reviewed in relation to their overall improvement. Quite a few minor issues from the previous inspection have not been thoroughly dealt with and, in the case of art, music and ICT, improvements since the last inspection have been unsatisfactory. There is a comprehensive and well-established system for performance management which is generally effective in supporting staff to develop professionally in order to achieve the school's aims and targets.
53. The move from heads of year to heads of house as part of the restructuring process, has represented a change of culture within the school. Staff are now becoming accustomed to the new regime and early signs are that it is successful although not all roles and responsibilities have been fully developed, for example, in relation to monitoring attendance and pupils' achievements across the curriculum. Whilst evaluation processes are very good overall, not all staff, in their roles as subject teachers or as members of a house team, make as good use of assessment information as they might to promote pupils' progress.
54. Development plans are coherent in their aims and embrace many strategies for further improvement. Some are very specific and of a high quality reflecting identified priorities for development. Others lack considerable detail about how and when objectives are to be achieved and hence some staff are not entirely clear about the part they have to play in some initiatives and in what timescales.
55. Improving teaching and learning is the central objective of continuing professional development in the school. Staff are very willing to learn and develop their skills. The school uses several strategies to achieve this and action research through the 'Carpe Vitam' project is the most recent development. A great deal of development work, very well led by senior managers, is done within the school. The National Strategies have been embraced and promoted extremely well. This has led to considerable improvement in pupils' achievement particularly in English, mathematics and science where teaching is often very good. The school has worked well to improve staff skills in the use of ICT, but this work is not yet having as big an impact as it might because access to resources is still limited.
56. The school's special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator is responsible for overseeing the school's SEN provision. She is enthusiastic and up-to-date with current thinking. Leadership of SEN is sound and management is good. There have been improvements in some areas, such as the production of a development plan, although this lacks sharpness and a sufficiently tight focus on the real priorities. The management of the various forms of support for SEN pupils is good but the management of pupils' individual education plans has some shortcomings because it is not currently straightforward to see how the different subjects of the curriculum are contributing to pupils' overall SEN targets.
57. Financial management is good. The headteacher and governors ensure that spending is geared

appropriately to the strategic plans they have for the school and that best value principles are applied. School finances are closely checked and middle managers required to account for the effectiveness of their spending.

58. Funding from local Improvement grants, from the sports college status and from the Excellence in Cities initiative is well used to support the curriculum with a positive effect on standards.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	<b>2,050,935</b> [1,718,924]	Balance from previous year	<b>30,870</b>
Total expenditure	<b>2,074,206</b> [1,742,195]	Balance carried forward to the next	<b>7,600</b>
Expenditure per pupil	<b>3,078</b> [2,588]		

The above table gives, in bold, the total income and expenditure figures, including those relating to specific grants. The figures in square brackets are those for the LEA delegated budget, not including specific grants.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Boys' results in English literature GCSE examinations have improved very well.
- Marking of pupils' work in all years is very good and helps pupils understand how to do better.
- The curriculum is very good.
- Standards in drama lessons are generally below average in Years 7 to 9.
- The subject makes very little use of ICT.

#### Commentary

59. In 2003, results in national tests in English at the end of Year 9 were in line with those for all schools and above those for schools with similar pupils. Results have fluctuated but, taking the last three years together, they have been well above national levels. There is some underachievement, particularly among more able girls, which means that the proportion gaining higher levels in 2003 was below that in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. Although girls' results generally are higher than those of boys, boys are ahead of boys nationally.
60. In 2003, GCSE English language results were above the national figure for the percentage gaining grades A\*-C. This was a substantial improvement on the results for 2002 and was mainly the result of much better performance by boys whose attainment, while still below that of girls, had improved to be better than standards achieved by boys nationally. English literature results improved significantly from being well below the national level in 2002 to being just above it in 2003. Standards achieved by girls were higher but the biggest increase was the doubling of the proportion of boys gaining the higher grades. GCSE results achieved in 2002 and 2003 show that pupils made progress as could be expected given the standards those pupils had achieved two years earlier.
61. Standards in English on entry into Year 7 are below national averages. Standards in Year 9, seen during the inspection, in lessons and in scrutiny of pupils' work, were average and indicate that pupils make good progress overall. Results show that pupils achieve very well over their first three years because very good teaching is well focused on developing the skills that they need. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Evaluation of pupils' achievement indicates that the middle and lower attaining pupils make the best progress in Years 7 to 9. This trend continues in Years 10 and 11, where standards are above average overall. Pupils make good progress but the proportion gaining the highest grades at GCSE is lower than the national average. Very good teaching, which is skillfully focused on the skills pupils need, helps them to succeed in coursework assignments and examinations. The difference between boys' and girls' achievement has been successfully addressed in recent years because the department accurately analyses achievement by gender, by ethnic background and by prior attainment.
62. Pupils' oral skills do not develop as well as their reading and writing skills. Pupils respond with short answers and are reticent to develop answers further. It is more a reluctance and a lack of confidence than a lack of capability, but it is affecting achievement in activities that require textual explanation, presentations or dramatisations. Some groups in drama activities were reluctant to perform.
63. Very good teaching is a strength of the department. In two thirds of lessons seen teaching and learning were very good. Teachers manage pupils well and they respond positively and do their best. A very good quality of the teaching is the engagement of pupils and good use of praise to promote pupils' belief in themselves. Teachers have very good command of their subject and use a very good range of teaching skills in lessons, which are brisk and challenging. Tasks are very well planned to develop a range of speaking and listening and reading and writing skills to meet the needs of pupils. The aims of the lessons are clearly set out so that pupils know what they have to do and the best lessons include evaluation at the

end which encourages pupils to measure their own gains in knowledge and understanding. The quality of the assessment used to guide pupils is consistently very good across the department so that pupils understand clearly the progress they have made and what they need to do to improve.

64. Drama is taught by English teachers as part of English in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching and learning in drama is more variable than in English. In the drama lessons seen, teaching ranged from outstanding to unsatisfactory, depending on the skills and training of the teachers. There is enough good teaching skill within the department to raise the standards of drama teaching by working together to share good practice and develop common approaches.
65. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader's vision for the subject is shared and supported by the senior management. Plans to develop the subject are in accord with the school development plan. The syllabus and schemes of work are very good because the National Strategies have been well used to develop teaching and learning styles. The management of the subject is good as procedures are clear and there is good teamwork. Teachers are well qualified and are well deployed. Teaching is monitored and standards are reviewed. Accommodation and resources are very good in the new block although there are not enough classrooms. The room used for drama is poor. It doubles as a classroom and is not equipped for drama. The size and the very poor acoustics have a negative impact on the quality of the teaching and learning.
66. Overall the subject has made very good progress since the last inspection. There has been a successful drive to raise standards at GCSE and to develop teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum has developed well and there is a consistent approach across the department.

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

67. On entry pupils' literacy skills are below average for their age. As pupils move through the school, they develop good skills in English and literacy and use them well in most lessons across the curriculum because most teachers understand how to promote them. The school employs a good range of strategies to support literacy development. Progress units, booster classes and paired reading help lower attaining pupils make good progress. Sentence completion exercises are used in science to help low attaining pupils.
68. Teachers generally use questions well, although many pupils are happiest responding with short answers and are unenthusiastic about developing their responses. In mathematics, pupils are used to giving a verbal explanation of their answers, but in some other subjects, pupils are not encouraged enough to discuss issues. Groups in some drama classes were reluctant to perform.
69. Reading skills are developed well in many subjects. By Year 9, pupils read well from a variety of texts with good understanding of character and situation. In history, they learn to distinguish between objective and biased accounts of events. Work on media studies topics teaches pupils to evaluate persuasive language and the effectiveness of advertising. Older pupils make subtle judgements about the moral implications of what they read. In subjects like history, geography and English pupils learn essential skills in reading questions precisely so that they do justice to their knowledge with relevant answers.
70. Writing skills are taught systematically in many subjects. Key words are introduced in context and pupils practise using technical terms with confidence. Essays are modelled by teachers and pupils learn from good examples of writing. Subjects like history use creative writing as a means of stimulating pupils to speculate or hypothesise. Opportunities for making notes in sketchbooks, however, are not taken in art. In design and technology pupils write evaluations of both the process and the product.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in German are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and create a positive atmosphere for learning in lessons.
- There is a lack of challenge in some French lessons, particularly for the most able.

- Marking is not being used consistently well to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

## Commentary

71. Standards in modern foreign languages are improving now that the department has a renewed vision and clarity of purpose for further development. The shortcomings in provision in the past are still evident in the below average standards in French in Years 10 and 11.
72. Results in GCSE in 2003 show the proportion of candidates who achieved A\*-C grades in German was well above the national average but in French was well below the national average. In German, boys and girls performed equally well but in French, girls performed better than boys, as occurs nationally. Assessments in modern foreign languages at the end of Year 9 show that attainment in 2003 was well below the national average.
73. Current standards of work of pupils in Year 9 in German are above average. The majority of pupils are able to communicate confidently using the language well for specific coursework tasks. Pupils develop their listening skills well and carry out promptly their teachers' instructions in German. Pupils have a good range of essential vocabulary and grammar, many using past and future tenses confidently and accurately in their speech and writing. The standards of work of pupils in Year 9 in French are average. Pupils' understanding of vocabulary used in topics and on tasks set by the teacher is good. Pupils answer set questions accurately. However, pupils, particularly abler pupils, do not develop conversation enough. Most able pupils write accurately but there is little evidence of extended writing tasks for these pupils in French. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are making appropriate progress in all four language skills.
74. Standards in German in Year 11 are above average. Most pupils express their ideas fully using well an increasing range of vocabulary, grammatical expressions and tenses in both speaking and writing. In French, standards are below average. Some higher attaining pupils demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary and a sound understanding of grammar but some are insecure in their knowledge, understanding and use of tenses. Higher attaining pupils speak well in situations controlled by the teacher but are not so confident when asked questions of a general nature based on previous learning. Part of the reason for underachievement amongst higher attainers is that all pupils are doing the same task with a consequent lack of challenge for the most able in some classes. Lower attaining pupils in both languages are developing well the basic structures needed for the Foundation Level of the GCSE examination.
75. In German, boys and girls of all capabilities in both key stages achieve well because they are well taught and bring good attitudes to their work. In French, the achievement of higher attaining pupils in both key stages is inhibited by lack of challenge in some lessons. Lower attaining pupils achieve well as a result of well-planned lessons with measurable and appropriately challenging targets.
76. Teaching is good overall. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Pupils' efforts are valued and respected. Consequently, pupils respond by trying hard in lessons, participate fully and generally achieve well. Teachers plan effectively, make good use of resources to make lessons interesting and use a good variety of teaching styles that engage and sustain pupils' attention. The marking of pupils' work is regular, with some good examples of positive comments by teachers to help pupils improve their written standards; this practice is inconsistent across the department.
77. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has identified areas for improvement and is managing the implementation of a shared vision centred on the raising of standards. The department meets the requirements of performance management and there is a sharing of ideas on good practice in teaching and learning but more opportunities should be taken mutually to observe those ideas in the classroom. The department follows school requirements for monitoring pupil achievement but pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to raise their standards. Assessment is improving systematically and steadily but there needs to be more detailed analysis of assessments and subsequent planning to address shortcomings in pupils' performance. Improvement since the last inspection has been good: the quality of teaching is now consistently good throughout the department; there is now more evidence of evaluation of the department's work; and learning resources are now adequate to support learning fully.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good.
- The subject benefits from enthusiastic and committed leadership and staff who work well together as a team.
- Relationships in lessons are very good and the pupils behave well and work hard.
- Too few pupils achieve the higher grades at GCSE.
- Use of ICT is limited and needs to be developed further to support learning.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

78. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average compared with all schools. When compared to similar schools, results are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving higher than expected levels is also well above the national average when compared to similar schools. Boys and girls perform equally well.
79. GCSE results in 2003 were just above the national average for grades A\*-C and grades A\*-G. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C has risen over the last few years but dipped slightly in 2003, probably due to staffing difficulties which have been resolved. Fewer pupils achieved A\* and A grades than nationally. The girls' results were slightly better than the boys'.
80. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. Standards of work seen in lessons and in the pupils' books throughout the school were above the expected level for many pupils. Most pupils are able to draw accurate graphs and interpret and analyse data. Space and shape work presents a number of the pupils with some difficulty.
81. Achievement by the majority of pupils by the end of Years 9 is very good and by the end of Year 11 it is good. In all years, pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds make sound progress. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in smaller sets and they benefit from this.
82. Teaching is good overall and always at least sound. Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils. In the best lessons, the teachers have high expectations of the pupils, the pace is good and a variety of tasks is included to challenge the pupils. An example of high quality learning was in a Year 9 lesson on the circle in which an investigation helped the pupils understand circle properties and enabled them to use these properties to solve problems. Some very good 'starter' exercises are employed; mini-whiteboards, for example, are used very effectively to test Year 8 pupils' knowledge of the equations of straight lines. The endings of lessons are more variable in quality and do not always consolidate the pupils' learning appropriately. Teachers make effective use of questioning, encouraging pupils to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. Where teaching was less good, the pace was usually too slow.
83. As a result of effective teaching, most pupils acquire knowledge of basic skills and concepts which enable them to work on their own to improve their understanding. Literacy skills are improved by the good displays of key words, the insistence of teachers on the correct use of mathematical language and the good oral work in lessons. Pupils have a positive attitude to mathematics, they behave very well in lessons and relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good.
84. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The acting head of department, who is also a member of the senior management team, has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards and is a good role model. She is well supported by the commitment and hard work of the team of teachers. Together they give a considerable amount of time to enrichment and booster classes, for pupils at all attainment levels, to enable them to develop their mathematical understanding and enjoyment. Sharing good practice is a strong feature of the department. The department is responding very positively to the National Numeracy Strategy and this is raising standards. Assessment procedures are very good, pupils are tested regularly, they are aware of their National Curriculum levels, know what to do to improve and have targets set. Resources are good but accommodation is tight and unsatisfactory for a practical subject. Some good ICT work was seen in a lesson and on display but this needs to be further developed

to enhance the pupils' learning.

85. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The proportion of lessons in which teaching and learning are good or better has improved significantly. Test and examination results at the end of Years 9 and 11 have improved considerably. The staff have worked hard over time to minimise the effects of the past staffing problems on pupils' learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

86. Pupils' numeracy skills are good. The key features of the National Numeracy Strategy have been shared with all staff in the school at a training day and most departments have identified opportunities to extend pupils' mathematical understanding. Further work is now required to ensure that pupils' progress in the use of mathematics across the curriculum is regularly evaluated and teachers' expertise in promoting pupils' skills is further enhanced.
87. Pupils are making good use of their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Graph drawing and analysis and interpretation of data are used well in science, design and technology and geography. Numeracy standards are well above average in science where pupils demonstrated they can do mental calculations competently and use formulae to make accurate calculations. In ICT, there is good use of 'excel' for drawing bar charts and line graphs.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' results in tests and examinations have improved very well since the last inspection.
- Teaching sets high expectations and this leads to very good achievement by pupils.
- Assessment of pupil's progress is very well organised, and target setting and marking are very effective.
- Improvement since the last inspection is very good particularly teaching of investigative skills.
- Sometimes difficulty in managing pupils' behaviour impeded their learning.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology in lessons.

### **Commentary**

88. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated since 2001 but overall they have improved. In 2003 they were about average for both boys and girls compared with all schools but in comparison with similar schools (where pupils had similar starting points), results were well above average.
89. GCSE examinations results in 2003 were well above the national average and well above average when compared to the pupils' performance in the Year 9 tests. Overall, achievement between Years 7 and 11 was very good. However, boys did less a little well than girls in GCSE examinations.
90. Standards of work in lessons are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11. In Year 7, pupils' understanding of forces, for example and their practical skills, are below average. By Year 9, pupils' understanding of science is above average and, in the case of their understanding of solids, liquids and gases, it is well above average. Boys and girls do equally well.
91. Throughout the school achievement in lessons is very good. Pupils learn quickly because teachers' expectations are high and the pace of lessons is good, as happens in Year 10, for example, when the mathematical demand of science lessons is high. In an information and communication technology room, pupils' achievement was limited by lack of space and an uncomfortably high temperature. Sometimes the pace of a lesson is not as fast as possible even though achievement remains good. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are very good; they are taught with sensitivity and the pace of lessons is well matched to their needs. Very careful instruction ensures that they succeed.
92. Both teaching and learning are very good. Teaching sets high expectations and planning is very good. Teachers make very good use of investigation to allow pupils to learn to plan their work. Relationships are very good, pupils are regularly encouraged and given credit for their efforts so that their morale is very good and they are very willing to ask and answer questions. Lesson objectives are clear and teachers explain tasks very well to pupils so they know what to do and they understand why they are doing it. For these

reasons, pupils succeed with practical and other tasks, they cooperate well, both with teachers and other pupils and they are interested in learning. A teacher's inadequate control of pupils' poor behaviour led to unsatisfactory learning in one lesson. Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is well planned and learning of numeracy skills is very good.

93. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is a very good role model. Improvement in teaching methods has been very good and teachers use a range of methods that interest pupils. Records of pupils' marks and grades are very thorough and they are used to evaluate the achievements of boys and girls and of different groups. Targets are produced and they are discussed with pupils. Pupils evaluate their own work and set further targets for themselves. Pupils are well informed about their progress and are provided with good advice about how to improve.
94. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Information and communication technology is used more often but more use of data-loggers is still needed. Teaching of investigative skills is thorough and effective and the achievement of pupils with special educational needs has improved greatly. Science is often made relevant to everyday life. Pupils regularly interpret data and graphs and lesson planning is much improved. Development plans are clearly focused on raising achievement and management is much improved.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high in GCSE business and communication systems.
- Standards are well below average at the end of Year 9.
- Shortcomings in the ICT curriculum restrict pupils' progress in some areas. Pupils do not learn enough about control technology.
- There is too little time on the timetable for teaching ICT.
- Teachers check each pupil's progress in ICT lessons and give them good one-to-one support.
- Pupils are well behaved; they concentrate, work independently, collaborate and ask for help from the teacher when they need it.
- There is not enough whole class interactive teaching of ICT skills.
- The work pupils do in ICT supports their social, moral and cultural development and makes a good contribution to citizenship.

### Commentary

95. Standards of work are well below national expectations by the end of Year 9. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils learn to use word processing and desktop publishing to create newsletters and posters and spreadsheets to produce bar charts and line graphs. Most pupils can search the Internet, but they cannot design or construct a web page. Few pupils can make good use of a database.
96. By the end of Year 11, pupils who choose to study GCSE business and communication systems achieve very high standards in this course, but the standard of work in ICT is only satisfactory. Pupils not taking this course experience ICT in the other subjects they take and attain reasonable standards.
97. Pupils in all years show a good understanding of how to find and develop information but do not understand control technology. More girls than boys achieve high standards by the end of Year 9, but, by the end of Year 11, boys and girls achieve equally well.
98. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. Pupils learn well in lessons because teachers' classroom management is good, teachers have good relationships with pupils and because teachers check each pupil's progress in lessons and provide good one-to-one support. Learning is also good because pupils are well behaved, concentrate, work independently, collaborate and ask for help from the teacher when they need it. The tasks pupils are asked to do in ICT lessons are well planned to help pupils of different abilities learn. Pupils in Year 10 do a series of increasingly difficult tasks using a spreadsheet, for example. Working independently and at their own pace, all pupils cover the basic concepts and more able pupils apply these in a much wider range of contexts. All the tasks pupils do are in real life contexts which support their social, moral and cultural development and make a good contribution to citizenship. Year 7 pupils put

together a report on 'making a home safe for a young child' and use the Internet well to find related information.

99. Good teaching and learning do not, however, lead to high standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 because shortcomings in the ICT curriculum restrict pupils' progress in some areas. Pupils do not learn enough about control, databases and data-logging. The organisation of teaching resources for GCSE business and communication systems is satisfactory, but teaching resources are not as well organised for Years 7 to 9. In Years 8 and 9 and for those pupils in Year 10 who do not choose to study GCSE business and communication systems, there is too little time on the timetable for ICT and pupils are taught ICT for much less than the national average of one hour each week. There is not enough whole-class interactive teaching of ICT skills as modern presentation technology is not always available for teachers to use in ICT lessons.
100. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Pupils' are set targets and their achievement is monitored, although the assessment of pupils' ICT capability does not include the work they do in other subjects. The ICT curriculum is not well coordinated across subjects, nor within ICT, because of the curriculum gaps. The department does not have a thorough overview of the ICT curriculum that will be taught in ICT lessons and in other subjects throughout the curriculum. This makes it difficult to ensure that teaching covers all areas of the subject. Standards at the end of Year 9 have not improved. The school has worked effectively to increase staff skills in ICT but this endeavour has not yet had a positive impact on the overall quality of provision and on pupils' standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

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

101. Pupils have satisfactory skills in using ICT across the curriculum. Many teachers are trained to use ICT to support teaching and learning and pupils are able to use the Internet, word-processing and spreadsheets to help their learning.
102. The level of ICT resources and access to them, has improved and is only slightly below the national average. The use of ICT across the curriculum has increased although the level of use is still low. Class sets of mobile computers are available and these are well used in geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, PE and science, but do not yet fully meet the needs of design and technology, geography, PE and religious education. Pupils use ICT to develop their understanding of modeling in mathematics and data logging in science, and use the Internet for research in art, geography, modern foreign languages and science. The PE department is developing the use of ICT to analyse and improve performance in sports. There are ICT resources in English and history and for CAD/CAM in design and technology but the limited quantity restricts use. The music department has several computers and modern music software but these are not often used.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and most pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Good well-organised teaching is producing good learning.
- Information and communication technology is well used in Years 9, 10 and 11 but could be used more effectively in Years 7 and 8.
- Teaching methods are generally good but do not make full use of the recommendations in the National Strategies to provide a wide range approaches, especially for those pupils with special educational needs.

## **Commentary**

103. Pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 9 where the work of most is detailed and impressive and represents good achievement. Pupils have acquired good map skills and their written work shows a good understanding of how physical and human processes shape the landscape. Higher attaining pupils make good use of case studies to explain environmental issues and can empathise with the victims of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
104. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were close to the national average and have shown a steady improvement over time. Girls do better than boys, especially in obtaining the higher grades, but the difference is not great.
105. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. By Year 11, most pupils can apply a good range of skills to their GCSE coursework. Most pupils write well and can link cause and effect in some detail. Pupils with special educational needs produce creditable graph and map work and their written answers, though brief, are correct.
106. Pupils are taught and learn well. They benefit from teachers who are well prepared and have good subject knowledge, evident not only in the way they teach the full class but also in the explanations that they give to individual pupils. Considerable thought has gone into the scheme of work to produce lessons that are stimulating and relevant to the pupils. For example, an introductory lesson on Japan allowed pupils to build on their existing knowledge of the country by using Internet links to research other key facts. Information and communication technology is well used in Years 9, 10 and 11 but could be used more effectively in Years 7 and 8. Teaching is helped by the fact that pupils work hard, want to learn and by behaviour that is very good. Teachers know their pupils well and provide resources that match the needs of the majority, including the highest attainers. Pupils with special educational needs, however, would benefit from an approach that makes more use of the literacy strategy to promote their learning: classroom display of key words, teaching strategies that incorporate pupil explanations of words and terms, the use of a subject specific pupil dictionary and a literacy corner in each classroom are all strategies that are not yet being fully exploited. Teachers use homework regularly and to good effect. Marking is helpful and supportive and contributes to good assessment of pupils' work.
107. The department is well led and managed and the head of department has a clear vision of what is needed to continue the development of the subject in school. Collaborative planning is evident although subject specific team meetings are relatively infrequent and this limits the extent to which good practice can be shared.
108. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The main issues for improvement raised at the time have been systematically and successfully addressed. Opportunities for independent learning are provided through a series of investigative research studies throughout Years 7 to 9 and coursework in Years 10 and 11. However the limitations of the school library have an adverse effect on the opportunities for school based research. Teaching has improved and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching strategies are varied and lesson time well managed. Teachers are using National Curriculum levels to track pupils' progress and marking is supportive and focused on ways pupils can improve. Teachers in the department have used further training, when appropriate, to develop their own skills and knowledge.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching results in good learning throughout Years 7 to 11.
- The history department is well led and managed.
- History makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social, cultural and citizenship education.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to use ICT in history lessons.

## Commentary

109. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement since pupils enter the school with below average standards. Pupils have a secure knowledge of timelines. They demonstrate good recall of topics studied and begin to see how events can impact on peoples' lives, as in their work on the rise of Hitler.
110. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average, representing good achievement. Pupils demonstrate confident analytical skills when investigating sources such as political cartoons relating to Roosevelt.
111. Throughout Years 7 to 11 pupils develop good writing skills in a wide variety of formats, such as diary entries, letters, newspaper articles and essays. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with SEN achieve in line with others. Pupils identified as gifted in history also do well.
112. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils make good progress because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons very effectively to provide enthusiastic and briskly paced teaching that engages them. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils with incisive questioning and an imaginative and progressive range of activities in each lesson. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their written literacy in history, but occasions are sometimes missed to develop their oracy. Regular homework builds effectively on class work and is well marked. Assessment is rigorous and provides pupils with a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Learning support assistants are well briefed by class teachers and provide good support to individual pupils. In a few lessons, teachers are overly dominant which can impede pupils' development as independent learners.
113. The quality of leadership and management is good. There is a clear vision for the subject centred on promoting high standards of achievement. Teachers set very good examples to pupils in their conduct and professionalism. Development plans are well conceived and include strategies to address the current limited use made of ICT in lessons. Schemes of work have been carefully updated to address recent national initiatives. History makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Its focus on tolerance for racial, social and religious groups significantly contributes to pupils' citizenship education. Field trips are well used to support learning.
114. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Good standards have been maintained and improvements made in developing pupils' literacy and in the quality of subject leadership.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11 because too little time is allocated to cover the Cheshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
- The good teaching and learning leads to good achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Teachers have very high expectations for all pupils.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and relationships are harmonious.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural and citizenship development.
- Assessment is not yet fully integrated into all units of study.

## Commentary

115. Standards by Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Agreed syllabus. There is insufficient evidence to form a judgement on standards at Year 11.
116. Achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as the work and style of learning are matched to their capabilities. Assessment is developing and is becoming integrated into units of work. Marking is thorough and helpful and informs pupils of how they can improve their work. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning and behave very well and this creates a culture for learning and a climate for success. They respect the views of others. Year 9 pupils identify clearly, for example, factors they feel make for a successful marriage and compare them to the characteristics of love in the Bible.
117. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan and prepare their lessons thoroughly. They have very high expectations of all pupils' work and behaviour. Lessons have clear objectives, that teachers share with the class and active learning that allows pupils to test ideas in a trusting and secure environment. Attention to presentation and using correct specialist vocabulary is a feature of all lessons. Homework is regularly set and reinforces and extends classroom learning. Information and communication technology is developing slowly and is helping pupils to show their understanding of religious ideas.
118. Leadership is good. It provides a clear direction for the subject. Management is good. Teachers are supported well with a full scheme of work and help with lesson planning. The department members, who all have responsibilities elsewhere in the school, work well together and considerable time is spent informally working to ensure a common approach and that standards are monitored and are consistently high.
119. The improvement since the last inspection has been good despite there still being a lack of time in Years 10 and 11 to cover the Agreed Syllabus. The application of knowledge learned, to current situations and issues, has made the course more relevant for pupils. The introduction of aspects of major world religions has increased all pupils' knowledge. The understanding of these faiths has greatly improved the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural and citizenship development. Teaching now involves more active learning and is good. There is a scheme of work covering the Agreed Syllabus in Years 7, 8 and 9. Assessments now inform pupils of how to improve. Resources are now satisfactory. Management has improved and is now good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are above average and particularly high in food technology.
- Teachers' hard work and good classroom management skills lead to pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- ICT is beginning to have an impact on standards of work and its use should be extended further.
- The department's effective policies and practices are not applied or coordinated consistently across all material areas.

#### Commentary

120. Standards in design and technology on entry are low. Pupils have limited appreciation of the principles of designing and their practical skills in using a range of materials are underdeveloped.
121. Results in the statutory teacher assessments in Year 9 have remained similar to or above the national averages since 2001. These results are confirmed in the above average work seen during the inspection

and represent good overall achievement for the pupils in Years 7 to 9. Making skills are well developed through projects and focused tasks, but design skills are less well developed. Pupils are not always guided in a consistent manner, across the different material areas of study, through the stages of designing, in a way that enables them to establish a secure competence in using a range of research, analysis, development and communication techniques. They do not therefore always recognise and use the skills acquired in earlier work when tackling the increasing demands of new and more complex situations. Standards in sketching are weak and this hinders design fluency. High attaining pupils produce work that is above the national average, displaying high degree of skills in making and finishing. Teachers provide good additional support for pupils with special educational needs, ensuring that their performance matches that of other pupils.

122. GCSE results have remained consistently above both the school and national averages at the higher grades A\*-C. Performance in the food technology examination was significantly higher than that found in other subjects. Girls' results overall were higher than boys' and reflect the national trend. During the inspection some examples of particularly good work were seen in all areas to confirm the good achievement in Years 10 and 11. High attainers produce good work that shows detailed research, good design skills and techniques and considers the views of clients. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to limited presentational skills, little development of ideas or incomplete work. The impact of ICT is beginning to show in standards of work, including computer-assisted-designing (CAD) and to a lesser extent computer-assisted-manufacturing (CAM). Good use is made of digital cameras to record not only outcomes but also stages of manufacture.
123. Pupils' achievements are closely related to the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, teaching and learning are good and occasionally very good in Years 10 and 11. Specialist teachers have a secure command of the subject and teach to their strengths. Demonstrations are very good and give confidence to pupils to try to attain high standards. In the most effective lessons, pupils are particularly motivated by enthusiastic teaching. Teachers provide high levels of individual help to pupils and have good skills in managing their classes. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are therefore often very good. Lessons that were satisfactory had some good features, but there was sometimes a lack of precision in explanations, or deadlines for work to be completed were not always made clear.
124. Leadership is good and management is sound. The head of department has vision, is innovative and sets the standards for the quality of teaching and aspirations for pupils' work and achievements. There is a strong team of teaching and support staff who share a common belief that all pupils can succeed. The comparatively new assessment arrangements are effective in tracking pupil progress and ensuring pupils are not only informed of their National Curriculum levels but are also clear as to what and how aspects can be improved.
125. Some group sizes are over 25 and, although no health and safety concerns were noted during the inspection, there are insufficient workstations and pupils are forced to share space and equipment and this slows progress. The commitment of the staff to providing extra-curricular opportunities is highly commendable and has a positive impact on standards. Resources are adequate in the main but are limited for further developments in the use of ICT.
126. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection although some inconsistencies in practice still exist. The head of department should now ensure that the good departmental policies and practices, particularly those relating to developing pupils' design skills, are effectively applied and coordinated across all material areas.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils underachieve in art because of weaknesses in teaching.
- Pupils lack appropriate research skills and their knowledge of artists is weak.
- Weak management of assessment restricts pupils' understanding of how they might improve.
- The art curriculum misses opportunities to enhance pupils' multicultural education.

- Pupils have very limited opportunities to use ICT in art.

### Commentary

127. Standards by Year 9 are average. Whilst many pupils show some competence in practical aspects of art, their use of sketchbooks, knowledge of artists and their evaluative skills are weak. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore unsatisfactory.
128. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in the 2003 GCSE examination was well below average; boys' results were poor. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average, representing unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. Pupils demonstrate poor research skills and their contextual studies are very weak. Pupils have weak evaluative skills and their understanding of the few artists and styles they encounter are insecure. Only a few pupils produce practical work of an appropriate GCSE standard.
129. Throughout Years 7 to 11 boys achieve less well than girls. Pupils with SEN achieve in line with others. Those designated talented in art do not achieve as well as they could.
130. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Whilst teachers provide pupils with a supportive, caring and well-disciplined learning environment, pupils make insufficient progress because expectations are too low. Lesson planning lacks progressive activities to develop pupils' practical skills. When teachers start lessons with practical demonstrations they miss opportunities to fully engage pupils by explaining work clearly, establishing the lesson aim and using focused questions, to ensure all pupils fully understand what is required of them. Teachers accept a slow pace of working and this restricts what pupils' might achieve. No extension work is provided for the more able. Homework is insufficiently used to build on class activities. The majority of pupils have no real understanding of how well they are doing and what they should do to improve because assessment lacks rigour and coherence. Marked work, where found, is of variable quality and lacks substantive comment for pupil improvement.
131. Leadership and management of art are unsatisfactory. The department lacks vision and both school and national initiatives are slow to be assimilated. Development planning identifies appropriate issues but has no clear criteria for success, costings or deadlines. Schemes of work are outdated, lack detailed planning and make scant reference to how art lessons might develop pupils' skills in literacy, citizenship, ICT and their support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment methods are ill-defined, especially for Years 7 to 9. Monitoring of pupils' progress is weak. The curriculum misses opportunities for pupils to study the work of a wide range of artists from different periods and art from other cultures. Pupils are rarely able to use ICT to generate and manipulate art. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, particularly limiting the size of work pupils in Years 10 and 11 might produce. Storage of work is poor and sends a negative message to pupils as to the value of their efforts.
132. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, taking account of the decline in GCSE results and the shortcomings of subject leadership and management.

### Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE pupils support each other and are keen to share their creative compositional ideas and practical skills.
- Target setting, assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are poor.
- Teaching lacks direction, sufficiently challenging objectives and rarely matches pupils' needs.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- The school allocates a considerable sum of money to enhance pupils' instrumental skills.

### Commentary

133. Pupils enter school at various standards and make slow progress. Their knowledge of pitch, rhythm, key elemental musical terms, notation, composition, listening and appreciation are

below expectations by Year 9.

134. GCSE music has not been taught for several years but was reintroduced last year due to pupil interest. Pupils in the present Year 10 GCSE group display at least satisfactory practical skills often on more than one instrument. They have a reasonable knowledge about time-signatures, key-signatures, intervals and scales. Standards are below average, however, because too little attention is paid to developing pupils' skills in composition and appraising music.
135. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not develop their musical vocabulary and are unable to explain fluently and clearly what skills they have acquired in any form of music. Assessment is weak and hence pupils have very little understanding of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
136. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Lesson planning is weak because it does not provide work that is well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. Because tasks set generally lack challenge, pupils become disengaged very quickly. Occasionally, lessons contain suitable activities to challenge lower attaining pupils. Talented pupils are often required to work on dull tasks and at these times display negative attitudes. Teaching does provide some good individual support to pupils but does not ensure that all present are working with interest and concentration. Pupils' subject knowledge and understanding are not being strengthened or developed in a systematic and secure way. Pupils do not spend enough time making music together. The inappropriate use of worksheets often limits pupils' responses, constrains pupils' creativity and fails to provide realistic challenges. There is very little evidence of any work relating to pitch or notation and this omission has certainly restricted compositional work in Years 7 to 9. Too few opportunities to develop singing and aural techniques are provided. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make effective use of departmental instruments and enjoy playing them. Their learning is erratic and unfocused, however, because of the lack of specific short-term learning targets and this has allowed several pupils to focus continuously on the development of practical skills even though one of the main objectives in that module of work was to arrive at a group composition.
137. Accommodation and resources for music are sound. The department has a large number of keyboards. Seven computer workstations have now been installed but these are rarely used. Some classroom percussion instruments are required to improve departmental resources. The school financially subsidises music instrumental lessons to the total sum of £18,000 a year. Parents and pupils appreciate this positive initiative and the valuable contribution that visiting instrumental teachers make to sustain the improvement of the school's wind ensemble, keyboard group, classical guitar group and rock band. The school is also reviewing the provision of brass tuition and preparing to re-establish the school choir.
138. The school is currently without a subject leader in music. Substantial support has been given to the present temporary music teacher who is enthusiastic, displays good subject knowledge, is a good guitarist and who works hard to motivate and inspire pupils. The school intends that the present unsatisfactory position concerning leadership and management in music will be addressed with the introduction of a new post, Head of Performing Arts. Year 10 pupils effectively manage the peripatetic teaching timetable which is overseen by the headteacher. Their mature approach to this task is impressive. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education (PE) is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are confident, have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons very well.
- The development of thinking skills has had a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- Pupils receive a good curriculum, covering a wide range of activities, plus access to many extra-curricular activities which support their personal development very well.

- The facilities and accommodation are barely adequate to support the work of a specialist sports college.
- The overall vision for subject development through Sports College status is clear although not fully articulated in departmental documentation.

### Commentary

139. Standards are average and pupils achieve well overall. Pupils understand how to use equipment safely and how to improve their skills. Pupils with SEN achieve well because they are supported by sensitive teaching. Pupils are confident and well behaved.
140. In Years 7 to 9, standards are currently average overall, with all pupils making good progress from a low base. Although no Year 9 lessons were observed during the inspection, standards and progress in Years 7 and 8, indicate that by the end of Year 9, pupils will reach nationally expected standards.
141. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were broadly average as are current standards in the GCSE classes. The department is making efforts to improve pupils' work on sports theory. At the end of a module of work, pupils are able to engage effectively in self-evaluation activities through which they identify an area for development and then take action to hone their skills.
142. Standards in the core PE lessons (for all pupils in Years 10 and 11) are broadly in line with national expectation for both boys and girls. In one lesson seen, the new activity of lacrosse was being played and pupils worked hard to master the basic skills; the more able boys and girls transferred previous learning about throwing and catching in other games and made good progress. All pupils could take part in the game and keep the ball moving with increasing control.
143. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in some lessons. Teaching has benefited from the work done in the school on developing pupils' thinking skills and this work forms the basis of very effective lesson planning. There are high levels of pupil involvement in the lessons and they are given opportunities to be responsible for their own learning through identification of an area for improvement, to select and refine work for a group dance, for example, or to work with a partner in gymnastics. Pupils are set specific targets in lessons. They benefit from the clear structure and the reflective nature of the plenary in which reiteration of the main teaching points and of the criteria for a good quality performance helps pupils understand how they bring about improvement. Theory lessons observed demonstrate the range of interactive and participatory methods being utilised to make the learning interesting and fun.
144. Leadership is good with a strong strategic steer from the school's Director of Sport who brings great knowledge and experience to the work of the department. Management of the department is secure, with good routine practice. The team works together well and each member is a good role model for the pupils. The addition of a second male teacher, a newly qualified teacher, to the department has strengthened it. Departmental documentation is not as clear and comprehensive as it might be; it is being developed so as to be more closely linked to the Sports College plan. Some good links have been forged with partner primary schools as part of the Sports College programme.
145. Staff give willingly of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular and extension activities through which pupils can improve their skills and master new ones. Participation in sport is very good. Opportunities for personal development are afforded through Junior Sports Leader Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award and residential experiences. Pupils' cultural development is encouraged through activities such as 'Bollywood' dancing in which some Asian pupils teach others.
146. Accommodation is satisfactory, but limited, given the aspirations of this Sports College. The absence of a designated area for the GCSE groups creates difficulties in relation to access to ICT and other teaching resources and to the creation of permanent displays. The college makes the best use of its indoor facilities, but shared use of the smallish sports hall for gymnastics and dance is less than adequate. Improvements to the outdoor courts are now complete providing a good area for games. Accommodation is holding back the development of the community strand of the specialist college work.
147. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards are rising at GCSE and participation rates have risen in sports activities. The school has achieved specialist college status and, although only in the second year, this has had a visible and positive impact on the work and life of the school and on the range of PE activities offered. The school is working towards 'Sportsmark Gold', having achieved the 'Sportsmark'.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in citizenship, though not yet reported on, are above average and pupils' achievement is good.
- There is a rich programme of out of school activities that gives most pupils practical experience of the skills needed to be an active citizen.
- Aspects of citizenship are successfully taught across most subjects in the school.
- The new subject's introduction has been well managed and leadership is very good.
- There needs to be an evaluation of progress and an assessment of staff training needs.
- Assessment procedures are sound but have yet to be fully implemented.

### **Commentary**

148. Standards and achievement in citizenship will be reported on for the first time in summer 2004 when Year 9 pupils are assessed against the nationally set targets. The school plans that each subject teacher will make a separate statement that will in turn allow an overall list of "can do" statements to be compiled for each pupil.
149. By Year 9, many pupils have been given the opportunity to experience practical aspects of citizenship education through an extensive programme of out of school activities. In addition, most subject areas have identified topics that contribute towards the citizenship programme. As a result, most pupils have practical knowledge of the importance of community involvement through the school council, the Junior Sport Leaders' scheme, the Millennium Volunteers, the Young Persons' Task group, the school prefect system, the paired reading programme, the art jig-saw project on Crewe station and many others. They have a strong sense of community and support the school's aims of "valuing ourselves and each other". Their political literacy is good, enhanced by such things as voting for the Cheshire Youth Parliament and regular updates from their own school council members. Their moral and social responsibility is also well developed through the school's regular involvement in charity events and its support for fair world trade. By the end of Year 11, pupils have further developed their awareness of citizenship issues through a weekly enrichment and enhancement programme.
150. Aspects of citizenship are successfully taught across several different subject areas in Years 7 to 11 and good examples of this were seen in science (road safety issues centred on a study of car stopping distances and moral issues based on a study of cloning), in ICT (a lesson on making the home safe for young children) and in geography (factors that influence retail shopping habits but cause the decline of some established shopping centres). The taught element of citizenship as a separate subject was not observed in Years 7 to 9 because of the timing of the inspection.
151. The planning and introduction of citizenship as a new subject to the school has been undertaken very well. The senior teacher in charge has a clear vision of what citizenship is and how it can reinforce the existing aims of the school. Most subjects have committed themselves and put time and effort into planning how best their subject can contribute to the overall programme. A detailed audit of existing provision was completed and allowed an efficient and successful introduction but there now needs to be an equally detailed evaluation of progress over the past year. Staff training requirements also need to be linked to this evaluation.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

*Inspection judgement*

*Grade*

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

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<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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