

INSPECTION REPORT

CROSBY HIGH SCHOOL

Crosby

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104980

Headteacher: Steven Dempsey

Lead inspector: George Derby

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th July 2004

Inspection number: 258986

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
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	113
School address:	De Villiers Avenue Crosby Merseyside
Postcode:	L23 2TH
Telephone number:	0151 924 3671
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mike Hanford
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Crosby High School, formally known as Ronald House, is an average size special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected nationally. It is beginning to admit pupils with more complex needs including, increasing numbers of pupils with autism, pupils with limited spoken language, sensory impairments and physical difficulties. However, the numbers of these pupils are very small, at present. The school draws its pupils mainly from the north-west Liverpool area including Bootle, Crosby, Litherland, Netherton and Seaforth. Some of these areas are socially and economically deprived and there is a high percentage of families (42 per cent) eligible for free school meals. All the pupils come from white British backgrounds.

The school received a Recognition of Quality Award in Careers in 2003 and one in Work Experience in 2004. It is also received an Investor in People award in 2002. It is working towards the Healthy Schools Award. The school changed its name in September 2003 and no longer takes pupils under the age of 11. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 pupils had left the school. However, a small number were on site for additional tuition and to meet inspectors. The school is part of a local Education Action Zone (EAZ), the 'Manor partnership'. The school is also linked to cluster of nearby schools receiving a Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25349	George Derby	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Science French
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20165	Alan Lemon	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Geography History Personal, social and health education Religious education Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. It has some very good and excellent features. It has a very strong ethos of care and concern. It significantly builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The pupils achieve well and achievement is particularly strong for pupils' personal development. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good. Overall, the leadership of the school is good and there is effective management. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good; there has been a very rigorous approach to improving the quality of the provision. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has developed very effective systems that ensure the school evaluates and builds on its performance very well.
- The high quality of care for pupils, the very good support for their personal development and the excellent relationships between pupils and staff ensure a very harmonious environment.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and to work are very good.
- Pupils receive very good support and encouragement from teachers and teaching assistants; as a result, they work very hard and try their best.
- The provision in mathematics, science, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education is very good; much of the teaching in these subjects is very good or excellent.
- The taught programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for religious education is unsatisfactory; as a result, pupils' achievements are less than satisfactory.
- Although improving, teachers do not use ICT sufficiently to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers do not make enough use of the opportunities to support writing in subjects and especially to improve pupils' knowledge of sounds in words and their spelling.

There has been good improvement since the school was inspected in 1998. At that time, it had a number of weaknesses. A newly appointed headteacher in 2000 has significantly improved practice and ensured that pupils' achievement has risen. There is a very clear vision for the future development of the school. Subject leadership has developed well. The work of co-ordinators is now effective overall. Governors are much more involved in the school's work and support the headteacher in planning for the future development; the chair takes a very active role in this. Curriculum planning has improved and there are full, detailed schemes of work for nearly all subjects. Assessment is satisfactory and is developing well. The accommodation has been improved; it is now satisfactory and has a range of specialist facilities.

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	very good
Year 11	good	very good

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

The good attention to planning in most subjects, and the good quality teaching, are the main reasons why **pupils' achievements are good**. Pupils achieve very well in mathematics, science, geography and ICT and well in English, French and physical education. However, achievement in religious education and in PSHE lessons is not good enough. However, against pupils' personal and social targets and in the very wide range of other opportunities around the school, they achieve very well. This is also because of high level of support for the pupils' personal skills and the incentives provided

for pupils. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in writing they could do a lot better if they had more opportunities. Pupils also have a wide range of ways to learn, especially for those who attend mainstream school, 'taster' days at college and work related learning.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils have a very keen interest in their lessons and behave very well. A high level of respect for pupils by adults, and a valuing of their contributions, significantly enhances their self-esteem. The pupils' attendance is very good and their punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Over a half of the teaching was very good or excellent. However, seven per cent was unsatisfactory, mostly in religious education or PSHE lessons. Teachers give pupils every encouragement to be involved in lessons and clearly state what they are going to learn. They usually ensure that their lessons always have a practical component, knowing that a 'hands on' approach is what helps pupils learn most effectively. Staff carefully consider the best ways to support pupils' learning. However, a few only provide a narrow range of ways and the teaching in these lessons was often unsuccessful. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very well managed. Other aspects, such as the very good quality of care for pupils and the good links with parents, very strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress. The school's standing in the local area, and the pupils' opportunities to learn, have been strengthened through the very strong partnership with local schools and the community in general. The curriculum is good overall and opportunities outside lessons are good; participation in sport is very good. The school has worked hard to improve facilities and accommodation. However, the indoor sports hall for physical education is inadequate.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The tenacious approach by the headteacher has led to improved quality and standards. His leadership is very good. The headteacher and two deputy headteachers form a good team. The work of governors is effective and they provide good support, ensuring all statutory requirements are met. The headteacher's and governors' determination to provide 'the best' for pupils is successful. Leadership by other key staff is good overall. The school's senior management team is supportive and members carry out their management duties effectively. However, although their leadership is satisfactory, they sometimes play a lesser role than they should in the strategic direction of the school. There is a very good vision for the school's future and this is supported by strong staff teamwork, especially that of co-ordinators. Planning for the development of the school is very effective.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Most parents at the pre-inspection meeting felt that school has transformed their children, many having bad experiences in their previous mainstream schools. Overall, from the survey of parents' views, a few had concerns over homework and about bullying, but these views were not substantiated by the inspection team. Pupils like their lessons and activities very much.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise pupils' achievement in the subjects of PSHE and religious education through improved provision, especially the aspects of planning and teaching.
- Provide wider opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects.
- Provide wider opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects and improve their knowledge of sounds in words and spelling.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is often well below that of pupils of a similar age. This is due to their moderate learning difficulties and, in a small number of cases, their additional needs. Pupils make good progress and achieve well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement has been improved through better planning, teaching and assessment.
- The pupils make good or very good progress in most subjects; in a few subjects their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The very good emphasis on developing pupils' language skills enhances their skills and confidence in speaking and listening; as a result, pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils' writing skills, their phonic knowledge and spelling skills could be better supported in subjects.
- Overall, the school meets the differing needs of pupils' well; this results in the small number with additional needs achieving well.
- The school is working hard to raise attainment by setting targets and providing a wider range of award-bearing courses.

Commentary

1. The good improvement in pupils' achievement in most subjects since the last inspection is because of a number of key improvements in the school's work. Although pupils' achievements were sound in most subjects, the weakly planned curriculum and limited assessment reduced the effect of the good teaching.
2. In most subjects pupils' achievements have now been strengthened and are mostly good or very good. This improvement is because of:
 - the good and often very good teaching;
 - the teachers' good knowledge of pupils' additional needs and of how to help pupils in lessons;
 - the wide range of ways that are planned to help pupils to be confident speakers;
 - a curriculum which better meets pupils' needs;
 - a good range of ways of assessing pupils' needs and tracking of pupils' progress with information used soundly to adapt programmes for pupils;
 - careful use of target-setting to raise attainment;
 - the good development of most subjects through improved subject leadership.
3. In mathematics, science, ICT, geography and physical education, in athletics, pupils achieve very well. Very high levels of staff knowledge coupled with skilled ways to help pupils understand enable pupils to make very good progress. Overall, in physical education achievement is good. However, the effects of the very good teaching are limited by the indoor facilities which are inadequate.
4. Achievement in English and French is good. Whether it is in lessons generally, during tutorial time or during assemblies, the pupils have very good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Their use of spoken language improves very well and is considerably supported by the well-designed resources for reading and writing. Their grasp of vocabulary through literature, understanding of the meanings of idioms and interpreting of different intonations in speech are strengths.

5. Although English lessons adequately support pupils' writing, and pupils' progress is satisfactory, their writing skills are not as well developed as their skills in reading, speaking and listening. Opportunities to develop reading and writing skills in lessons other than English vary from teacher to teacher but are limited overall. In addition, while many pupils become confident readers and achieve well in reading, some could do better as there is a weakness in their ability to recognise the complex sound patterns in words, such as '.ough'. Spelling is also a weakness, partly linked to this and to the lack of a well-developed strategy for spelling. Not all subjects support pupils' reading and spelling skills as much as they could, although there are some good examples of the use of technology in ICT to help pupils interpret text and check the accuracy of their writing.
6. In mathematics, an emphasis on practical work, where pupils solve everyday problems, together with clear demonstrations and explanations, helps them achieve well. All staff successfully teach the National Numeracy Strategy, giving pupils the confidence to extend their skills. In French, good knowledge by the co-ordinator and a well-planned range of activities in lessons (including challenging oral work) effectively support pupils' achievements. However, progress is not even across all year group as some teachers do not plan adequately to meet the needs of all the pupils in their class.
7. In religious education and in PSHE lessons pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. This is because the work here does not build often enough on what the pupils have learned previously and fails to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils. The provision for PSHE is sound overall; although it is unsatisfactory for the subject, the progress that pupils make toward their personal targets is very good. The school recognises that aspects such as tutorial time and assembly add much to pupils' personal development and intends to link all these aspects to strengthen overall planning. The school intends to re-organise the planning of religious education.
8. The school's range of award-bearing courses has increased since the last inspection and the recent increased accuracy in target setting is helping to raise achievement. The school set targets for the first time in 2003 and although actual results were somewhat lower than the actual targets at the end of Year 9, this reflected the school's inexperience in the process. The school did well to exceed its target for one A*-G GCSE grades with 33 per cent of pupils attaining the grades. It has raised the target to 48 per cent for this year; pupils are on track to reach, and possibly exceed, this percentage. Attainment in the tests is usually the highest in science with attainment in English much lower, reflecting pupils' major weakness in the subject. Pupils now undertake a range of courses which meet their needs well and these are to be extended further during the next academic year.
9. The knowledge of pupils' additional special educational needs, especially of those pupils with behavioural or sensory difficulties, is good. Overall, there are only a very small number of pupils with additional needs but the school supports them well and they make good progress. Teachers make sure their needs are met by providing additional help or by using modified materials, such as those for visually impaired pupils. In addition, the pastoral support and the school's good systems for monitoring and improving behaviour help those who are known to have problems from time to time in controlling their behaviour. As a result they, too, achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitude of pupils to school and to their learning is very good and their behaviour in and around school is also very good. There is very effective provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils really enjoy their lessons and try very hard with their work.
- The pupils are treated fairly and with great respect; this even-handedness, together with the very good management of pupils' behaviour, results in a very orderly community.
- The opportunities for pupils' spiritual reflection, their understanding of moral issues and to develop their social skills are very good; cultural opportunities are good.
- The relationships between all members of the school community are very good.
- Attendance has improved well from the low levels seen four years ago.

Commentary

10. From the moment they arrive in school with their escorts, the pupils enjoy meeting up with their friends in the Breakfast Club and talking about what they will be doing during the day. Almost all the parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoyed school. At the pre-inspection meeting with parents there were other positive comments about the keenness of their children to attend school and the "fabulous relationships that exist in school". The interesting curriculum and the good quality teaching motivate the pupils so well that they show a high level of enthusiasm for learning and concentrate very well.
11. The pupils act very sensibly and maturely and work co-operatively in most lessons and around the school. Any disagreements are minor and are quickly sorted out. Behaviour in lessons is sometimes exemplary, usually where lessons have them 'hanging on the edge of their seat'. It has improved well since the last inspection. Staff treat pupils with respect and, in return, the pupils have a high degree of respect for them. A small number of parents expressed concern at the pre-inspection meeting about behaviour and incidents of bullying but the inspection team saw no evidence of this during their time in school. The school sets very high expectations for pupils' conduct and there are some very good management procedures in place to constantly promote, encourage and monitor behaviour. The high level of exclusions in the last reporting period was mainly due to one pupil who has since left the school.

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	113	12	0

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

12. Pupils respond very well to the guidance that adults give them. No unsociable behaviour was seen during the inspection. The impact of these very high quality relationships is that all pupils are totally included in all school activities. In addition, the opportunities and the encouragement that pupils of all ages are given to take responsibility are very good.
13. The opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual, moral and social development are very good and carefully planned throughout subjects. Pupils are encouraged to reflect and talk about their feelings in a variety of situations. For example, in assembly pupils were discussing the difference and uniqueness of each of them. Additionally, on a recent residential visit, pupils watched the night sky at midnight and spoke about their feelings of the experience. Moral development is promoted very well through rigorous behaviour management procedures. Pupils respond very well to these and they have a clear understanding of the rewards and sanctions that are in place. On many occasions during the inspection, examples were seen of staff valuing pupils' contributions and how their self-esteem and confidence were being raised. Social development is also very good. Pupils are encouraged to give their views about the

school and to reflect on their likes and dislikes about school through the School Council. Adults listen carefully to their views and each contribution is valued; every pupil is encouraged to take part in discussion. Additionally, the school production of *Songs from Broadway* provided an excellent opportunity for pupils to sing and dance in public. They responded outstandingly to the challenges of solos, duets and group performances. Pupils are also very keen to take on other responsibilities such as head girl, head boy and prefects.

- Cultural development is good. The school has worked hard to provide opportunities for pupils to experience their own culture and the culture of those living in other countries. All these opportunities have a very good impact on the development of all the pupils at Crosby High School as they become more self assured, confident and aware of living in a multicultural community.

Attendance

- The school works very hard to ensure that its pupils attend school on a regular basis. The impact of this is that attendance figures are very good and well above those of similar schools in the area and nationally. The attendance co-ordinator has introduced very thorough and effective procedures, which allow immediate follow-up action to be taken in the event of an absence. In addition, the school's curriculum and level of challenge for pupils in lessons have significantly increased, resulting in pupils who want to learn and who want to come to school. The punctuality of pupils to school is heavily reliant on the provision of transport, but it is consistently good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.5
National data	8.2	National data	1.8

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 is good overall. The quality of teaching is good and has some very good and excellent features. Other aspects, such the very good quality of care for pupils, the good links with parents and the very good links with the community and local schools, very strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress. The curriculum is good but could be even better, especially if there were a well-integrated programme for PSHE. The school has worked hard to improve facilities and accommodation. These are now good, although facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are significant strengths in much of the teaching, especially in mathematics, science and ICT where a considerable amount of the teaching is excellent; there are weaknesses, however, in the teaching of religious education and PSHE which need urgent attention.
- The very good encouragement given to pupils helps them to be motivated and highly interested in their work.
- Very good discipline and systems for supporting pupils' behaviour mean that pupils act sensibly and behave very well.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils.

- Teachers miss opportunities to promote literacy, and ICT is inconsistently used to support learning.

Commentary

16. Teachers usually provide interesting ways to involve pupils in their lessons. They think carefully about how they can capture their interests and imagination. Some staff use very well constructed and informative multimedia approaches and, although the school does not have any interactive whiteboards as yet, pupils are highly motivated by the use of ICT to promote learning. As a result of the very good encouragement and support they get in lessons, pupils are highly interested in their lessons and most work very hard. Even the small number of pupils who have had histories of difficult behaviour in their previous schools now show a keen interest in work and exhibit few problems.
17. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. Discipline is very strong and most staff stand no nonsense. The incentives provided for pupils during lessons and in the reviews of their performance during tutorial periods, really enhance their self-esteem and prompt them to do better. In a very small number of lessons where staff have not thought carefully enough about how to challenge higher attaining pupils, some become silly. This happened in a Year 8 French lesson where all pupils, despite a wide variation in their ability, were expected to do the same work.
18. The work of the teaching assistants is very effective. They are usually assigned to subjects and link with the teacher or co-ordinator in relation to their own staff training and improving knowledge of subjects. This works very well and there are many instances where teaching assistants add much to pupils' learning because of their own knowledge and skills in the subject. They also support very well those pupils with additional needs or those with literacy difficulties.
19. The amount of very good and better teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. However, a small amount of teaching seen during the inspection was less than satisfactory. This is similar to the findings previously. The teaching and pupils' learning are very good in mathematics, science, ICT, geography, and physical education. Teaching is so successful because there is a high degree of specialist knowledge, a very good understanding of pupils' needs and work which is highly planned to meet the pupils' needs. The exceptional teaching in science and ICT resulted in pupils learning excellently. Highly skilled teaching, based on excellent planning and ensuring that pupils had thoroughly grasped what they were do, meant that learning took place in small successful steps. In English and French teaching and learning are good.
20. Key strengths of the good, very good and excellent teaching were:
 - very good use of the structure of the national strategies in planning lessons and good use of subject vocabulary help emphasise ideas and pupils to learn effectively;
 - in a majority of lessons work is planned to take the needs of all pupils, including those with additional difficulties, into account;
 - very strong introductions make clear what pupils are to do and learn;
 - in English and many other subjects, including French, a very strong emphasis on speaking and listening and pupils' communication helps pupils develop their speaking and listening skills;
 - in science and ICT, highly expert knowledge is used to help pupils plan and interpret ideas, especially strengthened through high quality multimedia approaches.

However, during the inspection, in religious education and PSHE lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory. This was mainly because activities did not build on pupils' previous learning, work was not sufficiently planned for the needs of the different groups of pupils and there was a lack of challenge for all pupils. It was not possible to judge teaching in other subjects as too little was seen.

Weaknesses seen in satisfactory and less than satisfactory teaching:

- in some lessons insufficient attention is given to pupils' differing needs with work pitched for the higher attaining pupils to the detriment of those who are lower attaining;
- the use of limited worksheets, in some classes, fails to extend pupils' learning or support their writing skills;
- questioning does not extend pupils' ideas or build sufficiently on what they already know.

Other weaknesses generally:

- in lessons there are often missed opportunities to promote pupils' knowledge of the sounds in words so as to help improve their reading and to promote accurate spelling;
- opportunities to develop writing skills in a range of subjects, as well to use ICT to promote learning generally, are limited.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 57 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (11%)	22 (39%)	18 (22%)	7 (12%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)	0

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

21. The school uses a good range of procedures to keep track of pupils' progress but the impact of these has yet to be seen as some have been introduced only fairly recently. There are some very good subject-specific systems for assessment, for example in physical education, science and ICT. Some other arrangements, although highly effective in themselves, are not used consistently throughout the school and so it is difficult for staff to compare pupils' rates of progress in some subjects. Marking is inconsistent; it does not always make it clear to pupils how they can improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The breadth of learning opportunities for all pupils is good and these are well enriched with many additional activities. Accommodation and the school's resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective management has improved the curriculum and has ensured learning opportunities, overall, are of good quality.
- The curriculum provided suits pupils' learning needs and it prepares them well for when they leave school.
- Pupils who have additional special educational needs are provided for well.
- The inadequate planning for what is taught in religious education and PSHE leads to ineffective learning in these subjects.
- The performing arts, sports and other activities add richness to the curriculum.
- There has been improvement in the accommodation but facilities for physical education are inadequate.

Commentary

22. The curriculum, overall, is broad, suitably balanced and relevant to the needs of its pupils. It meets statutory requirements. It has improved well since the last inspection when there was inadequate co-ordination of what was taught, and insufficient balance. Planning in most subjects is now effective as teachers' good specialist subject knowledge has been capitalised upon to provide detailed plans which build on pupils' learning. Provision in mathematics, ICT, science and geography is very good, partly as a consequence. Close monitoring of planning by senior managers, and how this matches with what is taught, gives the school an accurate picture of where strengths and weaknesses in the work lie. This knowledge is being used well

to develop provision. In planning of programmes, co-ordinators have been imaginative and present pupils with activities that are of interest and challenge. Planning has also been shaped positively by the influences of major national initiatives, for example on literacy and numeracy. The programmes interest and motivate pupils; they promote very positive attitudes to learning and good achievement. The curriculum also makes a significant contribution to effective teaching.

23. The curriculum is planned largely to be a close match to what all pupils can realistically achieve and, as a result, in most subjects all pupils are included in effective learning opportunities. This is reflected also in the suitable range of accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. These are used to measure pupils' progress, celebrate achievement and help to enable them to gain qualifications to show their competencies in different areas of work. The school uses the Entry Level award, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Award and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) in ICT. It is increasing the number of subjects where GCSEs are introduced and has plans to develop GNVQ courses.
24. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good. The school is the only one of its type in the region to have achieved the careers recognition award. Pupils of all ages are taught the demands, commitment and responsibilities expected in the world of employment. A programme of independent travel is being introduced for Year 11 pupils. By the time they leave school, they have had very good opportunities to test what they have learned in very well organised work experience placements and other work-related learning.
25. The additional needs pupils have, such as visual impairment, are effectively communicated to teachers and this results in them taking the appropriate steps to include these pupils and adapt work which meets their needs. This extends to pupils who, for various reasons, are reluctant learners. The provision for them is very good. They are quickly identified and join a 'motivation group' in their tutor time each morning where they follow an independent computer learning program. The success they experience transforms their attitudes and builds their confidence and self-esteem.
26. Provision in some subjects does not yet meet all pupils' needs. For example, in religious education pupils are taught a suitably broad range of topics but, in planning these, there has not been enough attention to ensuring what is taught is a close match to pupils' abilities. Too often, this leads to activities that suit only higher-attaining pupils or to work that lacks sufficient challenge for most. Although the school's 'total' provision for PSHE is satisfactory, there are problems with the subject. The taught programme is poor because the links between what is taught and the learning objectives stated in plans are tenuous. In addition, what is intended for pupils to learn is set out too vaguely. Nevertheless, pupils develop very well personally and socially due to excellent relationships, the school's very good ethos and pertinent experiences in, for instance, assemblies and tutor time. The school has some very good 'separate' programmes or activities to support pupils' personal development (including School Council opportunities) and aspects of PSHE. However, these lack co-ordination and result in provision only being satisfactory overall.
27. There is good emphasis given to pupils' participation in the arts through opportunities for them to perform in music, dance and drama. Their involvement in sports is very good. This is the result of the good amount of time set aside each week, which the physical education co-ordinator uses to organise a wide variety of sports activities in school and beyond. Various clubs, such as for dance and music, meet at lunchtimes, allowing pupils to pursue interests and these are well-attended and used with enthusiasm.
28. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the provision of specialist teaching rooms for many subjects including music, science and ICT. Accommodation was poor at that time. However, the hall is still inadequate for the teaching of games activities in physical education because of the limited space. There are constant interruptions to lessons as the hall is used as a thoroughfare. These factors have a detrimental effect on the pupils'

learning in physical education, although the school compensates for this, to some extent, by using external facilities. A hydrotherapy pool has also been built. Although the substantial cost of this has been fully met by the local education authority (LEA) this facility is of little use to pupils at the school. Staff have not yet been trained to use the pool and the one pupil who could make use of it is transported to another school's pool.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, and health and safety of pupils are very good. The school takes very good care of the emotional and physical needs of its pupils and it provides them with very good support and advice. The school values and acts on the views of its pupils very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff consider it a priority to ensure pupils are well cared for and safe.
- The opportunities that the school provides to listen and act on the views of its pupils are very good.

Commentary

29. The school provides a very high standard of care for its pupils. This is central to the school's aims and ethos. This aspect of school life is underpinned by the excellent quality of trusting relationships that exist between all members of the school community and the thorough knowledge that all adults have of their pupils. It has improved well since the last inspection. Staff act as very good role models and always show a great concern for each individual and particularly how they are getting on with their work. The pastoral needs of all pupils, whatever their special educational needs, are very well catered for through the numerous ways the school has of doing this. For instance, the tutorial system reviews pupils' personal targets. Staff provide pupils with much encouragement to improve their personal skills, whether these be for learning or behaviour. They also reinforce pupils' knowledge of their targets and what they need to do to improve. The systems are managed effectively by one of the deputy headteachers and results in any problems being dealt with quickly and sensitively.
30. Very good procedures exist to promote health and safety, including fire evacuation, accident reporting and Internet security. In addition, there are very good risk assessments in place for each department and for every school activity. The school also maintains very good procedures for child protection. Similar high quality procedures exist to allow the school nurse to provide a weekly drop-in centre facility to deal with any medical, emotional or personal or social issues. Many pupils make good use of this facility.
31. Pupils are able to make their views on school matters known through the School Council. In this group pupils are encouraged to give their views about school life and any improvements that they would like to introduce. Non-teaching members of staff support the council very well and they ensure that all those who attend are fully involved in any discussions.
32. Parents expressed very positive views about this aspect of school life through their responses to the questionnaire and at their meeting. Pupils also have very positive views of school life and feel they are listened to.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between the school and its parents and carers is good. The quality of links that the school has developed with the community and other schools is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and carers have very positive views about most aspects of school life and are provided with a good level of information.
- The support that parents give to school activities is strong.
- The very effective partnership that has been developed with the local community and other schools in the area is an asset to pupils' learning and progress.

Commentary

33. The school has improved the quality of relationships with its parents and carers since the last inspection. Parents hold the school in high esteem and provide very good support for all its activities. In particular, the attendance of parents and carers at the dress rehearsal of the school summer production was very good and many were very proud to see their children perform in public. Although there is no formal fund-raising organisation in school, parents are very generous with the many donations that they make to various charities.
34. The school also tries hard to ensure that parents support the completion of pupils' homework. Although provision for homework is satisfactory, there are some problems with parental support for this. Despite the vast majority of parents and carers having signed up to the home/school agreement, only approximately 30 per cent of pupils complete homework. The school encourages pupils to make effective use of their 'Work Planners' but they are not always used appropriately as a two-way communication between school and home.
35. The information provided for parents is good. The regular newsletters are chatty and informative and the annual reports on pupils' progress give a good indication of what pupils can do and the targets that they need to achieve to improve further. Information about pupils' progress towards their targets in Annual Reviews is good and well focused. Meetings with parents at such events result in new, good quality, targets emerging.
36. A wealth of opportunities is provided through the Education Action Zone and the Excellence in Cities, Manor Partnership, to develop community links. These opportunities have a very good impact on the learning and development of personal and social skills and on an understanding of the business world through work experience projects.
37. Very strong links to promote the inclusion of pupils exist with local secondary schools. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the many opportunities to relate to, and learn with, children from mainstream schools and an independent school in a variety of subjects. Additionally, very good relationships exist with local primary schools so those younger pupils make the transfer into Year 7 with the minimum of concerns.
38. There is good provision for pupils to extend their learning in other schools. The very close links that exist between schools in the local area are used effectively to provide a range of opportunities. Pupils attend other schools to study design and technology, English, drama and physical education lessons. They are well supported by a teacher and teaching assistant from the school.
39. The role of the school as a resource base to offer support and advice to pupils with similar needs in other schools is in the process of being developed. A team of staff, including the involvement of a representative of the LEA, has been established. A programme of activities has been identified to develop and promote the provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is very effective. There is a strong partnership between the headteacher and the two deputy headteachers. Leadership by key staff is good overall. The leadership by the senior management team is satisfactory, but some members have little involvement in developing or supporting leadership initiatives. The work of subject co-ordinators is good overall and much of it is very effective. Governance is good and governors are very supportive of the school's work. The management of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very clear view of how the school needs to improve and develop; this is supported through very good financial planning.
- The school very effectively monitors how well it is doing.
- The leadership roles of co-ordinators have improved a great deal and staff are effective although the role of the senior management team is under-developed.
- Governors are an effective group who challenge the school to improve its performance; only a small number, however, have a full working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

40. There has been a significant improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection in 1998. At that time, the school was in a weak position. The temporary position of both the headteacher and deputy headteacher was unsatisfactory and did not provide a stable platform for improvement. In addition, the governing body did not monitor the school's work and had insufficient strategic involvement.
41. The headteacher has done a great deal to transform the school to the position it is now in, and in particular, the school's profile in the local community is now a very positive one. When he was appointed in 2000, the action plan from the previous inspection was incomplete and little had been done to move the school forward. His analysis, supported by inspection judgements, indicated that the school was in a weak state with much still needing to be done.
42. The headteacher has worked tirelessly since that time to improve the quality of education, raise pupils' achievement and to especially develop the roles of co-ordinators. In these, he has been largely successful and in many areas very much so. Very good staff training and very well focussed performance management systems have improved staff's skills and raised their expectations. As the school is now beginning to admit some pupils with complex needs, good arrangements are already in place to improve staff's skills through training and additional support from the LEA. In areas such as science and ICT, provision is now very good with excellent features. However, there is still some way to go to improve the provision in PSHE and religious education and especially their co-ordination. Although these subjects have not been as rigorously monitored as some, weaknesses in them are recognised by the headteacher and support is being provided to improve the situation.
43. The school has a variety of ways of checking how well it is doing. Recent developments include the use of Fischer Family Trust performance data for tracking progress and to produce even sharper target setting. The headteacher has recognised some of the deficiencies in the systems he 'inherited' and has worked hard to improve these. Target setting is becoming more accurate as a result. Monitoring of the school's work is very thorough and the headteacher has especially benefited from the national leadership course he has attended in developing the school's systems. The development plan is a very well focused document which outlines the school's clearly costed priorities for one year and beyond. It is based on a very good analysis of the school's previous work, constructed with governors and staff. The outcomes of planning have a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
44. Co-ordination of many of the subjects inspected is very effective. This is very good in mathematics, science, ICT, geography, music and physical education. In English and French it is good but it is unsatisfactory in religious education and PSHE, where co-ordinators do not influence their subjects sufficiently. However, overall there has been a good improvement in the work of co-ordinators since the last inspection. Leaders have been guided by the very clear expectations of the headteacher and most are now sharply focused on standards and how to improve the quality of provision. They have been given time to fulfil their roles. Where there is more than one member of staff in a department, systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by most subject leaders have been undertaken. Where this has taken place it has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and planning, in particular.

45. The headteacher has built an effective team of staff, committed to the pupils and the school and to ensuring pupils get the best. He ensures that teachers appointed have a high level of skill in their subjects and have a strong knowledge of the National Curriculum. This has had a positive effect on pupils' achievement. A core leadership group, comprising of the headteacher and two deputy headteachers, meet regularly and are effective in driving initiatives forward. These meet regularly in school time, as well as during holidays for briefing, planning and training.
46. A larger senior management team meet from time to time, and although there is an agenda, no minutes are kept. The role of this group is not entirely clear. Members carry out the management tasks they are asked to perform well, although some undertake little strategic work. There is dissent among a few staff about the pace of change and about workload, although this is not voiced by the majority of school staff. The role and function of this group is to change in September as significant staffing changes will have taken place.
47. The work of the governing body has improved well and is led effectively by the highly committed chair. It challenges the school effectively and ensures that the school is 'raising its game' at the right pace. It monitors the work of the school well and keeps a regular check on pace and effectiveness of development. Although governors are increasing their knowledge of the school's work and their involvement in school life, only a small number of governors have a full knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. More could be done to ensure all have a full view of the school's work and contribute more rigorously to school development.
48. The school's financial management is very good and is very well related to the school's priorities for improving provision for pupils. Governors play an active part in financial planning and work closely with the headteacher. The school's five-year plan shows well how its finances are to be used, for instance, to improve staffing levels and to finance after-school activities once the short-term national funding arrangements cease. The school's administration is very good and systems are clear and effective. Financial control is good and information requested is clear and readily available. Governors are kept well informed. The school has a considerable surplus of funds which it has built up over the last two years. However, this is earmarked for particular projects and plans are in place to reduce this over the next three years. These funds have accumulated, partly because of additional monies such as those for the development of outreach and for the school's contribution to the new hydrotherapy pool, recreation and storage areas, have not yet been spent. The school also employs a small number of staff using special grants which are likely to finish in the near future. The school is accumulating funds to continue the provision it has been successful in developing through these grants.
49. Principles of best value are applied well in managing resources, both through considering the purchase of materials and through evaluating the school's performance of staff. The school compares itself well with others and regularly consults parents, pupils and staff about its provision.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1052737
Total expenditure	983309
Expenditure per pupil	8701

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	82882
Balance carried forward to the next	152310

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are very well promoted and there is a passion for reading.
- There is insufficient attention by staff to the promotion of basic skills, such as writing, and the use of sounds in words to improve reading and spelling, in subjects other than English.
- The expertise of the subject leader and his enthusiasm rubs off and pupils have very good attitudes to the subject.
- The use of the library and the way reading for pleasure is promoted are very good.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Assessment systems are not used consistently enough throughout the school.
- Teaching is generally good but writing is under-emphasised and pupils' skills lag behind their other skills in English.

Commentary

50. Pupils' achievement in English is good. The development of their speaking and listening skills is very good. The use of spoken language improves very well and is very effectively linked to, and supported by, the school's tailor-made resources for reading and writing. Pupils' grasp of vocabulary through literature, understanding of the meanings of idioms and interpreting of different intonations in speech are strengths. Pupils' achievement in reading is good because they grasp the meaning well. Most are able to use visual cues and use their knowledge of language to predict which words will come next and to make sense of print. Although generally their basic knowledge of letter sounds is good, their use of groups of sounds in words (such as '...ion') to tackle difficult print and to build up complex words is limited. Some pupils lack sufficient knowledge of the rules associated with these sound to help them to read texts of increasing difficulty fluently and independently. Pupils' achievement in writing is satisfactory. Their written sentences show increasing length, complexity and the influence of books they read. The weakness in their phonic knowledge is also reflected in their spelling where some make needless errors.
51. Pupils have a love of books and great enthusiasm for the subject because lively, sensitive, well-planned teaching interests them and enables them to succeed. The management of pupils' behaviour and the help they get to understand the difficulties they have are excellent. They result in very attentive and well-behaved pupils. Their motivation and their interest and involvement in learning are outstanding. Teaching of intonation patterns to help pupils understand the stress put on words when reading text and the modelling of reading is very good. Generally, writing is under-emphasised in teaching, although the teaching of this element in English is satisfactory. Speaking, reading and writing are always well linked in lessons, but the use of ICT to help record pupils' ideas in writing is under-developed. Often, the time to write is at the end of a lesson. Some pupils do not have enough time or enough support (for example, through writing frames) to help them produce more extended writing at a faster pace than they usually work. Marking, while regular, does not always show pupils how they could improve well enough. Teaching could model writing better and help more to improve presentation of pupils' often untidy work. The management of teaching assistants and their contribution to the way pupils learn is very good, especially in the use of the library and the

management of a few pupils with behaviour difficulties which can hinder their learning. Teaching develops the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils very well through reflecting on values and beliefs, discussion on moral and social issues and cultural development through poetry books.

52. The quality of English curriculum is good and pupils are presented with a broad, balanced and stimulating range of activities. Occasionally in the planning, basic literacy skills are not identified precisely enough to ensure that all staff know exactly what to teach next. Assessment is sound with a wide range of useful procedures. However, these are not used consistently enough across the school and are not linked sufficiently closely to National Curriculum levels to help pupils improve their standards at a faster rate than they already do. Resources are satisfactory. The school has worked hard to set up the library. The range and number of books are satisfactory. The library is well managed by staff, and reading for pleasure is much promoted, valued and enjoyed by pupils. This is very well supported through the successful lunchtime reading club.
53. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader, supported by the headteacher, has identified how to improve provision and has a clear action plan. The subject manager, through the high quality of materials tailor-made for the school, has communicated a passion for literature to most of the pupils, many of whom have been admitted to the school because of difficulties with literacy. The school is in a very good position to raise standards further.
54. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is a new library and pupils' attitudes are better but the school still has not established the consistent use of systems to monitor pupils' progress throughout all classes.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Overall this is satisfactory. The school has identified subject-specific vocabulary well and promotes this reasonably consistently in other subjects. The wider aspects of literacy are promoted well in other subjects. For example, historical contexts are used in the teaching of English, and literacy is well used for recording in geography.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because they are mostly taught by knowledgeable staff who plan well and provide interesting and exciting lessons.
- Pupils' confidence in using French grows because teachers consider they have the potential to do well.
- The subject adds much to pupils' personal growth and development.
- The co-ordinator has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in French but staffing difficulties and the need for specialist staff sometimes means pupils' progress is uneven.

Commentary

56. Pupils' achievements are good overall; for some older pupils taught by the subject specialist, these are very good. Strengths lie in the enthusiasm and commitment of the subject co-ordinator and the good teaching observed. Pupils are strongly motivated to learn French and almost all concentrate and listen very well. They try hard to pronounce and spell words correctly and to remember what their teacher has said. Particularly impressive are the skills of Year 10 pupils who clearly have been taught very well and, despite their learning difficulties, have a really good grasp of the language. Weaknesses, however, lie in the recall of vocabulary

of Year 8 pupils; some of this stems from a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in this year.

57. A carefully planned programme utilises the framework of a commercial scheme and systematically develops pupils' confidence in using and understanding French. In Years 7 and 8, pupils learn a range of simple French constructions and vocabulary in their spoken and written forms. In Year 8, the pupils exchange simple information about clothes and food and drink in French. In Year 10 the highest attaining pupils read and write simple sentences and answer questions about different jobs quickly and without prompting. All pupils enjoy the challenge of the games that their teacher has devised and the excellent 'warm-ups' at the beginning of the lessons which help pupils recall, and build upon, what they have learned previously. Pupils try very hard to get things right and are really pleased when their efforts are rewarded. The improvement in their self-esteem spurs them on to try even harder.
58. Teaching is good overall. Apart from Year 8, there are high expectations of the pupils' capability to learn French with challenging activities provided and a very good pace to lessons. Pupils certainly enjoy these challenges. Quick-fire, well thought out questioning keeps pupils on their toes. Teachers are generally good role models, using a good balance of the target language and English. This gives pupils the confidence to try new language structures. Staff also exemplify well what pupils are to learn. There is good teamwork among staff and good use of available resources and time. However, only a narrow range of resources is available and more software and other media, such as video, would enhance the programme even further. Year 8 teaching, although satisfactory, is a relative weakness among so much good and very good practice. This is because the teacher's own subject knowledge is limited. However, although not a specialist, teaching methods could be more varied to interest and motivate all, and take account of the needs of all pupils.
59. The subject is led and managed well. Pupils' progress is monitored and assessed soundly and information gained is used to adapt programmes. Teaching is also monitored and the co-ordinator is aware of the weaknesses in teaching in Year 8, some of which relate to the difficulties of a relatively small school with teachers teaching more than one subject. The pupils benefit greatly from their visit to France and recall activities and events with enthusiasm. French makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social growth and their cultural interest. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the way the attainment of older pupils has improved so much.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on the way that lessons are taught; because of this pupils have a very good attitude towards learning.
- Teaching is very strongly focused on the needs of all pupils and the practical approach helps pupils learn effectively.
- All pupils show very good achievement and their progress is also very good.
- Very good leadership of the subject results in thorough planning of appropriate learning activities and good methods to check pupils' progress.
- Pupils find it difficult to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems.

Commentary

60. The very good achievement and progress that all the pupils make are a direct result of well-planned teaching. The teaching is very good overall. Very well-devised activities and range of questions effectively match the individual needs of the pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on fractions

the more able pupils were successfully challenged by the more difficult activities and questions that the teacher had prepared. In a Year 9 lesson, less able pupils discovered the number of litres of water that a bucket would hold. They were provided with an opportunity to estimate the capacity and then test their estimation by using a litre container to fill the bucket. This practical approach reinforced the pupils' knowledge of how to measure the volume of a liquid. The fact that activities are carefully planned to meet the needs of all the pupils ensures that they are interested and concentrate well for the duration of lessons, making good gains. If pupils do not understand they feel confident to ask the teacher to explain. In two Year 10 lessons timetabled at the same time, the more able pupils in one group were successfully working on the calculation of averages as part of their GCSE coursework, while the group of less able pupils participated in a game to develop their understanding of hundreds, tens and units.

61. All staff successfully use the guidance for, and the structure of, the National Strategy to teach their lessons. This has a positive effect on producing lessons of a consistently high quality. The carefully planned activities are very well used to ensure the full involvement of all the pupils. As a result, all the pupils are very keen to learn and show very good levels of concentration and interest in the activities. The thorough planning of the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupils and the regular checking of what they understand helps to ensure that the pupils make good progress and achieve well. There has been an increase in the numbers of more able pupils who are successfully obtaining nationally recognised qualifications.
62. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader uses planning and assessment information effectively to determine the future development priorities for the subject. The information obtained from test results and regular assessment show that pupils find it difficult to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. To overcome this teachers have focused their teaching on a wider range of practical activities. This has enabled the pupils to become more competent in using their knowledge to overcome the problems that are posed by these activities. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. The use and development of numeracy skills in other subjects are good. The subject co-ordinator has trained staff to illustrate the way that mathematics can be used in different subjects. This has had a positive outcome. In science, food technology, ICT and geography the pupils are provided with a wealth of opportunities to use their skills in number, measuring and calculating time.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good** and has some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very lively, engages pupils very well and helps the pupils think like real scientists.
- The excellent emphasis on investigation and experimentation results in pupils, over time, being able to make hypotheses, test out ideas and explain and evaluate what they see.
- Teamwork seen in the inspection was excellent.
- The co-ordinator is a highly competent practitioner with a very clear vision for the subject's development.

Commentary

64. Pupils achieve very well in science because of the high quality and often excellent teaching in the subject. A few pupils achieve exceptionally well and reach standards near, or in line with, the levels expected for their age.

65. Over time, their skills in investigation and experimentation improve considerably. This is aided by the very good laboratory facilities, a significant improvement since the last inspection. It is also because of the very good way in which the teacher regularly assesses and modifies the work planned for pupils. This ensures that pupils use their observation skills well, interpret what they see and begin to think of the various ways they can test materials or investigate scientific features, such as friction. It also helps them to know what to vary and what to keep the same. For many of the youngest pupils in Year 7, it is their vocabulary to describe and explain that holds them back. As a result, much work goes into the use of vocabulary and there is now an increased emphasis on pupils reading and spelling scientific words accurately. Over time, their interpretation skills increase so the oldest pupils begin to set up their own investigations. The more able pupils are confident about what constitutes a fair test and how to set up an investigation. Pupils are constantly reminded about what they should be attaining and how to attain it. The teacher is highly adept at identifying the criteria for success and enabling the pupils to improve their skills, so that there is always a constant 'push' towards higher levels of attainment.
66. At present, only the co-ordinator teaches the subject, although this will change in September 2004 when another teacher will join the department. At the time of the inspection, the science teacher worked in partnership with a student teacher. The working relationship was excellent, not only in the way the student was shown the best ways to teach pupils with learning difficulties but also in the way he, too, brought the subject alive, working in tandem with the co-ordinator. Teaching assistants also worked very effectively with teachers.
67. Teaching observed confirms the parents' and their children's views of the subject. It is highly entertaining, keeps pupils superbly interested and motivated and above all helps them learn and achieve very effectively. It also develops their confidence and self-esteem. Planning is excellent and considers the needs of the different pupils in each class very well indeed. The teacher's expertise in the subject and in using a wide range of teaching methods (including ICT) to demonstrate complex ideas is very good. However, this is not, as yet, enhanced by interactive displays, although these are currently under consideration. One group of Year 7 pupils who had been less settled in another lesson, were glued to their seats during an introduction on boat design and water resistance. The recap and recall on earlier work on air resistance, utilising practical 'helicopters' as well as a multimedia presentation, helped make the link very well. Their excitement and enthusiasm to get on with the investigation were also very apparent. The pace of lessons is rapid and keeps pupils interested and highly skilled questioning keeps them on their toes.
68. Pupils' responses are very carefully monitored, and a check kept regularly on their learning. If needed, the lesson is stopped and pupils' attention is drawn to areas where they are having difficulty. This ensures that pupils do not go on making mistakes or become frustrated if things go wrong. Pupils are frequently given a specific time to complete a section of work and this increases their focus. There is always a plenary session at the end of the lesson to assess pupils' learning and reinforce ideas. Usually, this is of high quality. However, it is sometimes short and occasionally unnecessary. For example, often the single period lesson is to be continued next time and the recap and questioning during the lesson are sufficient to have covered the things that are usually dealt with in the plenary.
69. Being the only teacher in the department, the co-ordinator's work is regularly monitored by senior staff, including the headteacher. This monitoring reflects the high quality teaching and planning seen during the inspection. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The co-ordinator has a very clear view of how the subject needs to develop and his skills in this have been enhanced through the national leadership programme he has been attending. Planning for its development is also very good, as in assessment and the monitoring of pupils' progress. This carefully takes into account the needs of the lowest attaining pupils and utilises criteria for the P Levels leading to Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Pupils' achievement is also supported with the very good links with a local independent school, where sixth formers

have been coaching Year 11 pupils. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good** and has some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although considerable investment has been made in ICT more is still needed and the school has had to deal with problems which sometimes have limited access to equipment.
- Pupils often develop ICT skills so well that for some these are in line with the levels expected for their age; however, weaknesses in literacy affect presentation.
- The quality of personal support in lessons is often excellent; this and the very well constructed programmes of work ensure that pupils achieve very well.
- The co-ordinator could take a greater role in financial management of the subject.

Commentary

70. The subject has been very significantly transformed since the last inspection. Two computer suites and a wide range of software and hardware coupled with high quality teaching have raised pupils' attainment in ICT. However, this has not been without its problems. The good accommodation is to be further improved by the installation of air conditioning; this will be a welcome improvement as rooms are hot and stuffy. Surprisingly though, this does not affect most pupils who show excellent enthusiasm for their work and who are very keen to do well. The teachers' use of very well prepared multimedia introductions and demonstrations is somewhat inhibited by the poor projection facilities which lead to some pupils not being able to see the display clearly. This should improve when interactive whiteboards, agreed to during the inspection, are installed. There have been network problems which have sometimes limited pupils' opportunities. There is a clear plan, however, for updating facilities as the school views its work in ICT as of potential 'flagship' quality.
71. By the time the pupils leave the school the more able pupils are very competent users of ICT, well versed, for example, in desktop publishing, multimedia work and the construction of databases. They work towards gaining the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) award, as so many of the staff have. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, there are very well constructed ICT teaching programmes in place and the pupils are now taught regularly by a highly competent practitioner. Pupils achieve very well as a result. Teaching is very good overall and much is often excellent. Teaching is also significantly enhanced by very competent technical support which is extremely valuable for pupils and in the preparation of lessons. Teamwork, here, is excellent.
72. A major factor in pupils not being entered for high level award-bearing courses, such as GCSE, has been the limiting factor of pupils' literacy skills. Many pupils produce highly competent pieces of work, such as in an excellent spoken presentation in a Year 9 lesson on designing procedures in control work. However, the work is often let down by some pupils' inability to spell accurately or produce well-constructed complex sentences. Work in ICT supports pupils' speaking and listening skills excellently; explanations of what they have produced are often of very high quality. However, the written work of a significant number is weak. Much support has been recently provided in lessons to compensate for these weaknesses, such as spell checking, the use of dictionaries, and spoken text output. This is often used for reading complex text from the Internet, but also used for pupils to check their own work to see if it makes sense.
73. The co-ordinator, teaching assistants and technician provide individual pupils with excellent support during the lessons. Following, usually, very clear introductions, where what pupils are to do and learn are specifically stated, pupils often work independently on the tasks they are provided with. The support is perceptive, based on a very good knowledge of pupils' needs and

the stage they are up to with their particular work. Staff receive information from the department's highly detailed assessment and pupil-monitoring procedures. The help the pupils get gives them confidence and builds their self-esteem very well. It spurs them on to try harder and to continue their work, usually at lunchtime. Support is also available after school and, in addition, teaching sessions are often arranged during holidays.

74. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the co-ordinator has a very good view of how the subject needs to improve further. However, most of the financial planning for the subject is dealt with by the headteacher and deputies. Given the important strategic position the subject holds, the co-ordinator's involvement in the financial aspects of development could be further enhanced.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. There is a mixed picture of the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects. Overall, though, it is limited. Some good and very good examples were seen during the inspection. In science this was used very well in demonstration and pupils also use it for recording. It is also used to good effect in design and technology and art and design. However, it is insufficiently used to support pupils' literacy, and especially writing, skills. Most departments have sufficient equipment but not all fully use it. The role of the subject co-ordinator in promoting and developing ICT in many subjects needs further development.

HUMANITIES

76. Insufficient teaching was seen in **history** during the inspection to make a judgement on provision as a whole. Evidence gathered was based on a brief discussion with the subject co-ordinator, scrutiny of pupils' work and one lesson observation in Year 7. In the lesson seen on 'Heaven and Hell' in medieval times, teaching was unsatisfactory. This was because the historical ideas to be developed did not get close enough attention. As a consequence, pupils did not gain the intended knowledge and understanding.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of expert teaching and a very well planned curriculum.
- Leadership and management in geography are very good.

Commentary

77. The teaching of geography is very effective. It is based on strong subject-specialist teaching combined with a very good understanding of pupils' learning needs. All pupils are included in the very good, and particularly challenging, learning opportunities. These are planned utilising the very good knowledge of the co-ordinator, and carefully and progressively build pupils' geographical knowledge, skills and understanding. In Year 7, pupils spent some time building up factual knowledge on Bootle and Southport and used this to begin comparing and contrasting both towns. From the careful explanation and good illustrations given by the teacher, they understood what 'compare' and 'contrast' meant and argued points well to support their evaluations. They identified the salient geographical features that make Southport a good resort town and those that make Bootle a good industrial town. Independent and collaborative learning are effectively emphasised as well as learning through the careful piecing together of evidence. Year 8 pupils carried out detailed research of the most attractive features of their choice of holiday resort, which they used as persuasive text and images in an

advertising brochure. They faced an excellent challenge in having to make a presentation to justify to a committee of their peers why their resort and brochure were the best.

78. Geography is co-ordinated very effectively and this has contributed to good improvement since the last inspection. In particular, the curriculum is now of high quality in the breadth, balance and relevance of learning opportunities for all pupils. The detailed planning of what they are taught means that pupils throughout the school are engaged in a thorough study of each aspect of geography. As a result of this, and very effective teaching, pupils achieve very well. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have followed an Entry Level course, although the modest results in 2003 do not reflect high current standards. However, eight Year 11 pupils are entered for the more demanding GCSE and are predicted to achieve passes with grades D to G, which would better reflect the standards currently reached.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is the basis of effective teaching in well-planned use of time and resources that leads to some good learning.
- The methods used for teaching religious education are often ineffective in meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils.

Commentary

79. Religious education lessons are usually well thought out, carefully planned and with good ideas to grab pupils' interest. At the beginning of each lesson what the pupils are to learn is carefully identified in the clear objectives set out. Time is divided up into a variety of activities and this helps pupils to enjoy learning and maintain interest. The rich symbolism of the Passover meal was effectively revealed to Year 8 pupils through a combination of the teacher's convincing explanation and their exploration of very good artefacts. This resulted in most pupils learning the meaning of many symbols, including the meaning of the bitter herbs which reminded the Jews of the harsh times, going back to Moses in Egypt. Equally, in Year 10, the video extract on a young Rwandan girl being the sole bread-winner for her many siblings following the loss of her parents worked powerfully to set the scene for pupils to explore issues in international aid.
80. While some of the ingredients are there to make potentially successful lessons, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, overall. This is because oral and written information for pupils is presented in vocabulary that only higher attaining pupils understand. The effects of this are clearly evident in the work pupils have completed over time and there is little indication of teaching strategies that make learning sufficiently accessible to lower attaining pupils. Often, the work of these pupils slips into undemanding completion of worksheets where they circle or underline a key word. There is little evidence that pupils are engaged sufficiently in their own reflections and evaluations of issues in religious education. Assessment has been ineffective in identifying these shortcomings. There are some examples of good writing and good progress, but there are not many. There is also little use of ICT to support this. With more consistent challenge and support, all pupils could be included in making good progress. As a result, achievement is unsatisfactory overall.
81. The co-ordination of religious education is unsatisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation are not rigorous enough to identify that lower attaining pupils are not provided for as well as others. The overall picture was more positive at the time of the last inspection and, therefore, improvement since then is unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

82. The subject of **design and technology** was sampled and as a result there is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision.
83. In the three lessons observed, the teaching and learning ranged from good to very good. In the much improved technology workshop, Year 9 pupils measured, marked out and cut components in wood for their articulated toys. While these were made to one pattern, rather than being designed individually by pupils, they achieved well. They sawed the wood competently and made a lap joint, which required them to take considerable care. The teacher and teaching assistant demonstrated skills and coached pupils effectively. They kept a close watch on how each pupil managed and helped when required, which ensured all pupils were included equally well in learning new skills. Similarly, Year 10 pupils, for an aspect of their ASDAN course, learned to plan a menu for a party. While the lesson was highly structured and predominantly led by the teacher, pupils had good problem-solving and decision-making opportunities. In discussing the designing and making of their party menus, pupils revealed a substantial knowledge of useful computer applications they could use such as desktop publishing and multimedia presentation.
84. In a food technology lesson where the teaching was very good, the lesson was well planned. Learning objectives were clearly communicated to Year 10 pupils by the teacher and well understood by them. They used these very effectively at the end of the lesson to evaluate their progress. The availability of written and pictorial instructions meant all pupils could follow a recipe and work independently. This contributed to very good learning and pupils achieved very well in making tuna salads and planning a meal with convenience foods.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

85. The subject of **art and design** was sampled and only three lessons were observed. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision.
86. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning ranged between very good and satisfactory. When the teacher's good expertise in art and design was not hampered by insufficient time for pupils to complete their work or the lack of appropriate equipment, learning was at least effective and pupils made good progress. For example, it was far too big a task for Year 7 pupils to make a printing block and learn how to print good quality images in the space of a single period of 40 minutes. As the art room had no printing press, the techniques pupils applied to printing were too primitive to produce clean, sharp impressions.
87. When the time and appropriate resources are available, teaching and learning are very good. Year 8 pupils have been working very successfully for some time on portraits using charcoal and pastels. They have achieved very well despite their learning difficulties, reaching the standards expected for their age. The whole group have learned to draw self-assuredly and know how to combine line, tone and colour in expressively effective ways. This is the result of the teacher's expert tuition in drawing, the teaching assistant's very good support and the encouragement they both give pupils. Pupils watched a video extract about Modigliani's portrait paintings and very confidently set about making line drawings, using the whole of their paper to capture the simplified, elongated characteristics of the artist's style. Some had noted, from the video, the colours Modigliani typically used and mixed these for their painting. A weakness which stopped the teaching from being excellent was the insufficient attention given to teaching pupils techniques for applying paint. They were unable to manage the wet paint; some pupils began to lose control of their work and became dispirited.
88. Too little teaching was seen to make an overall judgement on provision in **music**. No teaching was seen at all in Years 9 and 10 but that seen in Years 7 and 8 was very good. It was lively and very well based on the high quality of teachers' subject knowledge and the ability to perform and to communicate with the class. As a result, pupils listened very carefully, threw themselves

into composition and were ready to experiment. They understood how to use time symbols, could identify the names of notes and knew when to play and when to be silent.

89. Pupils throughout the school sing with gusto and perform well. The opportunities provided build their self-esteem and confidence greatly. One member of staff recalled the negative impact on a pupil who was refused the opportunity to perform in her previous mainstream school. At Crosby High this pupil has since flourished and become a confident musician. Pupils know a good range of songs, from sea shanties learned from their visit to the Albert Docks in Liverpool to songs from famous musical shows. They can sing rounds and in two parts and have a good idea of tempo and dynamics to be used when singing. Musical performance is an essential part of the school's curriculum.
90. The curriculum is very good but the development of skills, for example in rhythm, could be planned in even greater detail to make sure pupils go on making progress and that teacher expectations remain very high in all aspects of music. There is a well-attended lunchtime music club and an enthusiastic choir.
91. The subject is very well led and staffing and training are very good. Since the last inspection, accommodation and resources have improved dramatically and all are now very good in range and quality. The use of ICT is very good and this helps pupils to learn. The school does not have a suitable area for performance as the school's hall is too 'open'; it is used as a thoroughfare by all and is distracting for pupils trying to concentrate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching seen during the inspection was very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- The limited size of the hall restricts the range of activities and pupils' performance.
- Links with partner institutions enhance facilities and pupils' progress.

Commentary

92. The pupils' good achievement in physical education is somewhat limited by the lack of indoor facilities. Although the subject co-ordinator ensures that there is a very good range of activities, the limitations in the size of the hall severely restrict the programme of indoor activities. It is difficult to play games such as football, basketball and badminton with the older pupils because of the lack of space; height is a particular problem. There are constant interruptions because the hall has to be used as a thoroughfare between classes. The inadequacy of the hall was identified in the previous report but this has not been addressed.
93. Athletics was mainly being taught at the time of the inspection. The very good teaching of pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 10, ensures that they all achieve very well and progress in their jumping and shot putting skills. Because of the high expectations of the specialist and knowledgeable teacher the pupils are provided with a wide range of high quality activities that results in good levels of performance. All lessons commence with a good warm-up session and pupils are encouraged to assist each other with coaching points.
94. The co-ordination of the subject is very good because the subject manager has devised a comprehensive range of activities that meets the needs of all the pupils. Three quarters of the pupils in Year 11 are able to swim 25 metres before they leave because of lessons they receive in each year group throughout the school. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to extend their learning because of the very good links that exist with a local sports college and sports clubs in the local community. The subject co-ordinator has established good procedures to

check on pupils' achievements and progress. The information gathered is used effectively to plan individual pupil targets in the various activities. Pupils are provided with good support in lessons by a teaching assistant who is specifically linked with the subject. Many aspects of the subjects have improved since the last inspection. However, overall, improvement is only sound because of the lack of improvement in accommodation and its impact on pupils' achievement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education including citizenship is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor use is made of the curriculum for PSHE including citizenship.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- The leadership and management of PSHE including citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- The many opportunities across the curriculum to develop skills in PSHE contribute to pupils' personal and social development and their health education.

Commentary

95. Although the subject has a limited impact on pupils' achievement and on their personal skills, many other aspects of the school's work outweigh the weaknesses here. Nevertheless, the weaknesses in teaching and in the programme of work require urgent attention. The pupils' progress toward personal targets is very good and the considerable opportunities provided throughout the school day and in school life generally contribute to this effectively.
96. Staff do not take enough account of the information in the school's long and medium-term programme for PSHE when planning lessons. As a result, topics are insufficiently planned and the learning objectives set out in the programme are dealt with too superficially throughout the school. Pupils achieve poorly, as a consequence. For instance, the objective set in a lesson for Year 9 pupils was for them to distinguish minor from major 'choices' and for them to understand the influences on, and consequences of, the decisions they make. All they achieved was to sort minor decisions from major ones, something they could do before the lesson. They did not, as they were capable of, examine what making a major decision might mean for their lives. This work was not demanding enough to ensure pupils made progress.
97. Lessons are not organised with enough thought about what makes work interesting, relevant and challenging for pupils. Weak assessment of what they have already learned is a contributory factor in this and there is little or no variation in the work that reflects pupils' different abilities. Much of the work in pupils' folders shows they only identify key vocabulary or write lists, for example, of serious and not so serious crimes without working on examining key issues in more appropriate depth. Each lesson topic had several objectives and it was too often the case that only one was tackled, and unsatisfactorily. For example, when Year 7 pupils were taught about different forms of government, they were told only about democratic government and the objective concerning the characteristics of a good citizen were not addressed.
98. The way in which pupils are taught is not effective in promoting learning. While a good rapport is struck up in discussions there is very little else to expand the opportunities for learning. Questioning is not sharply focused and fails to develop pupils' enquiry skills very far. When additional resources were used, for example a video extract on domestic safety hazards in a Year 10 lesson, this lifted the discussion and led to pupils writing their own scenarios for accidents in the home. As a consequence, they learned a satisfactory amount about dangers and customary safety precautions. However, the use of resources, including ICT, is generally poor. In addition, pupils make little use of ICT for recording or for finding information out. While classroom assistants are positively active in supporting teaching and learning in some lessons, in others they are sit passively and are quite redundant.
99. The leadership and management of PSHE including citizenship are ineffective because monitoring and evaluation have not been sufficiently rigorous in acting to remedy the considerable weaknesses in provision. The school has already recognised that some development is required. However, the steps being taken are not sufficient to tackle the main cause of the weaknesses in the provision, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. No

judgement on improvement since the last inspection is possible as this was not reported on previously.

100. Although there is no co-ordinated planning as such, there are many individual opportunities whereby pupils throughout the school often achieve very well in their personal and social development. In relation to health education, they know about healthy life styles through their work in physical education and food technology and in the programmes of sex education and drugs awareness. They have opportunities, and do very well, in taking responsibility, especially through a very good careers education and work experience programme and taking part in the School Council. Pupils' self-confidence is very good and those pupils who have a particular difficulty in settling to learn, achieve very well in raising their self-esteem and confidence as a result of the support they get from attending the 'motivation group' each morning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>School 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	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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