

INSPECTION REPORT

LOWER LEE SCHOOL

Woolton

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104739

Headteacher: Adrian Larkin

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger
Dates of inspection: 12th-14th January 2004

Inspection number: 258938

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	13-16
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	26
School address:	Beaconsfield Road Woolton Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L25 6EF
Telephone number:	0151 4284071
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Skelton MBE
Date of previous inspection:	27/02/2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lower Lee is a residential and day school for up to 48 boys aged 13-16 from the City of Liverpool and surrounding areas. All pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) recognising the degree and complexity of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). There are 26 pupils on roll and 19 use the residential facility for all or part of each week but not at weekends. Nearly all pupils have been underachieving before their admission and attainment on entry is usually below average. About three quarters of pupils are entitled to free school meals and many come from single parent families; three pupils are in the care of the local authority. Twenty-one pupils are white and five are of mixed race. No pupils have English as an additional language. Following very recent reorganisation within the local education authority, the school no longer provides for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and this has resulted in a significant lowering of numbers on roll in the short term. The school premises are also due for significant redevelopment in the near future.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, modern foreign language, religious education
32261	Peter Hopkins	Lay inspector	
1405	John Morris	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, personal, social, health education/citizenship, physical education
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	English, geography, history, music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught. It is very well led and well managed and governed. It is currently giving satisfactory value for money on account of the fact that, whilst provision is good, the school has vacancies for 20 more pupils than are currently on roll. There is a clear strategy plan to fill these places by September 2004; in the meantime the school is giving satisfactory value for money

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievement is at least good in all the most important subjects.
- Pupils' make good progress in their personal development. Relationships between pupils and staff are very constructive.
- Teaching is good overall; a considerable amount is very good. Assessment of pupils' progress is very good.
- Staff listen carefully to the views of pupils and offer them very good advice and guidance.
- Design and technology is a weak area of the curriculum.
- Specialist accommodation for several subjects and the residential accommodation are unsatisfactory.

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning have improved with the result that pupils are making better progress. Much improved leadership and management has resulted in significant progress being made in addressing weaknesses identified by the last inspection. The accommodation has not improved but there are plans for a redevelopment of the school next year.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Achievement is good. There is no difference in the achievements of any group of pupils other than those who rarely attend. Pupils who have most difficulty in learning how to read and write receive very good support and this helps them to achieve just as well as other pupils. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education and citizenship. It is very good in information and communication technology and religious education but poor in design and technology. Improvements in pupils' progress are best illustrated by the increasing numbers of Year 11 pupils passing GCSE examinations.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. Their moral development is very good and their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils overcome their previously negative attitudes and work hard in lessons. Behaviour in lessons and at break and lunchtimes is good and in the residence it is very good. Most pupils are polite and friendly towards visitors and are good ambassadors for the school. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend well but a small group of pupils rarely come to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good for pupils of all ages. In English, mathematics and science it is good and in information and communication technology and religious education it is very good. Instances of weak teaching were observed in art and design and design and technology. Design and technology is also the subject where the curriculum, accommodation and resources are weakest and pupils have the least opportunity to learn the full range of topics expected of them. Teachers and teaching assistants work particularly effectively together. Most lessons are well planned, with very clear statements of what it is expected that pupils will learn. Teachers are very good at seeing trouble coming and very effectively stop problems from reaching the point where they interfere with learning. In most subjects the marking of pupils' work is accurate and helps them to see how they can improve in future. Teachers often demonstrate a particularly good understanding of the subjects they teach and of the pupils they are teaching. They are very good at checking the progress pupils are making and using the information they gather to plan future work. Outside of lessons, pupils have many opportunities to take part in activities which add interest and experience to their lives. The very good guidance and advice pupils are given helps them to understand how they can succeed and how to make the best choices when planning their futures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher has a clear perception of the school's strengths and quickly acts to bring about improvements when weaknesses are identified. Staff are empowered and strongly encouraged to learn and develop skills to benefit pupils, the school and themselves. There is rigorous assessment of pupils' progress and good monitoring and evaluation of the factors that promote it. Nevertheless, weaknesses in design and technology have not been picked up sufficiently quickly and pupils' achievement in this subject has suffered as a result. Governors have played an important part in improving the school, especially through their relentless and successful efforts to secure new school premises to be built on the site next year.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express great confidence in the leadership and management of the school and feel that good teaching and care is helping their children to make progress academically and in their personal development. Pupils are widely consulted and their views are taken account of. Nearly all feel that the school is helping them and most enjoy attending.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in design and technology.
- Continue to devise ways of minimising the impact of inadequate specialist accommodation whilst awaiting the new school building.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Achievement is at least good in most subjects.
- Pupils with additional learning needs receive good support to help them achieve.
- Increasing numbers of pupils are passing examinations.

Commentary

1. Many pupils arrive with a history of underachievement, usually because their attitudes and behaviour have not been good enough to enable them to benefit from teaching. At Lower Lee these factors are successfully overcome through good teaching in a situation that allows pupils to be taught in small class groups where their individual needs can best be met. The provision of residential care helps many pupils to achieve well by providing support to pupils with unsettled home backgrounds and especially to those pupils in the care of the local authority. This residential care usefully extends the school day, for instance by offering supervised homework and providing pupils with learning and recreational opportunities they would be unlikely to encounter otherwise. There is no group of pupils achieving better or worse than any other. Pupils of different ages are all achieving well and there is no discernible difference between the achievements of pupils of different ethnicity or ability.
2. Achievement in English is good, it is strongest in speaking and listening and reading but slightly weaker in writing, where many pupils remain resistant to writing to any great length. Many other subjects contribute to helping pupils improve their literacy skills, for instance by helping pupils to read, build up their vocabulary or to write for different purposes. In mathematics, pupils achieve well in most areas of the curriculum but have few opportunities for investigating mathematical issues. In science, the strong focus on getting pupils to conduct experiments motivates them and helps them to achieve well. In information and communication technology and religious education achievement is very good. Design and technology is the only subject where achievement is less than satisfactory.
3. Careful assessment of pupils' progress ensures that specific problems are quickly identified and effective support given to individuals. Many pupils are identified as having greater than average difficulties with their reading and these pupils are given extra time with specialist staff to help them overcome their problems. The school based literacy support centre, and additional withdrawal support, have been major factors in boosting individuals' confidence in reading and their motivation to improve. The benefits of this work are spread over many subjects.
4. No year group of pupils has as many as ten pupils in it so the growing numbers of pupils who are achieving their personal targets provides a more reliable indication of achievement than whole school targets. These targets are realistically challenging and there is a close match between teachers' expectations and pupils' achievements. Last year, several pupils comfortably exceeded their targets in statutory tests at the end of Year 9 and in examinations at the end of Year 11. This year's targets show expectations to be higher, usually by up to a grade in external examinations or a level in statutory tests. As a further indicator of improving achievement, increasing numbers of pupils are being entered for more challenging forms of accreditation. This year, nearly all Year 11 pupils are being entered for GCSE examinations in English,

mathematics and science whereas in past years several were entered, instead, for Certificate of Achievement accreditation.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are **good** and their attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are good.
- There are good systems for improving behaviour and attitudes and expectations are high.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is promoted well.
- A small group of pupils resolutely fails to attend.

Commentary

5. Straightforward, clearly stated and comprehensive behaviour guidelines encourage good behaviour and pupils respond well to them throughout the day. Assemblies, and meetings before each break-time, reflect well the warmth and supportive nature of relationships between pupils and staff. There is a strong focus on developing positive behaviour and responses. The results are evident in the courtesy most pupils show to adults, their welcoming and helpfulness to visitors and the interest they show in their lessons. One pupil stated, "My behaviour has improved a lot since I have been here. I have stopped my swearing and my work has really improved. I do more in science and physical education than I ever did in my last school; I now take part". Inspectors saw no harassment or racism and records show that such incidents are very rare. The figures below show that pupils of mixed race have been excluded more often than white pupils but the numbers are very small and care must be taken when interpreting them.

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	21	1	1
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	3	1

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

6. Very good systems for monitoring and recording behaviour are used consistently by staff. Teaching assistants play an essential role in recording pupils' responses during lessons and relate these carefully to pupils' individual targets. Pupils are fully involved in setting these targets, which are closely linked to their individual education and behaviour plans. Rewards and sanctions systems are very effective in developing pupils' awareness of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and encouraging them to take responsibility for their behaviour. One pupil told inspectors, "I've learnt here that I can't get away with being stupid. In my old school we got away with it but here I have learnt that if I don't behave or try I will lose my break." To reinforce pupils' achievements, each Friday a praise assembly is held and a wide range of achievement awards are given, for instance to the pupil of the week in each class.
7. Pupil's moral development, in particular their ability to distinguish right from wrong, is very good and pupils gain the self-confidence to express their views on a wide range of relevant issues. This is very evident within personal, social and health education lessons and during whole

school assemblies. In one such assembly pupils watched a video entitled 'Giving Racism the Red Card and listened carefully to the comments of celebrities and role models such as John Barnes and Ian Wright before being encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas about racial tolerance and understanding. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection when the school's provision for preparing pupils to play their part in a multicultural society was described as 'underdeveloped'. Pupils' spiritual development is good, with assemblies and religious education lessons contributing significantly to helping pupils to make sense of the situation they find themselves in and to realise that there are people in the world much less fortunate than themselves. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop social skills that will stand them in good stead in future. Inspectors were frequently pleasantly surprised to be greeted politely by pupils and to be offered help in finding their way around school. The 'extended day' allows pupils who are not on residential placements to stay in school until 8.00pm and to join in with the many activities provided by staff. This makes an important contribution to improving pupils' moral and social experiences.

8. Most pupils attend well and about one fifth have recorded 100 per cent attendance over the past term. Nearly one half have attendance levels above 90 per-cent. In such a small school the habitual non, or poor, attendance of a small group of pupils distorts figures. Five pupils are identified as having extreme attendance problems, often outside the control of the school. There are very well co-ordinated efforts to encourage all pupils to attend and absence is rigorously followed up and acted upon by the school and outside agencies.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	3.1
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Pupils are well taught and given very good advice and guidance. The curriculum is satisfactory and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to help all pupils to learn.
- Lessons are well planned, with clear statements of what pupils are expected to learn.
- The behaviour management skills of staff are very good.
- Teachers keep a very good track of pupils' progress.

Commentary

9. There is high quality teamwork between staff in most lessons. Teachers are very good at deploying teaching assistants to make best use of their skills. By being attached to specific classes teaching assistants are in a good position to pass on information from previous lessons to help teachers gauge the mood and receptiveness of pupils. A particular strength is

that assistants are helping individual pupils to learn rather than just supporting teachers with behaviour management. Occasionally they participate in lessons as learners, alongside pupils. This sets pupils a good example as they can see adults keen to learn, occasionally facing the same uncertainties as the pupils but having the confidence to ask for help. At other times assistants use their expertise to help individual pupils learn, for instance by offering discreet support so as not to embarrass pupils who are having difficulty in reading. It is not always lower attaining pupils who get attention. Often, teachers use assistants to help groups of higher achieving pupils so that the teacher can give more time and support to those facing particular learning or behavioural difficulties.

10. Nearly all lessons are planned in great detail, with very good attention being paid to pupils individual needs. Most lessons start with a very good introduction that incorporates a quick check of what pupils have remembered from previous lessons and explains to pupils what is expected of them in the current lesson. The main tasks are very well related to needs, closely aligned to clearly stated targets in individual education plans and matched carefully to longer term planning to ensure that pupils are learning systematically and making use of what they already know. Because of this, pupils are encouraged to try their hardest, knowing that the teachers' demands are reasonable and also that their previous achievements have been useful in helping them to learn more. At the end of lessons, teachers nearly always involve pupils in checking what they have learned and how they have behaved. Whilst doing this they refer to short-term subject related targets which pupils have written in consultation with staff.
11. Teachers rarely have problems in managing pupils' behaviour. This is because they recognise the importance of preventing inappropriate behaviour rather than curing it. Teachers are well prepared for potential problems because they are kept well informed by regular briefings, and by support assistants, as to which pupils may be struggling to cope. Problems are often averted by ensuring that lessons get off to a prompt start and proceed at a brisk pace, giving pupils few opportunities to become bored or disinterested. Pupils are given few opportunities not to be involved. If they are reluctant, questions are directed at them to encourage them to join in with discussions. Praise is used judiciously so pupils know that when they get it they deserve it.
12. The assessment of pupils' progress is very good. As a result, teachers have accurate information to use when planning lessons. They use this very well to identify what they expect individuals to learn in each lesson and what teachers and assistants may have to do to make sure they do. Importantly, by having detailed information about pupils' reading ability, teachers are adapting work to ensure that wherever possible, pupils can read instructions by themselves or with only a little help. Assessment is greatly helped by teachers clearly stating learning objectives in their planning. By doing so, they can quickly evaluate the degree to which objectives have been met. There is also very good marking of pupils work. This is accurate and is usually accompanied with helpful comments to help pupils improve their future work. Nearly all teachers are keeping very good records which sum up pupils' progress over longer periods. These are regularly shared with pupils and this helps to demonstrate to them the progress they are making and how their efforts are worthwhile.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	10 (31%)	13 (41%)	6 (19%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. It is well enriched through activities outside the classroom. There is a good staff but the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses

- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Enrichment opportunities are good and there is good support for learning outside the school day.
- Pupils are very well prepared for leaving school.

Commentary

13. The impact of unsatisfactory accommodation is most noticeable in design and technology where the lack of a suitable workshop seriously limits pupils' opportunities for working with wood, plastic and metal. In the same subject, there is no suitable food technology room. Not enough has been done to remedy this situation since the previous inspection. Most teachers make good use of the existing accommodation. They have created classrooms with vivid and informative displays and most classrooms are large and bright. This is not the case in art and design where little effort has been made to create a more stimulating area for teaching and learning. The science laboratory falls below the standard usually found in secondary schools but good, imaginative teaching is helping to minimise the impact of this. The same is true of accommodation for physical education, where the limitations of the school hall are kept to a minimum. Residential accommodation barely meets minimum care standards. Pupils have limited privacy as the majority share a two or three-bedded room. Although some improvements are being made, the quality of the toilet and bathroom facilities is unsatisfactory. This was an issue raised at the last inspection. The school has been reluctant to invest more than the minimum on improving accommodation because there are well advanced plans for a complete 'new build' on the existing premises to start later this year, pending the local education authority's final decision in the next few weeks. Should the decision be made not to redevelop, the school has sufficient reserve funds to considerably improve many aspects of the accommodation.
14. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to experience a wide range of activities closely related to the different subjects of the curriculum. They benefit from a wide range of visits to museums, places of worship, galleries and theatres, and residential experiences, as well as hosting visitors including a storyteller and musicians. Many pupils benefit from an extended school day, with a good range of activities taking place after school. These include sports such as swimming, badminton and soccer and clubs such as computing. There are frequent sporting fixtures with other schools. Staff in the residence very usefully extend pupils' learning opportunities through supervising and helping them with homework.
15. Pupils are very well prepared for leaving school. The careers programme is extensive and pupils are encouraged to focus realistically on what is important for their future. They are given many opportunities to explore their own particular interests. There are very good partnerships with external providers such as Connexions and the careers service. Pupils' personal skills, including independent living skills, are also well developed through personal, social and health education lessons and good opportunities provided in the residence.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Overall, pupils are provided with **good** care, guidance and support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are guided by comprehensive policies to ensure consistency in the care, guidance and support of pupils.
- Arrangements for seeking the views of pupils and acting on them are good.

Commentary

16. The school prospectus clearly sets out the ethos of the school and the 'Principles of Care' are well presented and easy to understand. Comprehensive policies and procedures for Health and Safety and Child Protection are well supported by staff training and clear identification of responsibilities. Trips outside the school require risk assessment of activities and pupils alike. Using these allows all pupils to be involved in activities subject to carefully considered limitations and this contributes significantly to their progress. Procedures for child protection are very well publicised throughout the school and understood by all staff. Pupils like the school and feel secure. New residential pupils undergo an induction programme and each is allocated a member of staff who will have a particular responsibility for the pupil. All procedures are carefully designed to ensure that pupils settle as quickly as possible to make the best of learning and developmental opportunities. There are very good handover arrangements between teaching and residential staff. These ensure that important information is not neglected.
17. The school is very good at involving pupils through seeking and often acting on their views. The School Council meets every week to discuss issues of importance to pupils. Through this forum, pupils recently discussed ways to raise funds for new footballs and followed it up by raising fifty pounds to contribute to the cost of the balls. Pupils are also involved in producing a monthly newsletter for circulation throughout the school and to parents. They produced their own questionnaire to seek everyone's views in preparation for the Ofsted Inspection. Each day, meetings between staff and pupils are held where there is good, honest discussion of lessons and their behaviour and progress within them. This close involvement of pupils is contributing greatly to improving their personal development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents, and other schools. The links with the community are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with other EBD provision within the Local Education Authority are good and help to reshape provision for such pupils.
- There is currently a narrow range of community links.
- Parents express positive views of the school and are kept well informed.

Commentary

18. The school works closely with other special schools and in particular with Hope School, the nearby school for younger pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This relationship has resulted in the formation of a more consistent approach to methods of working in both schools. This is particularly important because many of the pupils at Hope School are likely to transfer to Lower Lee at some time in the future and several already make use of the residential facility. Another productive link has been with two local pupil referral units. Here, expertise has been shared to help the local education authority to provide appropriate education, with as few interruptions to learning as possible, for the whole range of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

19. Links within the community are increasing and children regularly use local facilities. There is a very good link to Liverpool FC whereby apprentices to the club and their coaches come to the school to help pupils develop their soccer skills. All Year 10 pupils have mentors from the local community. These are people who the pupils know they can talk to in confidence about matters they may not want to raise with staff. This valuable initiative has been arranged through Liverpool Compact and there are plans to extend it to all pupils as suitable mentors are identified. There are good intentions to share resources and accommodation with the local secondary school but at this stage these are underdeveloped and pupils are not benefiting.
20. Parents consider that their children make good progress, teaching is good and they are kept well informed about the progress of their children. There are regular formal meetings with parents but also an ongoing informal contact between staff and parents that supports their learning and personal development. The school is attempting to increase the role of the parents within the school by developing a "parents' room" and arranging social events.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior staff share the desire to improve provision.
- The school is efficiently run.
- Good monitoring of provision leads to higher standards of achievement.
- Governors are making a good contribution to school improvement.

Commentary

21. Through rigorous monitoring the headteacher has built up a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are celebrated and built upon whilst most weaknesses are quickly addressed through decisive and prompt action. Staff are strongly encouraged to improve their performance. They are set targets for improvement that are closely linked to the very good school improvement plan and teachers are regularly observed in the classroom to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The effectiveness of this monitoring and the very good training that is made available to staff is evident in the improvements that have been made over the last two years, especially in teaching and learning. The role of subject leaders has been developed very well with great consideration given to employing the right people then empowering them to perform their duties. The only blemish relates to the fact that weaknesses in design and technology, though obvious to all, have not been addressed with the same degree of urgency as other areas of weakness.
22. The school is efficiently run. Though presently running below its capacity, following reorganisation, all staff are gainfully deployed throughout the day. Spending on resources is carefully monitored and specific improvements sought when any major spending decisions are made. Communication is clear and uncluttered and staff are not overburdened with unnecessary paperwork. When responsibility can be delegated it is and those given additional responsibilities are given all the support they need to carry them out effectively.
23. When recent monitoring of teaching identified problems in a mathematics group extra support was given to the teacher and standards quickly rose. Monitoring extends beyond that of teaching to ensure that appropriate targets are being set for pupils. Senior staff are currently working closely with another school, for younger pupils with similar difficulties, to ensure a good standardisation of practice, policy and procedure to ensure that if pupils are transferred between the two the change will be smooth.

24. The governing body has played an invaluable role in negotiations to improve the accommodation. This has taken a significant burden off the headteacher, allowing him to concentrate on raising standards. Many governors also visit regularly and visit classrooms to see for themselves what is going on in them. Many governors have stayed very loyal to the school through times of difficulty in the past and have played a significant role in managing finances to ensure that funds are available to employ good staff to further raise standards. Governors have ensured that all statutory requirements are comfortably met.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Only one French lesson was observed so no judgement on provision has been made.

ENGLISH

Lessons in English were seen in each year group. Discussions took place with the subject co-ordinator. An analysis of pupils' past work was undertaken.

Provision in English is **good**.

- Pupils achieve well but insufficient use is made of role-play and drama.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Effective support is given to develop pupils' literacy skills.

Commentary

25. By the time they leave the school most pupils achieve a pass grade in the GCSE examination. Those who do not, achieve a pass in the Certificate of Achievement. In 2003, of the six pupils who were entered for GCSE, two gained a D, one an E and three an F grade. Given their prior attainment, pupils in Year 9 achieve well in the Standard Assessment Tests, with seven out of eight boys taking the test in 2003, achieving grades ranging from level 2 to level 4. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to benefit from skills learned through participation in role-play and drama activities during English lessons.
26. All classes are taught English by a specialist teacher who has a particularly good understanding of the subject and how to teach it to pupils who have often experienced failure in the past. All of the lessons seen during the inspection were either good or very good. Good, confident management of pupils' behaviour is a strong feature of teaching. This does not rely on the threat of sanctions but is based upon the use of a wide range of effective strategies and very good support from teaching assistants. Lessons are made interesting and the teacher makes very effective use of her considerable dramatic skills, particularly the use of her voice. As a result pupils enjoy their English lessons. They listen well, contribute to discussion and generally settle down to their work. Lessons are pacy and pupils are not given the chance to avoid becoming involved in learning. The assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous. Frequent reference is made to their individual learning targets. An area of relative weakness is that expectations of pupils' written work are still not high enough. Good use is made of visits and visitors to stimulate interest and involvement.
27. Since September 2003 pupils with the greatest degree of difficulty have had access to very good additional help in developing their reading and writing. Most visit the Literacy Support Centre on a timetabled basis, on average twice weekly with each session lasting about 30 minutes. Specialist, intensive help is given to pupils on an individual basis. Assessment results shows that, as a result, most of the involved pupils are making very good progress in their reading and writing, and that this is impacting on achievement in many other subjects.
28. The leadership and management of English are good. Responsibility is shared between the teacher of English and the manager of the new Literacy Support Centre. Resources are generally sound, including the use of individualised learning programmes in the Literacy Support Centre, but there are too few varied reading materials such as comics and magazines

to further encourage interest. Nevertheless, satisfactory progress has been made in developing English since the last report. Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening and reading continue to be better than in writing, including spelling.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

29. Language and literacy are well promoted in many subjects. Pupils are gaining confidence to use scientific language and discussion of predictions and findings contributes well to their speaking and listening skills. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to extend their mathematical language. Year 9 pupils, for instance, use terms such as congruent, reflection and rotation correctly. In PSHE/citizenship, the teaching style encourages pupil interaction in speaking and listening.

French

30. Pupils in Year 9 are taught French. Past work shows that their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils can answer questions about where they live and identify the French names for facilities such as leisure centres and stations. In a well taught lesson, pupils showed increasing confidence in asking for directions and for following them, all the time using French. The co-ordinator is not a specialist in the subject but makes up for this by careful planning and preparation for each lesson. Planning is very good, it shows a clear understanding of the topics that are most likely to be of use to pupils should they ever visit France and it states precise expectations for each pupil based upon the assessment of previous learning and the abilities of each individual.

MATHEMATICS

Lessons in mathematics were seen in each year group. Discussions took place with the subject co-ordinator. An analysis of a sample of pupils' work was undertaken.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good.
- Teaching is good. The progress pupils make is recorded well and used well in lesson planning.
- There are not enough practical activities to develop pupils' mathematical skills of investigation and enquiry.
- There is no systematic approach to promoting mathematical learning in other subjects.

Commentary

31. Many pupils enter the school with a low level of numeracy skill. Emphasis in Year 9 is placed on developing basic skills and encouraging pupils to enjoy putting their new-found skills into practice. Games such as 'Countdown' are often used with Year 9 pupils to encourage them to use and develop their mental arithmetic skills. Activities such as this generate a high level of interest and pupils gain confidence with good support from the teacher and teaching assistant. By Year 10, pupils are following a GCSE course in mathematics. In 2003, five pupils were entered for the examination, four achieved passes at Grade E and one passed at Grade F. These were higher grades than predicted by their statutory test scores at the end of Year 9 and reflect good achievement. There has been good improvement in provision for mathematics since the last inspection.
32. Lessons are well planned and the level of challenge is realistic for pupils at all levels. As a result, pupils are encouraged to learn. Good questioning and support helps all pupils to be

involved throughout each lesson and new learning is carefully linked to previous work so that pupils see the relevance of it. Lessons are well planned and resources such as overhead projectors and computers are well used to stimulate learning. Staff work well together, motivating individuals or groups of pupils experiencing difficulties by encouraging them to communicate their ideas and findings with others. As a result of the good teaching, pupils often overcome their previous dislike of the subject; one said, "I wasn't allowed in the maths class in my old school, I just did worksheets in the office, my work was terrible 'cos I just used to do drawings and mess about".

33. Good records are kept of pupils' progress. They are well used to help teachers ensure that the right work is being set for all pupils and as a result, tasks challenge and motivate pupils to improve. Targets from individual educational plans are clearly displayed in classrooms so pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers' make consistent use of success and achievement rewards to encourage pupils. The referral of pupils work to the headteacher for recognition of effort and achievement has had a positive effect upon pupils' responses. In a Year 10 group there was good inclusion of a non reader who was able to develop his numeracy skills by good teaching based on awareness of his difficulties and providing reading support.
34. The range of practical activities linked to skills of mathematical enquiry is limited, particularly with the pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is evidence of investigations into the number of staff in the school and the number of chairs in the school but no evidence of investigations linked to everyday interests of pupils, for instance football scores or the price of goods in different shops. As a result, the relevance of what pupils learn in mathematics is occasionally lessened.

Mathematics across the curriculum

35. The leadership and management of mathematics is satisfactory. Within the mathematics department there is good organisation but there is insufficient attention to planning and promoting opportunities for pupils to apply and reinforce numeracy skills in lessons in other subjects and as a result, many opportunities for learning about the application of mathematics are lost.

SCIENCE

Lessons in Science were seen in each year group. Discussion took place with the subject co-ordinator and an analysis of a sample of pupils' work was undertaken.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good.
- The strong emphasis on practical work and investigation motivates pupils to learn.
- Teaching is good.

Commentary

36. A good range of teaching styles stimulates learning and achievement. As well as learning many scientific facts, pupils also develop their investigative and systematic enquiry skills. Pupils' interest in learning is enhanced by the good attention paid to making the subject relevant; in a Year 9 lesson, for instance, pupils linked their learning to the previous lesson's practical activity of looking at weeds and pests in the school grounds. Many pupils have achieved little in science before they arrive but by Year 11 most have been entered for the

GCSE modular science course. Last year, five pupils took the examination and they were all successful. Work is well presented in files and pupils are well involved in evaluating their own work.

37. Investigative work forms a key part of the science curriculum for all age groups. Pupils are developing good skills for applying scientific research to everyday life. They are involved in many experiments which bring science alive and make it interesting. Pupils in Year 10, for instance have done an experiment to find out if double glazing was more efficient than single glazing. When recording their results they have used computers well, using a data logger to create graphic recording of results. In a Year 11 lesson on rates of reaction, a pupil has prepared and successfully presents a PowerPoint presentation of his findings. The PowerPoint presentation making use of pictorial evidence stimulates discussion amongst the group and promotes learning. Evidence from lessons with all age groups shows the enjoyment the pupils gain from this activity based learning and this in turn leads to them wanting to learn more.
38. With good support from the teacher and teaching assistant, all pupils are actively involved and find the activities exciting. Pupils are made fully aware of the importance of health and safety issues linked to experimental work. Most teaching is good and occasionally better. Lesson planning is good and the enthusiasm and extensive subject knowledge of teachers challenges and inspires pupils of all levels of ability. When teaching is less effective it is the result of hesitation in managing pupils' behaviour. This leads to a drop in pupils' concentration and interruption to occasional lessons. More successful behaviour management is seen when the teacher pushes on with the lesson to keep pupils working and maintain their interest. However, co-ordination of science is otherwise good and accurate records are kept to guide pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and pupils are achieving very well.
- There is good use of information and communication technology in other subjects.

Commentary

39. Strong leadership and management have led to considerable improvements since the previous inspection. The curriculum has been greatly improved, as have resources and accommodation. Pupils are achieving significant success in courses externally accredited Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) courses. Most pupils are achieving on a par with the average pupil in a mainstream school. All pupils are building up a very good understanding of how to use computers to help them find, use and present information. Work in files shows that pupils understand the ways in which computers can be used to aid communication. As well as sending and receiving 'e-mails', they have learned how word processing can help them to improve the presentation of letters and documents to be read by other people.
40. Very good teaching is contributing to pupils meeting with considerable success in designing their own web pages. Lessons start with a good recap of previous work, often making particularly good use of demonstrations involving pupils. This has a good settling influence and ensures that little time is wasted. When pupils move on to individual work the abundance of resources is invaluable as each pupil can work at his own computer and has access to scanners and printers without having to wait for others. As a result, pupils can work at their own pace, pushed along by well organised teamwork between the teacher and support

assistant. Teachers pay good attention to making pupils aware of how to work safely with computers by carefully explaining that they are electrical appliances and that radiation, eye strain and incorrect posture are all potential hazards when using computers for long periods. Pupils' work is very well organised and presented and reflects their pride in their achievements and the high expectations of the teacher.

41. The very good subject knowledge of the teacher ensures that pupils' learning goes well beyond the obvious. Pupils are made to think about how computers work, for instance by recognising that devices associated with computers serve different purposes. As a result, pupils correctly identify input, output and storage devices. They also learn about specific ICT language such as the meaning of ROM (read only memory) and RAM (random access memory).

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

42. Use of computers in other subjects is good. In science, pupils use them to process and present the information they gather in experiments. In many other subjects, pupils are word processing their work to improve its appearance. Digital cameras are often used by staff and pupils to record events and provide illustrations for displays and newsletters. Several teachers are confidently using computers as an aid to their teaching. Occasionally, opportunities are being lost to use computers to help pupils overcome their frequent dislike of writing to any great length or for independent research.

HUMANITIES

History and Geography

The subjects are taught only to Year 9 pupils. One history lesson was observed and none of geography so no judgement of teaching is made. Analysis of pupils' work and teachers' records show that pupils' achievements are satisfactory in both subjects and that there is also satisfactory co-ordination of them.

Both subjects are taught to pupils in Year 9. Pupils' history work is assessed well through rigorous marking. In geography good use is made of information and communication technology, where pupils use the Internet to follow progress in the Clipper 'around the world' race. Both subjects benefit from pupils taking part in field trips to, for example, the North Yorkshire Moors and to museums such as the Imperial War and Maritime.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Only one religious education lesson was seen so no judgement is made on the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, analysis of pupils' past work and teachers' planning and records shows that this is a strong area of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in a wide range of topics.
- The subject is contributing very well to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

43. The subject is very well managed and there has been a great improvement since the previous inspection. The one lesson that could be observed was very well taught and clearly demonstrated why pupils are achieving so well. The teacher was well prepared, authoritative and confident. Pupils were set to work straight away, thus creating a sense of purpose and urgency. They responded well, taking notes as the teacher told them about Jewish holy books. Pupils' involvement was encouraged in discussion about books in general. In a valuable

contribution to literacy they talked about authors, fiction, non-fiction, autobiography and biography. This discussion led seamlessly into a very good discussion of how books had changed over the years and how some have achieved special status by making people think about how they feel and act. As a result, pupils became animated and keen to express their views. This enthusiasm was well channelled into written exercises particularly well tailored to the needs of each individual. The most able pupil answered a comprehension exercise on 'The Contents of the Torah', another pupil completed a cloze exercise, filling in the missing words correctly and the third received very good support from the classroom assistant who helped him to write simple answers to questions read to him.

44. All pupils have been set realistic targets for improvement, based on the evidence of what they already know. Year 9 pupils are building up a good understanding of the life of Jesus. They have researched and written about his background and his life, including his birth, temptation, baptism, death and resurrection. Pupils have also addressed 'Big Questions' such as 'who made me, is there a god, why am I here?' In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work shows much greater maturity. They have made perceptive comparisons between different faiths and carefully analysed the influence that faith has on institutions such as marriage and divorce. They have also analysed selfish and selfless acts, prejudice and the problems faced when standing up for what they believe in. All these have contributed significantly to their spiritual, social and moral development. All work is carefully marked and commented on by the teacher. Pupils have completed end of unit reviews which show their enjoyment of the subject and how it is helping them to understand their lives. An example, not untypical, is the boy who wrote 'I have tried my best at everything I have done and I am going to keep on doing well.'

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

In music, art and design and design and technology, insufficient lessons were seen to make secure judgements on teaching. In art and design and design and technology analysis of past work and teachers' records and planning allows for judgements to be made on achievement.

Five lessons were seen in physical education and games across all age groups. Observation took place of activities at lunch time and during the extended day. Discussion took place with the subject co-ordinator. An analysis of pupils' examinable work was undertaken.

Art and design

45. Achievement in art is satisfactory overall and many Year 11 pupils achieve well, achieving success in foundation level accreditation. Achievement is spread over a suitable range of work, including painting, drawing, modelling in clay and papier-mache. Pupils have created good collages and montages, often enhancing them with their own additions in pastel and paint. Many pieces of work show a good degree of imagination. Much of the best work is abstract composition, where pupils have given full rein to their creativeness; drawing from life is frequently weaker. In Year 11, pupils have examined the work and techniques of artists such as Picasso and Henry Moore. The use of sketch pads is underdeveloped amongst pupils in Year 9 but good in Years 10 and 11 where the development of pupils' ideas is plain to see. In these sketchpads, pupils have recorded the techniques they have used and why they chose them. They have written about problems they encountered and their own evaluations of completed work, for instance when modelling heads in a cubist style or experimenting with wax crayons. All sketchpads are greatly enhanced by the practice of recording pupils' achievements in them. Not only does this create a good assessment record for the teacher but it also gives ownership of the records to the pupils and gives them an easily accessible reaffirmation of their progress. The accommodation is not ideal in that there is very limited 'wet space' and the rooms are an odd shape. Nevertheless, much more could be made of it, particularly by celebrating pupils' achievements through displaying their work more thoughtfully and by tidying it up.

Music

46. All pupils benefit from weekly lessons in music, taught by a subject specialist. Assessment of every pupil's progress is carefully documented. In due course it is likely that some pupils will be able to achieve a pass grade in the GCSE examination. Pupils enjoy participating in the musical events and productions which take place on a regular basis. The subject is well resourced.

Design and technology

47. There are many weaknesses in design and technology. No overall judgement is made on teaching but two parts of lessons were observed and in both cases the teaching was weak, being ill planned, unchallenging, barely related to previous learning and generally dull. Pupils showed little interest in learning. Pupils' files of completed work show that new learning is haphazardly organised and that existing understanding of the subject is not sufficiently built upon. Achievement is poor. Records of pupils' progress are inaccurate and at times misleading. In one instance a pupil who has attended for only one day is represented as having achieved as much as others with full attendance. The room used as a workshop is unsuitable; being of temporary construction the floor will not support heavy machinery. As a result there are severe limitations in the curriculum and practical activities are limited to a small amount of woodwork, using hand-tools such as saws planes and hammers. The kitchen in the residential block is occasionally used to extend activities to include food preparation but there is no suitably planned programme. A little work on graphics is in evidence but it is unimaginative and mainly involves the copying of famous logos. There is no work with textiles. Leadership and management of the subject are very poor and there is little enthusiasm or vision for improving provision.

Physical education

Achievement in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many good opportunities for pupils to participate in physical activities.
- Good teaching encourages and motivates pupils to enjoy physical activity.

Commentary

48. The physical education programme and the extended extra curricular activities at lunchtime and after school make a significant contribution to the learning and achievements of pupils at the school. In lessons pupils develop skills in football, basketball, badminton, gymnastics, cricket, athletics and swimming. Since the on site facilities are limited the school uses the local sports centre well to enhance the options available and to broaden the pupils' learning experiences. Football, badminton, basketball and athletics matches with other schools help to promote personal and team skills. A highlight for the pupils, and a great motivating force, is the regular involvement of the Liverpool F.C. Academy to coach them in football skills. Leadership of the subject is good. The curriculum is well planned and extensive, accurate records show clearly the progress made by pupils in participating and making the effort to improve.
49. Teaching is good. It is characterised by enthusiasm and extensive subject knowledge. Pupils know they are getting a good deal and listen carefully to instructions. This helps them to develop skills and personal self esteem as they successfully practice disciplines such as passing and shooting. For the first time, this year, pupils in Year 10 are following the GCSE course in physical education and Year 11 pupils are completing entry level courses. Their work here is theoretical as well as practical and pupils are building up a good understanding of the benefits of exercise as well as how to avoid injury.

Personal, social, health education / Citizenship

Lessons in personal, social, health education/ citizenship were seen in all year groups. An analysis of a sample of work in each year group was undertaken and discussions took place with the subject co-ordinator.

Provision in personal, social, health education/ citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course contributes well to pupils' development as citizens.
- The role played by the co-ordinator is good.

Commentary

50. The programme of work is very appropriate for pupils whose social development has, in many cases, been subject to upheaval. As a result achievement is very good. In Year 9, pupils are gaining awareness of how they can contribute more positively both within school and the community. In Year 10 they examine issues to do with human rights and how people often suffer when rights are violated. One boy wrote, "I feel so sad that people who live in poor conditions in South America have so little but we have lots of things we take for granted". The course is becoming increasingly prominent within the curriculum and is having a positive impact upon the attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
51. The very good presentation of work and the good teaching indicate that pupils are developing social skills and social awareness. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were identifying possible reasons why people migrate from one area or country to another. Pupils discussed well with good guidance from the teacher and teaching assistant, factors which can affect how well immigrants adapt to a new way of life in this country. One pupil said it was like moving from primary to secondary school. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is an enthusiastic, newly qualified teacher. An extensive range of resources such as videos, books, posters and CD ROMs is being built up to support teaching. In addition, there are good plans to develop a programme of visits, visiting speakers and links to outside agencies to broaden the experiences and social awareness of the pupils. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*

