

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PENKFORD SCHOOL**

Newton-le-Willows

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104843

Headteacher: David Hartley

Lead inspector: Noreen Buckingham

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Inspection number: 258971

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: 9-16  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 59

School address: Wharf Road  
Newton-le-Willows  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
Postcode: WA12 9XZ

Telephone number: 01744 678745  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Crowther

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Since September 2003 Penkford School has been designated as a school for boys and girls who have been identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties aged between 9 and 16 years old. There are 59 pupils on the present school roll of which only two pupils are below 11 years of age and only ten pupils are girls, seven of whom are in Year 11 and will leave at the end of this academic year. The school has developed a base in a local high school to support inclusion opportunities and currently two boys who are dual registered attend full time. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. There is only one pupil from an ethnic minority background and six pupils are in the care of the community. Approximately 58 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals suggesting that pupils' socio-economic circumstances are below average. On entry pupils' attainments are below average for their ages mainly because of patchy attendance at previous schools.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16722	Noreen Buckingham	Lead inspector	Mathematics
			Personal, social and health education and citizenship
			Modern foreign languages
			Music
19433	Nancy Walker	Lay inspector	
10470	Pip Clark	Team inspector	English
			History
			Geography
			Religious education
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Science
			Information and communication technology
			Art and design
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school** with a number of very good features and provides a good quality education with increasing opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream school. This is because the leadership and management are good, the curriculum is good and teaching and learning are consistently good. As a consequence most pupils achieve well. The school has a high number of staff and costs are on the high side but the outcomes are good and so the school offers satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and senior leadership team, supported by governors, have managed the change in status of the school very well.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Every pupil is respected and valued resulting in a very positive ethos.
- The improved attendance of pupils is due to the very good monitoring procedures.
- Very good teamwork between all staff supports teaching and learning both in and outside of the classroom.
- Provision for inclusion is very good including links with other schools and colleges.
- The very good support, advice and guidance given to pupils puts the needs of the pupils at the heart of the school.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good enabling pupils to experience a range of activities.
- Throughout the school teaching and learning in science and physical education is very good and as a consequence pupils achieve very well.
- Behaviour management strategies do not always enable some pupils to accept constructive criticism in relation to behaviour and work.
- Too few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, which would further support their preparation for life after school.
- Some inconsistencies in the school's assessment procedures lead to wide ranging targets on some individual education plans (IEP's) and less challenging whole school targets.
- Not all teachers have high expectations of all pupils and higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Because of the change in status of the school it is impossible to judge improvement from the last inspection. However, the school has set up a base within a local mainstream school to support inclusion, has developed the curriculum to meet the changed needs of pupils and has increased the range of externally accredited courses. The professional development of staff to meet the changing school population has been crucial to the success of the school. It has a firm base on which to build.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 6	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 9	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 11	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

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

**Achievement is good** mainly because of the good teaching; lesson planning and very good level of support pupils receive from all staff. Standards attained are not as high as would normally be expected for pupils of this age because of their previous unsatisfactory attendance and disaffection with school. Whole school targets are generally met successfully as are pupils' individual behaviour

targets. Achievements in science and physical education are very good because of the very secure subject knowledge, very good teaching and behaviour management. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PHSE). In some lessons the achievement of a few pupils is hindered by instances of disruptive behaviour, which is not always managed constructively, and opportunities for learning are lost.

**Pupils' personal development is good overall and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.** Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is seen in their improved attendance and the very good relationships they enjoy with adults. Their behaviour generally is good and any misbehaviour is nearly always connected to pupils with recognised individual difficulties. However these occasions are not always dealt with appropriately. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take on personal responsibilities and some pupils find it hard sometimes to accept any criticism. Their social development is good because there are many opportunities during the school day for pupils to mix together, such as breakfast club, break times and lunch time when they can relax and chat in small groups. The reward system helps them understand right from wrong which promotes their moral development but there are too few opportunities for them to learn about living in a multi-cultural society.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**Pupils receive a good education because the curriculum is good and the quality of teaching is consistently good.** As a result pupils learn well and make good progress. The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils have many opportunities to gain external accreditation. The opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good and pupils have increasing opportunities to integrate into mainstream school, which is one of the school's most important aims. Teaching is very well planned and subject knowledge is good so that pupils have good opportunities to learn and make good progress. There is very good teamwork between all adults in the classroom and pupils are given good support. However there are a few occasions when higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently and teachers' expectations are not high enough. Assessment procedures are good and information gathered is analysed well but is not used as well as it might be to set challenging whole school targets. In addition, marking is not as helpful as it could be in indicating to pupils how to improve their work and targets on some IEP's are too broad mainly because of some inconsistencies in individual assessments. Pupils are well cared for and are given very good support. Their well being is at the heart of what the school does and because staff know the pupils very well they are quick to spot any problems and deal with them effectively.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good.** The change in the schools' status has been very well managed. The headteacher and other key staff work very well as a team and seek ways to meet the schools' aim of increasing opportunities for pupils to integrate with mainstream schools. Governance of the school is good and governors are very supportive of the school and totally share the headteacher's commitment to further inclusion. Although they do know its strengths and weaknesses they do not check the effectiveness of their policies in practice to see the impact on the work of the school. Statutory requirements are fully met.

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

Parents speak highly of the school and feel that it helps their children to behave better and generally improve their attitudes towards school. Considering pupils' previous school experiences this is good progress. Parents feel welcome in school and comfortable about approaching staff. Pupils generally say they like school and this is demonstrated by their improved attendance. The school council enables them to have a voice and air any concerns. They particularly appreciate the support they receive from staff and the very good relationships they have with them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Develop behaviour management strategies to enable pupils to understand and co-operate with what is and is not an acceptable standard of work and behaviour in a constructive way.
- Enable pupils to take on more responsibilities within the school day.
- Ensure more consistency in assessment by moderating samples of pupils' work, reviewing the marking of their work and use the information more effectively to set challenging individual and whole school targets.
- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations of all pupils and that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils' achievements across the school are good overall.

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

- Pupils achieve very well in science and physical education.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have increasing opportunities to follow accredited courses.
- The achievement of targets on IEP's is inconsistent.
- While whole school targets to raise achievement are usually met and sometimes exceeded they do not always challenge the most able pupils and expectations are not always high enough.
- The additional support for literacy successfully improves pupils' achievement.

#### **Commentary**

1 Pupils achieve very well in science and physical education because of teachers' very secure subject knowledge and the very high expectations they have in terms of both work and behaviour. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and this rubs off on to the pupils who enjoy their lessons and are willing to participate. Because of this they achieve very well. In physical education pupils are given a very good range of activities including cycling, sailing, canoeing and orienteering, which motivate them and they are keen to do well. In science pupils' very good achievements are supported by the teachers' ability to interest them in investigations and the way prior learning is extended and built on. Behaviour tends not to be an issue in these lessons because the pupils want to participate and do well.

2 The school is always seeking to increase pupils' opportunities to follow accredited courses and are flexible enough to introduce planned courses earlier if through their assessment system they find that pupils are capable of achieving a higher grade. Currently pupils can study for a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in English, mathematics, science, art and design, physical education and design and technology (resistant materials). Last Year in physical education 10 pupils gained GCSE grades between C and G, which represents very good achievement. Some pupils in Year 10 are following GCSE Foundation Level in art and design and science, which is good improvement. Inclusion at the base in a local high school has proved very successful for two pupils who are following a GCSE course in design and technology with the expectation that they will be successful. The main barrier to success is pupil absenteeism, (generally at the final examination) and the low expectations of some pupils.

3 The school analyses pupils' success rate at achieving their targets on their IEP and this shows some inconsistency. This is sometimes due to absences but also to an inconsistency in the assessment of pupils' work, some teachers' expectations being too low on occasions and a lack of challenge for some pupils who inspectors judge could do better. An example of a target which is too broad, reads as: "attain two-thirds NC level," which appears on a number of IEPs regardless of how well the pupil has achieved in the past. The school's system of predicting "safe" and "challenging" levels of improvement suggests an uncertainty in staffs' knowledge of pupils' abilities. Whole school moderation of work would give staff clearer benchmarks from which to set individual targets and also a consistency in assessing work and this would enable staff to set more realistic yet achievable targets to raise pupils' achievement.

4 Target have been set to improve attendance which is a major factor in making any improvements in achievement and the school has been generally successful in meeting these. Whole school targets to raise achievement are set in literacy, numeracy and science and last year the majority of targets set for pupils in Year 9 were met and many achieved beyond them. However,

pupils in Year 11 were not as successful and only the target for English was fully met. This year's targets appear to have been set at the "safe" level while a proportion of pupils could achieve higher.

5 Pupils who have been identified as needing additional support in basic literacy skills make good progress because of the specific sessions they are given. These SULP (Social Use of Language Programme) and the "emotional literacy" sessions are planned so that pupils' self-confidence improves whilst at the same time increasing their literacy skills. On admission to school many pupils have poor language skills and subsequently low literacy skills generally. Within the secure environment of the classroom along with adults with whom they have very good relationship, pupils listen and work hard to gradually build up their literacy skills and raise their own achievement levels.

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

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are good overall. The school's ways of helping pupils to develop their personal qualities as individuals through the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and good in some areas. This leads to satisfactory attitudes in lessons, good standards in behaviour and good attendance levels.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attendance is consistently above that of other similar schools and nearly all pupils make huge improvements in their own individual attendance compared to their previous school placements.
- Most pupils behave well and form very good relationships with their peers and adults in school.
- Although staff build self confidence and self esteem, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop responsibility and independence on a daily basis.
- While the behaviour of the majority is dealt with well, the handling of some pupils' very challenging behaviour is not always effective and sometimes staff are too lenient in what they expect.
- Limited opportunities are provided to develop pupils' understanding and awareness of a multi-cultural society.

### **Commentary**

6 The school is very successful in promoting attendance. Systems include very close monitoring and swift action to follow up unexplained absences, as well as incentives and sought after rewards for pupils who attend regularly. Pupils are made to feel very welcome every day and so they want to come to school. Nearly every pupil achieves high attendance levels and this is often in stark contrast to that at their previous schools.

7 Staff are very skilled and lead by example in forming very good relationships throughout school. They have high expectations of behaviour and manage pupils well and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. This is commendable on the part of the school bearing in mind the often severe and complex behavioural and emotional difficulties that some of their pupils have. However, sometimes staff are too lenient in what they expect from some pupils for fear of upsetting volatile temperaments and so they are not learning to face their difficulties and manage them as well as they might. Nevertheless, as a result of what the school does, pupils get along together and with adults in school very well and pupils' behaviour is mostly good. The behaviour management system enables pupils to achieve success and enjoy rewards, such as trips out, which are a good incentive. Achievements are celebrated and pupils do recognise others successes. The chair of governors is proud to recognise the achievements of pupils at the Annual Awards ceremony when certificates are presented. Pupils are involved in setting their own behaviour targets giving them some understanding about what is expected and this promotes pupils' understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Staff are very good role models for pupils and treat them with respect. It is rare to hear a raised voice in the school from staff. Pupils enjoy each other's company

and support one another well, both in lessons and during recreation times. For example, during a pool knockout competition in school, pupils were supportive of one another and the loser took it in good heart. Although there are very few pupils from ethnic minority homes the school does all it can to make pupils aware of racial issues and has participated in "Give racism the Red Card" activities to get the message across.

8 There are many opportunities provided outside formal lessons that help pupils to develop their social skills. For example, tea and toast in small groups each morning, lunch in small friendship groups, group activities to encourage communication, and many outdoor adventure activities to engage in team building exercises. Nevertheless, opportunities within school for pupils to take on responsibility, other than for achieving their own personal targets, are few. In addition, in practical lessons such as food technology, lessons are so short that staff often have to help pupils too much so as not to run out of time. This too hinders their independence.

9 Although pupils learn about the main world religions in religious education lessons, an understanding and awareness of a multi-cultural society is not sufficiently promoted in other subjects. For example, festivals other than the main Christian ones are not recognised and celebrated through assemblies, lunch menus, and food technology programmes.

**Attendance**

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (85.6 %)***

Authorised absence	
School data	12.4%
National data	11.9%

Unauthorised absence	
School data	2.3%
National data	7.7%

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

**Exclusions**

***Ethnic background of pupils***

***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean

No of pupils on roll
58
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
27	0
0	0

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education offered by the school is good because the curriculum is good and the quality of teaching is consistently good. As a result pupils learn well and make good progress. The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils have many opportunities to gain external accreditation. The opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good and pupils have increasing opportunities to integrate into a mainstream school, which is one of the school's most important aims. Pupils are well cared for and are given very good support. Their well being is at the heart of what the school does and because staff know the pupils very well they are quick to spot any problems and deal with them effectively.

**Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good and as a result pupils learn well. Assessment procedures are good overall but marking does not always help pupils to understand how they can improve.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan their lessons effectively based on a good understanding of their subjects and pupils learn well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well as a team in the classroom, which results in a positive classroom atmosphere.
- Teaching and learning in science and physical education are overall very good.
- High expectations are not a feature of all lessons and the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Assessment procedures are good but marking is not used well enough to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

## Commentary

10 Teachers' planning is detailed showing how the lesson will develop giving a good framework and often where it fits with medium term plans. Relevant and sometimes very good subject knowledge means that teachers can frame questions well and extend pupils' thinking. Most lessons follow a three- part format, which gives teachers opportunities to assess prior learning and how much pupils have learned at the end. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively to illustrate particular processes and make learning more interesting, for example, this was seen many times in mathematics, English and religious education. The best examples of planning include pupils' IEP targets showing how individual needs are being met but this is variable. When teaching is very good or excellent the expectations of both behaviour and work are high and outcomes in terms of achievement are very good.

11 The very good teamwork in the classroom between teachers and teaching assistants is a significant factor in the way pupils are supported. Across the school good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships between adults and pupils. Teaching assistants are involved in planning and so know how the lesson will unfold and what is expected of the pupils. In this way they can anticipate where help will be most needed and their knowledge of how pupils work means that support can be specifically targeted. The very good relationships between adults and pupils has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

12 In science and physical education teaching is of a very high quality and enables pupils to learn very well and make very good progress which results in success in external examinations. Very good subject knowledge, high expectations of work and behaviour, very interesting and motivating activities all combine to make learning attractive. This is important for pupils who have previously been disaffected by school. These factors are linked with very good relationships which creates an atmosphere of respect and an understanding that tasks are to be completed. However, these high expectations are not a feature of all lessons so pupils do not always learn as well as they might in other subjects. Sometimes a refusal to work, disrespectful language or disruptive behaviour when pupils occasionally take time out, are not challenged or dealt with in ways which would let pupils know what is and is not acceptable behaviour in the classroom. Because of this and a concern to maintain a calm atmosphere, the most able pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged and don't achieve as well as they might. In addition because some targets are set at a "safe" level expectations are not as high as they could be for all pupils. Good practice is not always shared so that pupils could learn from a consistent approach.

13 Assessment procedures are good and have been well thought out. They are generally used well in lessons and learning outcomes are in place for most subjects. Day to day assessment is good and teachers use questions well to assess what pupils have understood and give them immediate feedback about their work verbally and often marking it at the same time. However, marking generally is not helpful in informing pupils how to improve and does not serve as a reminder to support later learning.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 56 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	13 (23%)	23 (41%)	19 (34%)	0	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 breadth of curricular opportunities is good. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good. Accommodation and resources are good overall. Accommodation for physical education is limited but does not impact negatively on pupils' achievements.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has been well adapted for the needs of the changed pupil population.
- Monitoring of the curriculum is very good.
- Very good arrangements for inclusion.
- Good range of accreditation and opportunities for work experience.

### Commentary

14 The curriculum meets statutory requirements including provision for religious education. The school has been successful in making the curricular changes necessary to meet the needs of the present pupil population, which is an on-going process. The curriculum for the majority of subjects is good, and for physical education and science it is very good. There is a separate and appropriate curriculum for the very few pupils in Years 5 and 6, which is fully differentiated for English, science, history and geography. Important elements of the National Strategies have been implemented throughout the school for English and mathematics, and religious education follows national guidelines and the Locally Agreed Syllabus while, in other subjects, the schemes of work are based on national guidelines and adapted wherever necessary. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. All the requirements of the National Curriculum are met including planning for sex education and the issues of alcohol and drug misuse. Citizenship has been introduced which enables pupils to discuss racial matters.

15 Procedures for monitoring the curriculum are very good. There is an annual audit across the school which is compared with national expectations and the outcome informs the school's forward planning. There is a two-year rolling programme for auditing the curriculum for individual subjects with the findings being fed back to the staff through the School Self Review. There are plans to undertake these audits annually so that any changes in statutory requirements or further changes in the pupil population can be included.

16 Opportunities for inclusion are very good with plans in place for further developments. The school has very good relationships with neighbouring schools and colleges offering part-time or full-time integration whenever it is considered that pupils' needs would be better met. An Inclusion Unit has been developed in Broadway High School that is managed by a deputy head with special responsibility for inclusion. Pupils are well prepared for integration, supported in the mainstream by teaching assistants from Penkford and their progress is carefully monitored and evaluated.

17 The school provides a good range of accreditation that meets the present needs of all the pupils. It is under constant review and plans for its extension are flexible. Currently the school offers GCSE in English, mathematics, science, technology (this course is taken at a local high school), art and design and physical education. For other students Entry Level is taken in all the above subjects plus Citizenship and ICT. In addition students can obtain College Vocational Certificates, the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate and various modules from ASDAN. Students are well prepared for the next

stages of education which may include integration back into mainstream or moving into further education. There are excellent relationships with Connexions who know all the students well and who are instrumental in providing a good range of work experience.

18 Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good. There is a wide range of activities associated with physical education, which includes gymnastics, orienteering, canoeing, sailing, dance, inter-school sports competitions and many others. Currently 10 pupils are working for their Duke of Edinburgh Award (Bronze Level) with expectations they can go on for the Silver Award in due course. There is an annual residential trip for Years 9,10 and 11 which provides experience of living together in a community, building self-esteem and developing self-help skills. A music club and computer club are also available for pupils to enjoy.

19 Accommodation, while in a relatively old building, has been well organised and overall is good. There are good specialist rooms for science, music, design and technology and a well-equipped ICT suite. All the classrooms are of a good size and the Year 11 students have a separate designated building. The grounds are extensive and well cared for and a hard area has been marked out for various sporting activities such as mini-tennis, football and basketball practice. Whilst the indoor accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory because the hall is in the centre of the school and is a thoroughfare as far as movement around the school is concerned, it does not impact negatively on pupils' achievements. Resources are overall good. They are excellent for design and technology and very good for ICT. The school has sufficient teaching staff to meet the demands of the curriculum with most subjects being taught by specialist staff, the positive effect being seen in the progress made throughout the school particularly in physical education and science. The school is well supplied with support staff who are both skilled and committed to the needs and welfare of all the pupils and who work closely with the teaching staff to form very good working teams.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils are well cared for and they receive very good support, advice and guidance. The school values and involves pupils very well in its work and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A very calm and friendly atmosphere exists throughout the whole school.
- A lot of time and skill is spent in fostering very good and trusting relationships with pupils and providing sensitive support and understanding. However, sometimes staff make too many allowances for pupils' difficulties and pander to their needs.
- The elected school council enables pupils to have a voice and contribute to the work of the school.
- Clean, safe environment with very good supervision and good attention to pupils' safety and well being.
- Very good opportunities exist for reintegration into mainstream schools and there is good guidance on further study and career opportunities.

### **Commentary**

20 Daily routines are well established and because staff themselves have a very positive approach towards each other and pupils, a very calm and orderly environment exists. Form time is built into the timetable at the start and end of each day and it is used very well to listen to pupils' views and worries and to offer very skilled and sensitive support and guidance. For example, tea and toast are provided to pupils in small groups every morning on arrival and staff chat and take a genuine interest in each and every pupil. Individual behaviour targets are reviewed positively at the end of each day and strategies to improve are discussed at least weekly with every pupil. Consequently, pupils come to school secure in the knowledge that they are valued and listened to and that their worries and difficulties will be understood. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable lack of constructive criticism of pupils' work and personal development so as not to upset them, and so

pupils are not learning to cope with their difficulties as well as they might outside this very supportive environment.

21 The school council has elected members from each class and is well-organised, with well run fortnightly meetings with appropriate agendas. It gives pupil's opportunities to air their views and concerns in a safe environment, which also supports the development of social skills and listening to others opinions.

22 Pupils' safety and well being is at the heart of the school's work. Good procedures including regular site inspections and improvements to the building and grounds ensure a clean and safe environment. Bullying and racism is given a high priority and even minor incidents are addressed quickly and thoroughly. Activities throughout the school day always include members of staff, often joining in equally as well as providing very good supervision. Staff are thorough in carrying out risk assessments and implementing procedures to minimise potential hazards before pupils engage in out of school activities. Child protection arrangements in school are good. Staff know pupils and understand their difficulties very well and so they are vigilant in noticing and taking swift action to provide help and comfort and other professional support when it is needed.

23 Staff throughout the school work closely together and the school has very good links with other schools, colleges and other appropriate agencies. As a result, transition through and from the school is good with minimal trauma and opportunities for pupils to re-integrate into mainstream school are very good. Opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work and possible college courses are good and the school does all it can to ensure pupils have a place to go on leaving school.

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

The school has a good partnership with parents and the community and it has very good links with other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- School is very welcoming to parents and staff have worked very hard to build good relationships with parents.
- School provides good and regular information to parents on their child's personal development and involves them well, but parents are not well enough informed of or involved in what is being taught in lessons.
- A recent but very effective link with a secondary school has been established to facilitate return to mainstream school.

### **Commentary**

24 The school is keen to welcome parents and does all it can to put them at their ease. They have been successful in breaking down barriers formed in parents' minds over many years from previous school experience. Parents now feel welcome and speak highly of the school. Nearly all parents attend annual reviews and they support the school well and their children's progress where they can, particularly in behaviour, attendance and in their general attitude towards school and their teachers.

25 The school keeps parents very well informed of their child's personal development, especially their behaviour, attendance, and well being. There is routine telephone contact and staff regularly visit pupils' homes to share information and offer support and advice. End of year reports and annual review reports inform parents very well of their child's progress in personal development and satisfactorily of their progress in national curriculum subjects. General information about the school and events is regularly provided and the twice-yearly Penkford Flyer newspaper is an attractively produced and informative document about some of the work the pupils have done. Nevertheless, written correspondence with parents is often uninspiring and pays little attention to

informing parents about what pupils are currently learning in subjects. Consequently, parents are not being helped sufficiently well to take an interest or empowered to support their child's learning at the most effective time.

26 The school is very keen to ensure pupils can access every possible opportunity during their education. They are outward looking and have been proactive in establishing a very good link with a local secondary school. This is a recent initiative but is already proving very successful in enabling pupils in Years 7 to 9 to reintegrate into mainstream school. This is of tremendous benefit in promoting pupils' personal development as well as their academic success. For instance, the first two pupils to reintegrate in this way are thoroughly enjoying it and taking full advantage of what is on offer to them. They are commendable ambassadors for the school and are helping to break down the stigma associated with 'special' school pupils. Their peers are proud of them and some are inspired to work harder in order to be considered themselves for reintegration. The school also has links with other professionals to ensure pupils receive good advice and opportunities to experience the world of work and further study college courses.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good. Leadership by the headteacher is good and he is very well supported by the effective senior leadership team. Governance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The change in the school's status is being managed very well and there is a clear vision for its future development.
- Self-evaluation and monitoring the work of the school is developing well and has a positive outcome on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The governors contribute well to the strategic development of the school but could be more pro-active in evaluating the effect of their policies in practice.
- Financial systems are secure and the principles of best value are followed.

### **Commentary**

27 The school has undergone a long period of change over the last five years in both its role and management and the present headteacher has been involved throughout though not always as headteacher. The current management structure has only been in place since January of this year. Most of the staff remained throughout what has been a difficult and unsettling time which is testimony to the support they received and their loyalty to the school and pupils. All members of the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and carry them out effectively. Now that the role of the school is clear, management and staff have set about consolidating systems and policies, which has resulted in a welcoming school with a very positive ethos in which pupils come first. All staff and governors have a clear understanding of the direction the school is moving and fully subscribe to its inclusive focus. The headteacher and senior leadership team are very visible around the school and know all the pupils very well. They provide good support and guidance to both staff and pupils. The new base within a local high school is very well managed by a member of the senior leadership team and is growing.

28 Subject leaders are involved in monitoring both planning and teaching within their subjects and this fits in well with whole school self evaluation of its work. The school has a cycle of peer observations of lessons, which is beneficial to all staff in terms of their professional development and of receiving written feedback about their classroom performance. Their role is part of the school's self-evaluation procedures and is fundamental to improving the quality of teaching and learning and subsequently, pupils' achievement. The self-review process is ongoing through the year and highlights areas for development.

29 The governors make an effective contribution to the work and direction of the school and are beginning to have a good understanding of its work. They fulfil their statutory requirements and are

very supportive of new developments. They wholeheartedly share the school's vision of working towards being a more inclusive school and are keen to work in partnership with other agencies who can support the school. Many of them have worked with the school through the recent changes and appreciate the hard work by all staff. They have recently begun to link individually with specific subjects, which is beginning to extend their knowledge base, and adds to the information from subject leaders reports. Although governors visit when they can, in addition to regular meetings, there is no particular focus to these visits. Whilst policies are reviewed periodically they do not yet monitor their effectiveness in school on a regular basis.

30 The most significant aids to raising achievement are the good leadership by all those with key management roles, the strong support from governors and the commitment of staff giving the school a firm foundation on which to build and move forward. The school knows it now has to improve the attendance of some pupils so that they can access the good curriculum and raise their achievement and also continue to iron out any inconsistencies in managing the behaviour of some pupils while still pursuing a policy of academic challenge so that all reach their potential.

## Financial Information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,142,148	Balance from previous year	78,542
Total expenditure	1,087,424	Balance carried forward to the next	54,723
Expenditure per pupil	14,643		

31 Financial management is good and expenditure is monitored regularly using governor's expertise well. The principles of best value are well understood and governors make every effort to comply with them. The school compares itself with national data annually and considers how to improve, consults pupils and parents on an annual basis and ensures competition for equipment and services via tenders and quotations. It sets whole school targets but could be a little more adventurous in setting these targets and push the boundaries for some pupils a degree further.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4**

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

32 There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning or pupils' achievements in **French**. Teachers planning, curriculum documents and pupils' work were analysed which showed that the subject is well planned and pupils experience a good range of activities which systematically build up vocabulary and gives pupils some understanding of French culture.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Pupil's achievements in all areas of English are good due in part to the successful implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. It is supported by good teamwork between all staff.
- Marking could be more constructive in helping pupils to improve.
- The additional support provided for language development and literacy skills are very good.
- The range of accreditation is good and meets the needs of the pupils well.
- Planning for literacy across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

#### **Commentary**

33 Pupils' achievements in all areas of English are good because teaching is consistently good and the implementation of important aspects of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy is having a positive effect on overall progress. Many pupils come to the school with an in-built dislike of reading, spelling and writing with skill levels well below expectations. Through the well-focused IEP's and appropriate individual learning targets most pupils achieve well although a few have long-term problems, which inhibit their progress.

34 Reading and spelling levels throughout the school are variable since, in every year, there is at least one pupil with a reading and spelling age adequate for the demands of the National Curriculum without additional help. The majority, however, need regular practice and encouragement to persevere at a task they find difficult. Following the initial baseline assessment and the subsequent annual monitoring of progress some pupils are identified as needing more specialised help which is provided in six withdrawal groups. The results show that these pupils are making very good progress although there are still a few at the upper end of the school who continue to find reading a struggle. By Years 10 and 11, most pupils read with confidence although a few continue to need help in all basic skills.

35 Achievement in writing is good especially in the development of creative writing. For example in a Year 8 lesson pupils were able to write Haiku-style poems understanding the essential structure and rhythm and in Year 9 pupils have written letters and poems expressing the feelings and emotions of soldiers in World War I. In Year 10 the introduction of important elements of the literacy strategy is leading to a significant improvement in the ability of the students to plan, structure draft and finalise their assignments.

36 Pupils achieve well in the development of speaking skills but progress in listening skills is not as good which can be the cause of some problems in lessons across all the curriculum areas. Although there is planning for role-play, opportunities for drama, to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills are limited.

37 Good teaching and teamwork provide pupils with appropriate challenges and a positive learning environment. This helps raise their self-esteem and gives them the confidence to work independently while providing support when needed. The Sulp (Social Use of Language Programmes) lessons and the 'emotional literacy' sessions are well planned and effective in developing pupils' confidence in general conversational skills; this was seen in their willingness to talk with the inspectors. Lessons are well planned, generally taught at a good pace and include a variety of interesting activities which all help to maintain pupils' attention. As a result pupils work hard which leads to good progress and achievement. However, the good quality of teaching in the classroom is not matched by the quality of marking which seldom gives pupils constructive suggestions which could provide a greater level of challenge for the higher attainers and enable them to improve their achievements.

38 The extension of accreditation to include GCSE for the more able pupils is providing a good challenge and proving successful. Year 10 pupils made such good progress that the first two students will sit GCSE in the Summer Term 2005 instead of the initial expectation for 2006.

### **Language and Literacy across the curriculum**

39 In most subjects across the curriculum staff have expectations for good literacy skills but monitoring is inconsistent. Students are taught technical vocabulary where relevant with good examples of this in science and geography, and in the use of accurate mathematical language. There are instances, however, when the level of literacy skills has an adverse effect on progress in other subjects for example in an ICT lesson one boy with very limited reading skills had to have 1:1 support and guidance to complete his computer work which inevitably restricts progress in computer skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good and as a consequence pupils achieve well.
- The format of the National Numeracy Strategy is used well and starter activities using an interactive whiteboard are very effective.
- Leadership and management is good and monitoring the subject is also good and has a positive influence on subject development.
- Assessment is underdeveloped and marking is not rigorous enough to help pupils improve.

### **Commentary**

40 Achievement in mathematics is good mainly as a result of the good teaching and because of the positive relationships within the classroom. In addition teaching assistants work very well with teachers and give pupils very good support. All of these elements give pupils encouragement to learn. Teachers try to plan activities and use resources, which will interest pupils and encourage them to work as independently as possible as well as in groups or pairs. An example of good group work was when pupils in Years 5 and 6 were learning about the relationship between division and multiplication using specific language and numbers 2,7 and 14. Some found this quite challenging but with support and by working together they did understand "inverse operations" and they achieved well. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 learn about investigating and presenting data. Pupils in Year 8 went into the car park to record the different car colours prior to deciding how to show their results and Year 9 pupils build on this when learning about prediction, mode and median. Games maintain their interest and make learning fun and teaching relates the topic to everyday life in school, for example, collecting data about attendance. Good questioning and discussion enables the teacher to assess how well pupils have understood the concepts. The oldest pupils build further on their previous learning in their work about measurement and practical tasks keep them busy and interested.

41 Lessons follow a well structured format which gives a good framework for teaching and this is because of the way the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has been implemented. There is a strong corporate understanding of the NNS and this supports the clear curriculum planning. The three-part lesson is well established and the starter activities at the beginning of each lesson using the interactive whiteboard are used very well to give pupils opportunities to test their skills. Pupils like the competitive nature of some of the exercises and match their times against each other. Basic skills are very well reinforced by these activities in a way that motivates pupils and captures their total interest and they are usually very keen to get started on them. The whiteboard is also used with Year 10 pupils to visually demonstrate different weights from grammes to kilograms and sets various problems to solve, with the level of difficulty increasing as they become more confident.

42 The subject leader has a clear overview of mathematics by regular monitoring of planning and observation of teaching. The mathematics team meets often, shares ideas and carries out peer observations. Analysis of work shows that there is good coverage of the National Curriculum that has been adapted to meet the needs of the changing population and all pupils are entered for Entry Level. This year two pupils are entered for the Foundation Level which is an example of how well individual needs are met.

43 New assessment and recording systems are being introduced bringing mathematics into line with other subjects. A long-term target set on pupils' IEP's are too general and not sufficiently specific to individual pupils. Termly targets, while sometimes the same for a group of pupils, do relate more to clear cut learning objectives. However, these are not always stated on lesson plans making monitoring more difficult. Marking is limited in helping pupils to understand how they can do better, often just a tick or one word positive comment even when the work is unfinished or not up to expectations, giving the wrong messages to pupils.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

44 Other subjects contribute to mathematics learning well and opportunities for pupils to use and consolidate their numeracy skills are planned for. For example, pupils are encouraged to measure and work out a scale when making models in design and technology, which pupils had been working on in a mathematics lesson. They learn how to use spreadsheets, bar charts and pie charts in ICT and they have a good understanding of temperature ranges in science. They all know the value of snooker balls and use their number skills when working out the scores.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff work exceptionally well as a team providing very effective individual provision to pupils.
- The consistently very good teaching throughout the school by the subject specialist results in very good learning and achievement levels for pupils.
- Leadership is very good and the subject is very well managed. Both assessment and opportunities for accreditation are very good.

### **Commentary**

45 The subject specialist and the teaching assistant have an exceptional understanding not only of their pupils' abilities but also their unpredictable and challenging behaviour. This enables not only the teaching and support given to individual pupils to be at an appropriate ability level but also to present learning tasks in a style that is effective in encouraging pupils' self esteem and motivation. The teachers' very secure subject knowledge is also a very significant element in the very good teaching because it enables him to use questions very effectively not only to assess what pupils understand but also to extend their knowledge and understanding of the topics being taught.

46 The subject specialist has high expectations of all pupils, and has a rather unique way of explaining quite involved scientific processes in terms that the pupils can relate to and which maintains their interest and concentration. For example, in a lesson for Year 8 pupils on fossil fuels, which the teacher knew pupils would find boring, pupils lay on the floor, role playing dead dinosaurs, and were covered with layers of paper that represented sediment and rocks. This practical method of teaching resulted in not only the pupils enjoying the lesson but helped their understanding of how fossil fuels are formed. In an excellent lesson for Year 10 pupils, on the separation of crude oil through fractional distillation, the excellent preparation and relating the scientific reactions to every day life, such as how to stop milk boiling over by placing a saucer over the pan, resulted in excellent levels of learning and achievement. Such provision has resulted in pupils' achieving to their potential. By Year 6, pupils, in their work on sound, understand the causes of sounds and vibrations and how this is used in the design of different string instruments. In Year 9 pupils understand that coal, oil and gas are fossil fuels and that some metals react more readily with acid than others. In Years 10 and 11 pupils in their learning of living cells study how a chemical reaction, such as with yeast and sugar, produces new materials and through their study of genes and chromosomes, the cause of Sickle Cell Disease. They are achieving very well in their accreditation courses with two pupils presently studying for a full GCSE in science.

47 The subject leader, a specialist teacher, has a very good vision for the further development of the subject. An audit of provision produced a very good action plan. It highlighted the fact that although pupils were achieving well in the modular multi-choice questions their grades would fall in examinations due to their weak reading and spelling skills. As a result workbooks have been produced for each topic and examination boards have been approached to permit 'readers' for pupils taking written examinations. By using a quiz at the end of each unit pupils are assessed in an acceptable and enjoyable manner. Each question is referenced to a National Curriculum level. The results are then analysed to track pupils' progress and intervention programmes put into place if required. The subject leader realises that the school population has changed and that most pupils are now more academically able. To this end a wide range of accreditation provides for all ability levels through the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) Entry Level, the Assessment Qualification Alliance (AQA) GCSE Single Award Modular course and also for those pupils who are able to achieve a pass grade in a full GCSE course. Accommodation and resources are both very good with a very well resourced specialist area.

48 The subject leader makes very good and extensive use of ICT in teaching through using an interactive white board, linked to the Internet. However, little use of ICT by pupils was observed during the inspection period.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

##### **A Year 10 lesson. An enquiry based approach to discover how the components of crude oil are produced using fractional distillation.**

The success of this excellent lesson lies in the teacher's outstanding knowledge of the students, the ways in which they learn most effectively and the very detailed planning and preparation. The teacher's high expectations for students to concentrate and think for themselves, coupled with the use of an excellent question and answer technique, ensures that solutions are derived from the evidence and experience but never provided without the student's individual effort. There is frequent praise and encouragement but also constructive criticism such as "*a good try but you need to watch carefully and think about it again*". The start of the lesson is a quick-fire recall session to check on previous learning that acts to focus the students on scientific enquiry and ensure that they all have the necessary knowledge to move forward. The learning objectives for the lesson are shared and introduced with an excellent introduction illustrated with a practical demonstration of a simple laboratory distillation procedure. Through the teacher's skilled question and answer technique the students are able to work out for themselves the relationship between gas/liquid/temperature which is the foundation for the main task. The excellent teamwork between the teaching and non-teaching staff ensures the students are provided with any necessary help but at the same time allows them to learn from their own mistakes. The main task to discover how the various products are distilled from crude oil is made simple by the use of an excellent and yet simple model of the inside of an oil distillation tower which has been made by the teacher. By the end of the lesson all three students can describe the distillation process, why it works and the products that have

been produced. This is teaching of a very high standard based on the excellent knowledge of the teacher in challenging the students to the limit of their ability whilst recognising the need to maintain their self-esteem and confidence to ensure they are able to achieve at a high level.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching throughout the school results in pupils' good learning and achievement.
- Leadership and management are good, assessment data is used well to track pupils' progress.
- Very good resources are very well used to support the very effective use of ICT across the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

49 The teaching of discrete ICT skills is generally good and occasionally very good. Lessons are well planned, good use is made of direct questioning to guide pupils' learning and appropriate topics chosen to both interest and motivate pupils. For example, when pupils in Year 9 are designing a Compact Disc (CD) cover using the program Publisher, the teacher used CDs covers by current pop artist's as examples, to bring out the characteristics of good and poor designs. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and use their skills well as role models for their pupils though, occasionally, teachers use these skills to resolve pupils' problems themselves, rather than supporting pupils' independent learning. Teachers' expectations for the higher achievers are sometimes too low. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and they generally enjoy their learning. Teachers know their pupils well and are generally able to motivate them and to resolve occurrences of challenging behaviour through encouraging praise and support. In a very good lesson about the introduction of using spreadsheets, because of the teacher's clear presentation of the tasks and subject terminology, Year 10 pupils were able to undertake the tasks with enjoyment and showed great pleasure with their achievements. By Year 6 pupils are able to combine text and pictures, to change the font size and type of text and to use the Internet to search for information on volcanoes. In Years 7 to 9 pupils show developing skills in the use of ICT applications such as producing a PowerPoint presentation of the school's sports day and in producing a spreadsheet to compare the performance of various sports cars. Year 11 pupils perform well in the OCR GCSE Entry Level course.

50 The subject leader has produced the school's own scheme of work, based upon the Key Stage 3 Strategy, which is better at meeting the needs of the pupils. Assessment procedures based upon B Squared (a commercial scheme), are consistently used and the assessment data used well to track individual pupil's progress. Accreditation is to be extended by the inclusion of a full GCSE course to provide for the increasing numbers of higher achieving pupils in Year 9. The subject leader is constantly seeking opportunities to extend the learning opportunities provided for pupils. For example, in a recent Local Education Authority project, the Liverpool BBC Bus, pupils' recorded their experiences of a trip to Belgium, one pupil recorded an audio CD and others demonstrated their skills using the program Paint Shop Pro to manipulate digitised photographic images.

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

51 The use of ICT is planned into all subjects. Additionally, the subject leader has undertaken an audit, completed by other subject leaders, of the use of ICT to obtain an overview of such use. The networked suite of 9 modern computers with an interactive whiteboard and an interactive whiteboard connected to the Internet in most teaching areas, are used very well for the teaching and learning of both discrete and cross curricular ICT and numerous instances of such use were observed during the period of the inspection. For example, in an English topic of 'War Poems' a pupil produced a very good poem, used the program PowerPoint to show the poem, which the pupil also narrated, in a very realistic form with the poem typed on a background of old parchment paper.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

52 No lessons were seen during the inspection and therefore it is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching or learning or pupils' achievement. The subject leaders' detailed planning shows that the curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of the changed population in the school. Although, at the present time, there are only two pupils in Years 5 and 6 they are provided with a well-differentiated curriculum taught within the Year 7 class.

53 The subject has good assessment procedures and these, along with samples of pupils' previous work, indicate that most pupils are interested and make good progress. A significant number of pupils have never been far beyond their own immediate area around St. Helen's but through geography they are made aware of the different environments and economies in the wider world. For example, they begin by comparing geographical features between their own area and Southport but by Year 9 pupils are aware of the distribution of wealth across the world and the consequent effect on the people who live there. They are able to make comparisons between France, Brazil and Bangladesh. Geography is not taught in Key Stage 4 and therefore there are no opportunities for national accreditation and, due to the potential for behaviour difficulties of some pupils, the number of field trips is limited.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teamwork between all staff supports learning.
- An appropriate and relevant curriculum.
- A good range of resources and the well-planned use of ICT helps to develop independent learning.

### **Commentary**

54 Pupils enjoy history, make good progress and achieve well because lessons are well planned, relationships are consistently very good and the good teamwork ensures that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in all the tasks. This is particularly important when there are the inevitable instances of disruptive, inattentive behaviour, which are quietly managed by the staff with minimum effect on the remainder of the group. Lessons are interesting which keeps pupils' minds on their work and lessens their inclination to disrupt and not want to work.

55 The curriculum has been well adapted for the needs of the changed population. The two pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught an adapted curriculum that is appropriate for their age which is taught alongside the Year 7 pupils. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils understand that conditions in the past are different from today and that a knowledge of history helps to explain some of the problems faced today, for example the historical events which have created the present troubles in Ireland. There are a few pupils who find it difficult to understand the significance of the 'passage of time' i.e. chronology but the regular reference to time-lines, on display in the classroom, are an excellent and effective visual aid.

56 Resources and modern technology are used very well both by the teacher as a teaching aid but also for pupils' to use the Internet for personal research. For example one pupil in Year 7 looked at the work of three different authors about the Spanish Armada, was able to recognise the different interpretations and made a few simple comparisons which broadened his understanding of the event. The interactive white boards are particularly well used to bring history 'alive', which helps to maintain pupils' attention and interest.

## Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory across the school despite the negative attitude of a significant number of pupils.
- A new, well developed, curriculum.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development.

### Commentary

57 This is a difficult subject for many pupils who have adopted a very negative and sometimes hostile attitude to religious education. However, when lessons are well planned with time for discussion and practical activities, pupils are interested. With the help of consistently good relationships and the support of the skilled teaching assistants pupils are beginning to make progress so that overall their achievements are satisfactory.

58 A new curriculum has been introduced this year, which is now well adapted to the needs of the particular pupils based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus and national guidelines. The fully differentiated curriculum for pupils in Years 5 and 6 will not be implemented until next term, September 2004. This subject is still being developed and the subject leader is working hard to overcome the resistance of many pupils. Management and leadership are satisfactory and the new curriculum should go some way to raising pupils' levels of achievement.

59 As they move through the school pupils learn the basic facts about Christianity and other world religions and know that each has a different place of worship. Pupils know about important religious leaders such as Jesus and Mohammed, have read stories from the Bible and know that each faith has special celebrations. The school as a whole celebrates the Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival. By Year 9 pupils have had the opportunity to visit, and make comparisons between a Christian Church and a Jewish Synagogue. In Years 10 and 11, students understand some of the underlying beliefs of Buddhism and have written their own '8-point path to happiness' so relating learning to their own everyday lives.

60 After every school assembly there is a religious education lesson, taken by the form tutors, which allows for a period of reflection and discussion on whatever topic has been the theme of that assembly. These lessons are valuable in relating spiritual, social and moral issues to everyday life. For example, during the inspection, the topic was 'The Five Senses'. This led, to a variety of discussions including the difficulties experienced by people with little or no sight and the significance of food for religious celebrations such as Holy Communion and The Passover. The more able pupils can interpret difficult moral issues for themselves, for example, one boy wrote on the topic of 'forgiveness' "*One day my brother broke my bike and he said sorry so I forgave him*".

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

61 Too few lessons were observed in **art and design** to make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning or pupils' achievements. However, their evident enjoyment of the subject is enhanced by the enthusiastic teaching and experience of the subject specialist and scrutiny of files showed that lessons are well planned and the teacher ensures that all pupils are appropriately challenged. There were some occurrences of pupils' challenging behaviour not always dealt with satisfactorily in the observed lessons. The evidence of pupils' work on display shows that the learning opportunities provided for pupils cover all the elements of the National Curriculum. The results of pupils' work can be seen in the work of several famous artists being interpreted well by pupils, charcoal and pencil drawings of still life and a large paper and material collage made for the production of Macbeth. A central feature of the displayed work is a very good mosaic of the Sankey Valley Viaduct, which pupils produced in two days supported by a local artist. Talking to pupils about their contribution they were

evidently pleased and proud of their involvement. The subject leader provides good management and leadership and provision for accreditation provides for pupils of all abilities. The schools' own scheme of work has a more vocational focus which meets pupils' needs well. Vision for the further development of the subject is good with work for the Artsmark award starting in September.

62 There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning or pupils' achievements in **music**. However teachers' planning, the curriculum, short video clips of pupils' activities and their work books show that pupils are offered good opportunities to play a wide range of instruments and to experiment with technology to make a variety of sounds. Resources are very good and a very knowledgeable teaching assistant enables pupils to learn the rudiments of notation and to perform together and individually. A recent project involving pupils making and comparing echoes inside and outside school enabled them to learn a very wide range of techniques about recording and filming.

## **Design and Technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and generally good in food technology where pupils achieve well.
- Pupils benefit from spacious accommodation and good resources.
- Leadership is good and the coordinator has a good vision to extend accreditation.

## **Commentary**

63 Lessons are generally well planned with topics to motivate the pupils. The small number of pupils in a class enables teachers to know and relate to their pupils well. In the food technology lessons observed the experienced teacher's good relationships with pupils produced a good flow and pace to lessons. Any instances of challenging or disruptive behaviour by pupils were sympathetically but effectively dealt with and had little impact on the learning of the class. Pupils evidently enjoyed their learning and showed good subject knowledge. However, in resistant material lessons, although the lessons were well planned and prepared and taught by a specialist teacher, at times pupils' challenging behaviour, particularly in Year 8, was allowed to disrupt the learning of the class which prevented their satisfactory achievements from being better. By Year 6 pupils understand the importance of fibre and sources of it and design and make a kite. In Years 7 to 9 pupils understand the importance of recycling materials, design and make various sandwiches, cakes and puddings and design and produce a CD holder. Time is sometimes short however which means that pupils cannot always finish everything themselves and miss out on regimes such as washing up and tidying away. Measuring their practice models accurately enabled pupils in Year 10 to devise an appropriate scale and transfer their measurements on to wood. Pupils understand health and safety rules before beginning to use electrical equipment. As part of their OCR Entry Level in graphics and textile pupils in Year 11 designed a t-shirt and transferred a computer generated design onto it using flip paper.

64 There is very good purpose built accommodation for food technology, graphics and textiles, and resistant materials. Classrooms are spacious with a range of good resources and this has a positive impact on the way the subject is taught and how well pupils' learn.

65 The subject leader has produced the school's own scheme of work which meets the learning needs of the pupils but still ensures coverage of the subject's programme of study. Pupils' work in both food technology and resistant materials is moderated to give an overall grade, which is used to track pupils' progress over a three-year period. Additionally each pupil has a record of achievement as further evidence of progress. Pupils of all ability levels are provided for and there is good provision for accreditation. Vision for the further development of the subject is good with a proposed future addition to accreditation of the full GCSE course to be taught at the school.

## Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching by the subject specialist is consistently very good; pupils enjoy learning and achieve very well throughout the school.
- Provision for extra curricular and enrichment activities are very good, and build pupils' self confidence and motivation.
- Leadership and management are very good, ensuring pupils' learning is not affected by the lack of specialist accommodation, but assessment is underdeveloped.
- ICT is underused.

### Commentary

66 Most of the teaching is by a very experienced subject specialist and lessons are very well planned and teaching objectives made very clear. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to participate. The teacher presents learning in a style which the pupils readily relate to and, when coaching skills, explains techniques which the pupils easily understand. For example, when explaining the correct tennis racquet grip to a group of pupils in Year 9 stated, "The frying pan grip is good for frying eggs but not for playing tennis" which the pupils were later able to recall with ease. Further, the teacher's very good relationship with pupils, knowledge of their individual abilities and problems results in pupils being given individual praise and encouragement. This is why teaching and learning are very good. Teaching assistants provide very good support, generally to pupils with weaker skills which allows the teacher to circulate, observing pupils' skills, giving advice and working with pupils who show signs of challenging behaviour. This latter is generally effective in keeping pupils involved in learning and very few instances of pupils 'opting out' arose in all the observed lessons. By Year 6 pupils learn the basic skills in playing tennis. By Year 9 pupils are developing these skills in rallying from the baseline and returning serves by either back or forehand. In the most recent results nine pupils from Year 10 achieved an award in the EdExcel short course GCSE with one pupil achieving a C grade.

67 Activities to enrich and enhance the curriculum are numerous, covering a wide range of sports and activities such as gymnastics, canoeing, climbing, sailing, orienteering and mountain bike riding. The school also takes part in local inter-school competitions in soccer, athletics, swimming and softball. The pupils really enjoy these activities and were recently successful in winning the junior and senior athletic championship awards. Additionally, extra-curricular provision includes break and lunchtime clubs, and an after school sports club which will increase in frequency after September with funding through 'Awards for All'.

68 The subject leader realises that the lack of specialist accommodation could limit the range and depth of curricular provision mainly, in gymnastics and dance but these issues are being resolved by alternate provision through the hire of a private gymnasium and negotiations with a local high school and sports college to provide facilities and teaching in dance from September. The subject leader's vision for developing the subject further is very good. The school is applying for the 'Activemark' award in July, for pupils up to Year 6, and the 'Sportsmark' award in September 2005. Provision for accreditation is very good through the OCR Entry Level and the Edexcel Short course GCSE courses. However, ongoing assessment relies on verbal feedback and recording what has been covered followed by a summative assessment at the end of each academic year, to inform on pupils' progress while more detailed assessment would give the subject leader an ongoing picture of their progress.

69 There was little evidence during the inspection that ICT, such as using the Internet for information and using heart rate monitors to record the rate before and after exercise, is being used to support this subject.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in Citizenship is **good**.

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

- The school has introduced external accreditation for Citizenship.
- The school council is a positive development for pupils and gives them an increased understanding of citizenship.

#### **Commentary**

70 This year the curriculum for the OCR Citizenship has been successfully introduced for pupils in Years 10 and 11 giving them an opportunity for further external accreditation. The curriculum gives pupils experience of learning about matters, which not only concern them locally but about global issues and also gives them the opportunity to discuss topics which may affect them personally. For example pupils learn about renewable and non-renewable energy as part of the citizenship programme.

71 Elected members of the school council take their role seriously and know how to organise committees, elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson and other officers. They have representatives on St Helens Youth Council and good links with the local Member of Parliament who has taken them around the Houses of Parliament, which has given them an insight into democracy working. Two pupils have visited the European Parliament which they have remembered very clearly and which boosted their self-esteem. The school recognises the importance of the school council and allows the Annual General Meeting to take place in a local hotel which raises pupils' self confidence. These elements of school life very strongly support the citizenship curriculum.

### **Personal, Social and Health Education**

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

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

- Good opportunities are provided for pupils, which support their personal development.
- The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PHSE) is good and it is well managed and planned.

#### **Commentary**

72 The subject leader for PHSE has planned the curriculum very well and includes elements of the Healthy Schools Award. A good selection of topics provides effective challenges to develop pupils' understanding of a wide range of personal, environmental and health issues. Outside agencies support some aspects of sex education and pupils in Year 10 listen very maturely as information about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases is discussed. In an attempt to encourage pupils to continue at school after their examinations a Youth Development group works with them to develop communication and team work in activities when working together is paramount. Younger pupils have opportunities to discuss their actions and the consequence and about the range of feelings we experience.

73 There are a number of opportunities throughout the day when pupils can develop their personal and social skills. For example, the day starts off with the breakfast club letting pupils relax and chat about topics which interest them and at the end of the day the short pastoral period is used effectively to discuss what has gone on during the day or to have a one-to-one conversation with their form teacher about their progress or other issues which may be bothering them. This short

period demonstrates the very good relationships between adults and pupils when praise and encouragement in a supportive atmosphere are the hallmarks of the session. Pupils are involved in setting their own personal targets which are discussed at the end of every lesson when points are awarded and this makes a positive contribution to understanding their own behaviour and attitudes towards school. All staff are aware of the need to promote pupils' personal and social skills and are good role models in that they treat pupils with respect. Both parents and pupils recognise this aspect of the school's philosophy. In addition there are other sessions on the timetable, such as, Sulp (Social Use of Language Programme) and Emotional Literacy, which not only help develop language skills but develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
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
<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).*

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