

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **MORECAMBE HIGH SCHOOL**

Morecambe

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119761

Headteacher: Mr W P Bancroft

Lead inspector: Ms J Jones

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 259265

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1469
School address:	Dallam Avenue Morecambe Lancashire
Postcode:	LA4 5BG
Telephone number:	01524 410207
Fax number:	01524 420156
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Judith Robertshaw
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Morecambe High School is much bigger than other secondary schools nationally. There are 1291 students in the main school and 178 in the sixth form. The sixth form is smaller than might be expected from the size of the main school. Across the school there are more boys than girls. Standards on entry in Year 7 are average, but at the lower end of the range. Although the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is broadly average, analysis of the status of the local area by the local education authority shows that around two-thirds of students come from areas where there is a high degree of social and economic deprivation, which has increased since the time of the previous report. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or who do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average, and so is the proportion of students with Statements of Special Educational Need. Student mobility is relatively high, with 29 students entering the school last year, and 70 leaving at times outside the normal stating and leaving dates.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12460	J Jones	Lead inspector	
19742	A Taylor	Lay inspector	
33019	S Aspinall	Team inspector	Geography 11-16
13734	H Davies	Sixth form co-ordinator	Geography sixth form Business education sixth form
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	English
8756	P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
19915	P Hooton	Team inspector	History
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education Provision for students with special educational needs
27665	O Lees	Team inspector	Music
20380	N Pinkney	Team inspector	Science
21803	L Ramsay	Team inspector	Design and technology
31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
30072	J Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Psychology (Sixth form)

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>10</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>54</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school.** Teaching and learning are good overall. Achievement is good overall in Years 7 to 11 and very good in English. The school provides good value for money overall, though the sixth form is not fully cost-effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students achieve very well in GCSE English.
- The school is well led and managed by a forward-looking and consultative headteacher and leadership team.
- Standards in ICT (information and communication technology) and some aspects of design and technology are too low.
- Some students' behaviour, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching arrangements for some students with special educational needs are inefficient and there are too few teaching assistants.
- Attendance is below average.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is innovative and allows a wide choice for students' learning needs and aspirations. The provision for outdoor education in Years 7 to 11 is exceptionally good.
- Teaching, learning and achievement in the sixth form are good.
- Most of the buildings are in urgent need of modernisation and there are not enough computers.

### Changes since the previous inspection

Improvement overall is satisfactory. The school has met all the issues from the previous inspection well: assessment is greatly improved, teaching is monitored more closely, there is a very good new library and the other buildings, though still inadequate, are clean. Standards in teaching have been maintained, even though around 10 per cent of teaching is at present done by temporary staff. Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last five years. GCSE results in the one year prior to the previous inspection were unusually high. They dropped in the following year but have partially recovered. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 2003 is in line with the school's average for the last five years and is now close to the national average. The curriculum is better matched to the needs of the students and is particularly effective in providing for the lower attaining students.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

*For GCSE examinations, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The table above refers to GCSE results in 2003. Achievement is judged on the basis both of these and of the standards seen in the current Years 9 and 11. Since students enter at the lower end of average, as judged by attainment in English, mathematics and science, and leave with securely

average standards overall, and above average standards in English and mathematics, **achievement overall is judged to be good**. By Year 9 achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Standards are below average in modern languages, ICT and design and technology. By Year 11 standards are average overall, but above average in English, and mathematics. Standards remain below average in modern foreign languages and ICT but improve to satisfactory in design and technology. Achievement is good in the sixth form.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. They are very good in English and good in mathematics. Assessment is good and supports learning well because students know how well they are doing and how to improve. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some good features. All students benefit greatly from the unique provision for outdoor education. ICT is not used enough across the curriculum.

Care and guidance are **good**. Partnerships with parents are good and with the community are **very good**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**. While most students' attitudes to school are good and they take their work seriously, a significant minority, mainly younger students, does not behave well and interferes with the effectiveness of teaching. Students' personal development is good. Their spiritual and moral development is good, and their social and cultural development is very good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Governance of the school is **good**. Governors know the school's strengths and share a clear idea of the direction the school should take with the head teacher and senior managers. Leadership by the headteacher, senior managers and other staff with responsibilities is **good**. Management is **good**. Overall the school is in a good position to improve further.

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

**Parents think highly of the school.** It is popular and oversubscribed. Students are enthusiastic, take part in many activities outside school hours, and feel they are treated with care and respect.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

In order to raise standards, the school should:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in ICT and resistant materials;
- see that all teachers use the behaviour policy so that unsatisfactory behaviour is dealt with consistently and effectively in all lessons;
- use teachers of students with special educational needs more efficiently and provide more support in class for students with learning or behavioural difficulties;
- take measures to improve attendance;

and to meet statutory requirements, the school should:

- provide a daily act of collective worship.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT MORECAMBE HIGH SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Morecambe High School has a sixth form of 178 students compared to the national average of 186. It provides a **good education** for its students but it is currently **not cost-effective**.

Standards vary according to students' prior attainment but are currently **average** overall. Students' achievement is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. The sixth form is **well led** and students receive **good** support and guidance from staff. Improvement since the last inspection has been **satisfactory**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of teaching and the help provided for students is good.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.
- Links with the community are very good, as is the involvement of students in the life of the school.
- Enrichment activities are limited.
- There is a limited range of vocational courses available for students.
- Social space in the sixth form centre is limited and this does not help to encourage the social development of students.
- Assessment is a strength of sixth form teaching particularly in business education and physical education where it is excellent.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Only eight subjects in the sixth form were inspected in full.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is <b>very good</b> in English literature. Standards are average and students achieve well.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>very good</b> . Standards are above average and students achieve well as a result of good teaching and the good attitudes of students.
Science	Biology Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory.
Humanities	Geography Provision is <b>good</b> . While standards are below average in Year 13 students achieve well as a result of good teaching and positive attitudes on the part of most students. Psychology Provision is <b>very good</b> . Standards are average but students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment as a result of very good teaching and very positive attitudes from students. History Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards are <b>below average</b> but students <b>achieve well</b> because of <b>good</b> teaching and resources.



Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
Business	Provision is <b>good</b> in business. Standards are average but students achieve well in relation to prior attainment at the start of the course. Assessment procedures are excellent and play an important part in students' achievement.

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **good** support and guidance. They find their teachers and tutors approachable when they need extra help. Teachers mark work regularly and provide good advice about what to do to improve work and improve chances in examinations. Regular reviews of progress are made and helpful targets are set to assist students to raise the standard of their work. The quality of assessment and marking is very good and excellent in business studies and physical education. Tutor-time and guidance days are very well used to guide, support and monitor progress. Guidance on careers and university entrance is good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **good**. The director of sixth form studies has a clear vision and high aspirations for the development and improvement of the sixth form. The team of tutors works efficiently as a unit. The curriculum is effectively planned to meet the needs of most students. Problems associated with the provision of enrichment courses and social accommodation for students are being tackled. Students are increasingly asked for their views and whenever possible appropriate action is taken. There are very good opportunities for students to be involved in the life of the school and in the management of the sixth form centre.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy life in the sixth form. They find it well managed and friendly, and are appreciative of the opportunities available. They consider their teachers to be knowledgeable and helpful. Teaching is challenging and enables students to develop independent learning skills. They feel that courses generally meet their needs and contribute to their career plans. Their views can be communicated directly to staff or through the sixth form management committee. Some would like a wider range of activities in and outside the formal curriculum.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

Standards are average at the end of Year 9. They are average by the end of Year 11 but above average overall in English and mathematics. Test results at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last five years. GCSE results have dropped slightly in the last two years. Previously they had shown an improving trend.

Students achieve satisfactorily over the Years 7 to 9, and well in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Their personal development is good overall, but the behaviour of a significant minority, especially in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Standards in the sixth form are average and achievement is good.

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

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

- Achievement overall is good
- Achievement is very good English in and good in mathematics
- Standards are below average in ICT in all years
- There is considerable variation in standards between sixth form subjects.

#### **Commentary**

#### ***Standards in tests at the end of Year 9***

1. Test results in English, mathematics and science are close to average, and have been rising in line with the national trend over the last five years. The average point score in science was just above average in 2003. It was average in English and just below in mathematics.
2. In comparison with students who achieved similar standards three years earlier at the end of Year 6, results are below average overall, and this is due to the lower results in mathematics. These lower standards are attributed to the difficulty in staffing mathematics last year.

#### ***Standards seen in lessons in Year 9***

3. In English, mathematics and science, standards are broadly average in Year 9. In mathematics standards are higher than indicated by last year's test results. Generally, standards are average in most other subjects, apart from design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages, where standards are below average.

#### ***Achievement in Years 7 to 9***

4. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Although the proportion of students entering the school with the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science is close to average, closer inspection shows that most students on Level 4 are in the lower band for that level, and there are fewer high level students. This is due in part to selective schools in the area. Students under-achieve in ICT because teaching is unsatisfactory.

#### ***Standards in examinations by the end of Year 11***

5. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Over the last five years the results rose for the first three but dropped in the past two. This coincided with severe staffing difficulties that affected many subjects, and science and mathematics in particular. Results in science were below average in 2003, with girls doing particularly badly. This was due to the high number of

temporary teachers last year; two groups that were particularly affected were predominantly girls. English results held up well however, and were well above average in 2003. This is a result of the effective work of teachers in the English department.

### ***Standards in work seen in Year 11***

6. In current lessons there are more subjects in Year 11 where standards are above average than there are in Year 9. By this stage, standards are generally above average in English, mathematics, art and design, geography and physical education. Standards in science, where there is now a full team of scientists, are average. In design and technology there is an improvement over the earlier years and standards are average. Standards remain below average in ICT and modern foreign languages. The below average standards in French and German are due to staffing difficulties in the past that have left a legacy of below average standards. In ICT the below average standards are due to unsatisfactory teaching in earlier years, so that students start their courses in Year 10 with too few skills with computer programs.

### ***Achievement in Years 10 and 11***

7. Although attainment is broadly average on entry, it is at the lower end of the average. When students leave, the overall standard across all subjects is at the upper edge of average, and in the core subjects of English and mathematics their standards are above average. Therefore, achievement overall, based on the change between students' standards on entry to those they leave with, is good. There is the greatest acceleration in learning during Years 10 and 11.

### ***Changes since the previous inspection***

8. At the time of the previous report six years ago the school had just had its best ever results, from a smaller than usual year group that were more able than usual according to their test results on entry. The school has not matched this since, either in terms of attainment on entry, or GCSE results. By comparison with the last five later years the school has maintained its standards, even in the face of severe staffing difficulties.

### ***Achievement of students with special educational needs***

9. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards the achievement of targets set for them. At GCSE, students supported by Statements of Special Educational Need gain grades on average in six subjects, which far exceeds reasonable expectation based upon their standards assessed on entry to the school. Their difficulties are understood by subject teachers who generally provide appropriately challenging work.

### ***The achievement of talented and gifted students***

10. Provision for the most able students has improved since the previous report and now is satisfactory. Higher attaining students are making good progress and the proportion of higher grades at GCSE and in the sixth form is increasing.

### ***Sixth form***

11. Standards at A level and in AVCE in 2003 were average overall. This compares with similar average standards at the time of the last inspection. As was the situation at the time of the last inspection in 1998, average results are achieved from a below average intake with a limited number of higher attainers. Added value across the sixth form remains good. There was however considerable variation in standards between subjects. At A level results were above average in biology, psychology, physical education and mathematics and average in AVCE business studies. In art and design, geography, history, and other sciences, results were below average. Results were well below average in English literature and physics. They were

significantly below in drama. In chemistry and design and technology the number of candidates was very small but good results were achieved in relation to students' prior attainment. With similar small numbers students performed less well in French, German and music. Standards in 2003 showed an upward trend compared to 2002 in the average point score per candidate.

12. From observations during the inspection current standards are average overall. Not all subjects were inspected. The variation between subjects is still a cause for some concern. Students are achieving standards above average in mathematics, physical education and German. They are average in English literature, VCE business education and psychology. Standards are below average in geography, history and biology. These judgements indicate that standards overall are being maintained. The achievement of the majority of students is good. Assessment data indicates that almost all students achieve well compared to their prior attainment. No significant variation was observed in the performance of male or female students.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.5 (34.7)	33.6 (34.7)

*There were 256 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.3 (84.3)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.4 (18.9)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	246.0 (226)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 81 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Students have good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is satisfactory overall and improves as they get older. Relationships are good. The current attendance rate is unsatisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Opportunities for an impressive number of outdoor activities significantly enhance students' social and spiritual development.
- The behaviour of some students, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, is not as good as it should be and is affecting their learning and that of others who are behaving well.
- There is a small, but significant number of students whose attendance is sporadic, or are simply refusing to attend school at all.
- Attendance in the sixth form is good.
- Assemblies are good and students' musical performances make them extra special.

## Commentary

13. Students' personal development is very strongly encouraged through the highly acclaimed outdoor activities programme. For example, it was noted that whilst students were using the climbing wall, working in twos and threes really helped them to learn to trust each other and developed their self-confidence. Spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and the contribution outdoor activities makes to this area should not be underestimated. Students' personal development is even stronger when students are placed in challenging physical circumstances. Subjects such as history and English, where students have to make spiritual and emotional responses to events, and literature also make a strong contribution to students' personal development because these matters are dealt with sensitively and in depth.
14. Cultural development is very strong. Art, music and drama all have a very high profile in the school. Musical performances add something special to the good assemblies, which deliver powerful messages, making students think and question.
15. The school provides acts of collective worship twice weekly for all students but does not meet the requirement that this should happen every day.
16. Overall, students have good attitudes to their work and they generally enjoy lessons. These positive attitudes are seen in the high standard of uniform, following the school's hard work to increase students' pride in themselves and the school. Older students have better attitudes to their work than younger ones.
17. Standards of behaviour have improved and they are satisfactory overall, being better for older students than younger ones. Whilst the majority of students behave well, a significant minority of younger ones do not. For this reason, behaviour in Years 7 to 9 has to be judged unsatisfactory. Behaviour is also adversely affected by the shortage of support staff. There is a good behaviour policy, but not everyone is using it. This undermines the efforts of teachers who try to apply the policy and find that the most recalcitrant students are not sufficiently used to it and do not respect it. As a result, some teachers continue to devise their own ways to deal with students who misbehave, rather than using the sanctions available to them such as having students removed from class.
18. Staffing difficulties in the last two years have led to the school relying on temporary staff more than usual, and this instability with teachers coming and going has, naturally, unsettled the most difficult students. They are more likely to misbehave for temporary staff than they are for permanent teachers. Noise in corridors during the split lunchtime disturbs some lessons.
19. The way the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good overall. Social and cultural development is very good and a particular strength. This is reflected in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and the encouragement the school gives for students to help each other and take responsibility. For example, trained seniors (specially appointed Year 11 students) carry out a wide range of posts within school in order to help their younger counterparts.

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	9.1
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	1.7
National data:	1.1

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

20. Students' attendance has been fluctuating in recent years, partly because there have been discrepancies in the way attendance has been recorded. These have now been ironed out and last year's figures, officially recorded as below average, should have been higher.
21. Currently, students' attendance rate is below average and is unsatisfactory. This is especially so for students in Years 8 and 11. A small, but significant minority of students is refusing to come to school for one reason or another. Many of these students are coping with a range of extreme social circumstances outside school. In some cases, parents condone these absences. The waiting list of students needing specialised counselling and help from outside agencies is very long.
22. The number of students with poor attendance is decreasing, partly because of a special programme that combines lessons with extended work experience. This is not a suitable option for all students with attendance problems, and the number of placements the school can offer is limited.
23. The school receives very good support from the educational welfare officer, whose work is highly regarded by staff and students. An additional factor affecting attendance is the rising numbers of parents taking holidays in term time, some for extended periods; the school rightly refuses to authorise these. Unauthorised absence is above average because many of the long-term absent students do not have legitimate reasons for absence.

## **Exclusions**

24. The school makes sensible use of its sanctions, and exclusions are used in those situations where the health and safety of other students and staff are placed in jeopardy. Students and staff are clear about the kind of situations when exclusions are used.
25. The school makes very good provision for students in Years 10 and 11 for whom the conventional curriculum is considered inappropriate and who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Helped by significant additional funding by the local education authority the school makes good alternative provision for approximately 12 students in each year group. These students study a basic curriculum in school and spend the remainder of the week on work experience.
26. Although unwritten, a clear and effective code of conduct operates amongst these students. Attendance and behaviour are very much improved, Students' self-esteem has increased and they willingly accept more responsibility. In lessons observed, they demonstrated sensitivity to the feelings and experiences of others and confidence in their relationship with the teacher and each other. The course is valued by students and by their parents. Compared with expectation based on earlier standards the achievement and personal development of students are very good and in some instances excellent. The course is skilfully managed. Expectations of students are high and they respond positively to opportunities offered.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish

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

<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
1424	87	8
1	0	0

White – any other White background	8	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

## Sixth Form

27. Students have very good attitudes to their work. They are very good role models for younger students, and they set a good example. Students play an important part in school and community life by organising activities, helping in lessons and generally making themselves indispensable. They really enjoy this kind of involvement.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching is good overall and in keeping with the current picture nationally. Assessment is also good and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is good overall, but satisfactory in the sixth form

### Teaching and learning

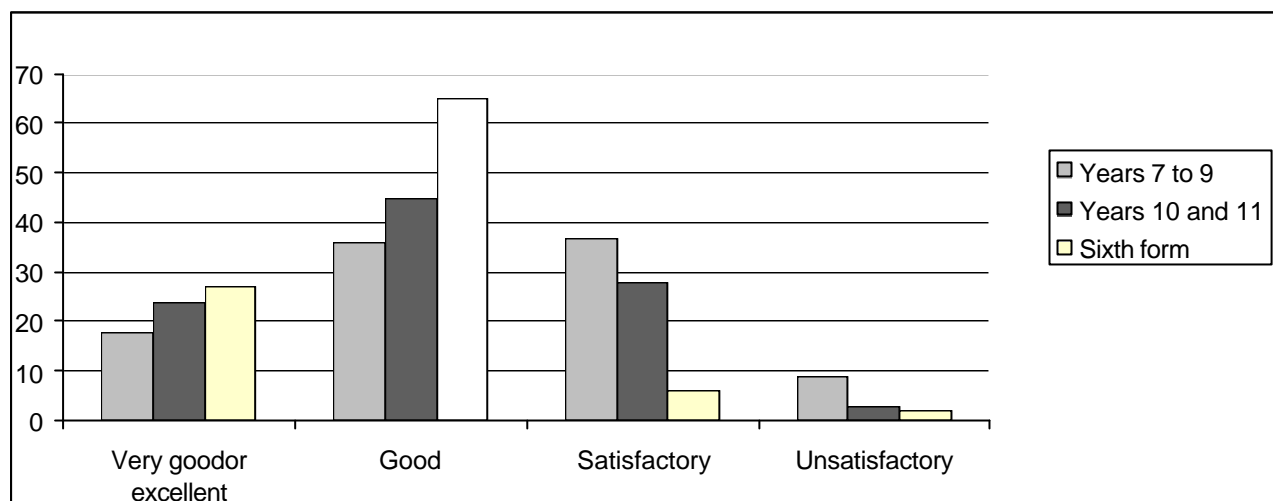
Teaching and learning are good overall although they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. There is a very high proportion of good teaching in the sixth form. Students' work is assessed well.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in most subjects because teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, the sixth form and overall.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11 in ICT.
- Teaching is very good in psychology in the sixth form.
- Marking and assessment are good and particularly good in the sixth form.
- Teachers are always available to assist students with their work in and outside lesson-time.



## Commentary



28. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in all other years. This results in good achievement of the five years between Years 7 and 11. Unfortunately, in Years 7 to 9 the effectiveness of teaching, and consequently learning, is marred by the persistent silliness and uncooperative behaviour of a significant minority. In most lessons teachers still manage to provide lessons that are at least satisfactory and enable the bulk of students to learn. However, not all teachers find the behaviour policy helpful. The systems and processes are not fully embedded in the way all staff treat students, and therefore some teachers have lost confidence in their effectiveness. In Years 10 and 11 behaviour is better and teaching and learning are more effective as a result. Additionally, there is too little support from teaching assistants or additional teachers for students with educational or behavioural problems.
29. The school has had to cope with serious staffing difficulties in the last two years and there are still some lessons taught by non-specialists. However, these teachers are generally well supported within the departments.
30. Teaching in English and mathematics is good in all years. Teachers know their subjects well and communicate their enthusiasm to students through a good range of interesting activities.
31. In science, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 teachers sometimes have to waste too much time with students who do not want to learn, distract others and slow down the pace of the lesson. .
32. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory overall, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching in resistant materials, where poorly planned teaching does not interest students so that they learn little and behave badly. Teaching in ICT in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. In too many lessons students waste time, take far too long to log on to computers and achieve little. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is better but students start the course in Year 10 too far behind as a result of the unsatisfactory teaching earlier.
33. In all other subjects teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>1</sup> is seen in the brisk starter activities and effective reviews at the ends of lessons, and this helpful structure is also used in Years 10 and 11 lessons.
34. Homework is generally used well to reinforce the work done in lessons and to encourage students to work independently.

<sup>1</sup> A government initiative to improve teaching, learning and standards in Years 7 to 9



35. Assessment, both through tests and assignments and during lessons, is good. Assessment makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of teaching and overall achievement, because it has provided consistency and stability in subjects where the staffing difficulties in the last two years have had the most impact. In spite of changes in teaching and some loss of motivation, the students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Day-to-day assessment through marking is usually helpful and is encouraging but realistic.

### **Sixth form**

36. Teaching and learning are good overall in every subject inspected in full and very good in psychology. In most subjects, students learn well in lessons and achieve well over time. In psychology, achievement is very good and in biology it is satisfactory. Teaching is well planned and structured; it is accurate and sets high expectations in terms of quality and quantity of work expected. Students are given many opportunities to develop independent learning and research skills. One of the main strengths of teaching and learning is the secure specialist knowledge of teachers, which when combined with positive attitudes from students leads to good achievement.
37. In psychology, students respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and their own intellectual efforts play an important part in their very good achievement. In business education, students are challenged to think carefully about business theory and organisation and relate them to the real world. Students develop critical thinking skills in general studies and this contributes to their personal development. Particularly good practice was observed in a Year 13 general studies lesson on genetic engineering.
38. Homework assignments are used effectively to reinforce and extend what is learned in school. Sixth form teaching caters well for individual students' needs and students appreciate the way teachers are always helpful and readily available outside set lesson times to assist with any work problems.
39. Assessment of students' work is very good and is a strength of sixth form teaching. Information is used very effectively to inform students of their progress and to help them iron out problems. Marking and assessment is outstanding in business education and physical education. In business education, regular and full 'one to one' oral and written reviews are held with students and this is having a positive effect on standards. In physical education, the high quality of assessment contributes to effective learning. In the other subjects assessment is at least good and very good in mathematics, geography and psychology. Very good analysis of examination results effectively feeds back into teaching and learning.

#### **Example of excellent practice of assessment in business studies**

Assessment procedures in the department are outstanding. Students regularly receive very well considered written judgements on their work that help them significantly to see the standard they are achieving and how they can improve. Frequent one to one reviews are held and students are able to play an important part in making and recognising improvements in their work. They are made clearly aware of the criteria that teachers and the examining boards use to assess their work. They appreciate that mistakes are inevitable and that they can learn from sorting them out. Very detailed written comments are recorded and used by teachers and students to raise the quality of assignments and examination units. In addition assessment is very effectively used to refine students' targets and teaching programmes.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 182 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	38 (21%)	86 (47%)	46 (25%)	10 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

### **The curriculum**

The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment within and beyond the curriculum. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are too few computers to enable ICT to be used as widely as teachers would like.

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

- Outdoor pursuits education makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development.
- The programme of extended work experience has greatly increased the motivation of certain students in Years 10 and 11.
- Students are not getting enough experience of ICT through individual subjects.
- There are not enough classroom assistants to give adequate support to students with learning needs.
- The school offers a very wide range of opportunities outside the curriculum for students to extend and develop themselves.
- In the sixth form, there is limited provision of interesting activities to broaden students' education.

#### **Commentary**

40. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and in Years 10 and 11 it is good. Statutory requirements are properly met with the exception of the daily act of collective worship. All students in the school follow an appropriate course in religious education and in Years 10 and 11 the majority take it to GCSE. The reservations mentioned in the previous inspection report have largely been put right. This is especially true of the opportunities now offered to a number of students in Years 10 and 11 to follow vocational courses that are better suited to their particular needs. A course of extended work experience has been created especially for students in those years who are at risk of dropping out of education. So far this has had notable success in rekindling the interest of these vulnerable young people.
41. The outstanding programme of outdoor pursuits education runs through the whole school. Every student in the younger years is involved, providing them with unique opportunities to learn new skills and test themselves in a safe but demanding environment. The school is well advanced in its planning for further improvements to the curriculum for next year and beyond. For example, a course in critical thinking to AS level is to be introduced in September 2004 for keen students in Year 11 and, for those who would benefit from it, a vocational science course to GCSE.
42. Areas for improvement in the curriculum still remain, however. The most important of these, and one that spans the five years from ages 11 to 16, is students' low exposure to ICT through subjects. They have taught ICT lessons in Years 7 to 11, but beyond this they have too little opportunity to experience individual subjects, such as modern foreign languages or design and technology, through the medium of ICT. In Years 10 and 11 all students take a short GCSE course in ICT. However, this course is not well suited to all students' needs, especially higher attainers who cannot thereby stretch themselves by taking a full course to GCSE.

43. In music, half of Year 8 students only have one hour of teaching per fortnight. This is well below the recommended allocation of time and insufficient to cover the programme of work. In design and technology students have no opportunity of using techniques for computer-aided design or manufacture – a requirement of the course. A number of students have more than one teacher for some of their subjects. While this does not materially undermine standards, it is not good for continuity, especially in skills-based subjects such as physical education. The school is taking steps to avoid this happening from next year.
44. A rich programme of activities offers students very good opportunities to be involved. Students themselves, and parents, are pleased with this strong provision. Very good sporting activities, led by the physical education faculty and also involving staff not attached to it, have large numbers of keen participants. The performing arts, too, figure strongly and the school puts on many events throughout the year to entertain people both within and outside the school in such venues as day centres and residential homes. Other subject areas, such as modern foreign languages and history, run well-subscribed annual trips abroad to places of interest. A visit to First World War battle sites and another to Auschwitz have a profound effect on students as well as bringing to life the learning of history. This work does much to broaden students' horizons and helps to raise standards, as does the broad programme of study support, including homework clubs, reading help and after-school lessons in a second foreign language.

#### ***Provision for students with special educational needs***

45. The school makes satisfactory provision for students with special educational needs. Teachers know details of individual education plans and generally provide appropriate tasks and help for individuals. The proportion of students receiving additional support appears to be well below the national average whereas the number supported by Statements is average. Inspection evidence shows that the two figures should be similar; that they are results from problems of procedure rather than failure to meet needs. The school provides additional support for more students than indicated by published data. The levels of support provided are not recorded as recommended by the Code of Practice and parents are insufficiently informed of the levels of support actually provided.

#### ***Provision for students at an early stage of learning English***

46. The school admits occasional foreign students to the sixth form, as a part of a programme arranged for these students in their own countries. These students are given additional help through the programme. Some stay long enough to take A level examinations and all acquire a good working knowledge of English. The very few other students coming into the school in earlier years are given effective help by the local education authority service and quickly learn the language.

#### ***Provision for talented and gifted students***

47. Within several subjects, opportunities are provided to help students to develop appropriate targets for themselves by, for example, visiting universities and hearing former students speak about their experiences and achievements.
48. To encourage further the achievements and aspirations of its most able students, the school has now appointed a co-ordinator with responsibility for enhancing provision and ensuring that policy and procedures match the recommendations of the Code of Practice for the identification of such students and appropriate liaison with their parents.

#### ***Staffing, accommodation and resources***

49. There is a satisfactory match of teachers to the curriculum, in spite of the high numbers of temporary teachers. In the last two years the school has had difficulty making permanent

appointments in some subjects and this has inevitably had an impact on standards and on the quality of teaching generally. The provision of support staff is unsatisfactory. This is because the support staff for students with special educational needs is neither sufficient nor appropriate. However, technical support in other subject areas is satisfactory, and in some subjects good. There is good support by the office staff, who contribute to the smooth administration of the school.

50. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. In some subjects there are insufficient dedicated classrooms, which means staff have to take books and other materials with them to different parts of the school; this is a particular problem in English. The practice of sharing rooms also makes the display of students' work more difficult where two or more subjects have to share a room. On the final day of the inspection there was extensive flooding of the playing fields, a regular occurrence during the winter months, making them unusable. Ongoing refurbishment in mathematics and science has improved the quality of some classrooms and laboratories.
51. Resources are unsatisfactory. Although subjects have adequate supplies of books and other materials, there is a shortage of computers and ICT equipment for both teachers and students. There are only two interactive whiteboards in the school, and only one portable data projector available for general use. The new library, however, is an excellent resource. It is well organised, stocked and efficiently run. There is a particularly good range of student texts for sixth form subjects such as physical education, history and geography. A computer room attached to the library provides an additional resource for sixth form students for research work.

#### Sixth form

52. The sixth form curriculum provides students with a satisfactory range of subjects that build on their earlier studies and are a good basis for further and higher education. There are twenty-one AS and A level courses but only one advanced vocational course and one intermediate GNVQ course. There are no separate key skills lessons but students acquire the skills adequately through their other studies. Every student is on an individual learning programme, which is regularly monitored by tutors. The curriculum is evaluated regularly and the effect of current provision on standards and students' needs is assessed.
53. Currently there is a limited range of additional activities for students both inside and outside curriculum time. This was raised by a number of students during the inspection. There is strong strategic planning taking place in co-operation with Lancaster and Morecambe College for a two-way flow of students to participate in a wide choice of activities to improve the situation.
54. There are opportunities for students to be involved in the life of the school and the management of the sixth form. These include membership of the school council, the sixth form management committee and participation in the better reading partners scheme and in concerts and musical activities. Students also participate as helpers in the school's outdoor education programme. There is currently a lack of team sport activities available.
55. Links with further and higher education institutions provide students with effective guidance and preparation for post-16 education, training and employment. There are good links with Lancaster University as well as regular speakers from other universities and colleges.
56. Sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers are available to teach the curriculum. The school has successfully solved some of the staffing problems, which have in recent years impacted negatively on standards in several subjects.
57. The sixth form area is well organised but the restricted accommodation is putting pressure on social space and having an adverse effect on students' social development. The closeness of the library and adjacent computer suite, which is reserved for sixth form students, is a good provision. The shortage of permanent specialist rooms means that it is difficult to provide

students with a bank of resources and research materials in subjects such as history and geography for spontaneous and planned reference in lessons. In general though, resources and equipment meet the needs of students well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The provision for students' care, welfare, and safety is good. They are provided with satisfactory levels of support, advice and guidance. The school involves students well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good provision for students' health and welfare.
- The pastoral system in Years 7 to 11 does not focus enough on helping students to improve their academic performance.
- In the sixth form, tutor time and guidance days are very well used to guide, support and monitor progress.
- Systems for consulting students and listening to their views are leading to some positive changes in school practice.
- There are not enough adults in school specially trained to support students who have significant problems preventing them from learning.
- Sixth form students' involvement in school life is very strong.

## **Commentary**

58. There are good systems to ensure students' health, safety and welfare. There is a good citizenship programme (described elsewhere in this report) together with a number of visiting speakers on health and welfare matters, particularly tailored to students' specific needs. Health, safety, and child protection procedures are well established and secure.
59. The school has recognised that the current pastoral system is not focussed on providing guidance on students' academic performance. It is, however, stronger for older students than for younger ones. Form tutors have little responsibility for monitoring how students are getting on with their work, and Heads of Year have a limited role.
60. Systems, some generated by students themselves, whereby they help each other with problems and worries, are good. There are groups helping those who are at risk of or being bullied, as well as wider involvement from seniors and sixth formers. However, there are too few adults supporting students who are trying to cope with a range of external pressures from home, often preventing them from learning as well as they should. The school appropriately plans to appoint additional support staff to fill this gap.
61. The school council is very well established. There have been many positive changes because of it, including landscaping of the grounds to make them more pleasant. Given the mature attitudes of the student councillors involved, there is further scope for them to take even more responsibility for running the council, than they do already.

## **Sixth form**

62. Advice, support and guidance for sixth form students are good. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.
63. Students feel well supported and the quality of guidance is good. They have very good relationships with their tutors and teachers and feel valued and encouraged to fulfil their potential.

64. Tutor times are well used to help and guide students. Teachers make the best use of the short tutor time currently available. Specific guidance days also help to enhance the provision. Students said they would like a greater range of additional activities and the school has already planned a new programme for next year, in co-operation with the local college. This will include more opportunities for team games. The quality of documentation for students, particularly about different courses, options and student guides is particularly high.
65. Students' views are valued and actively sought out through a variety of channels. The processes for consulting students and acting on their views are very good. The recent 'Update' newsletter, specifically for sixth form students, was a particularly useful idea, and vividly shows how much the school does listen and act.
66. Involvement in school life by sixth formers has increased greatly over the last year in response to their wishes. They now play an important role in helping younger students.

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

The partnership with parents is good. There are some very good community links. Relationships with primary schools and other educational establishments are also good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is popular and oversubscribed.
- The school is a focal point for community activity and relationships are very strong.
- The school keeps parents well informed about how their child is getting on.
- There are some imaginative links with colleges and universities, which are improving the curriculum in different ways.

### **Commentary**

67. Morecambe High School is popular with parents, who provide good support. This is particularly true of a group of parents who have shown themselves to be keen to get more involved in school life and have revitalised the Parents' and Teachers' Association. The school welcomes this kind of involvement.
68. Community links are very strong and relationships are wide and varied. They are especially good in music and drama. For example, students are currently involved in performances at local theatres in Keswick and Lancaster. Musicians perform concerts in the community and a local adult choir is shortly to perform with school soloists. The school has become a focal point for community activities, related to the regeneration work taking place through the Pathfinder project.
69. Parents are well informed about how their child progresses. A new system where parents receive a short and full report each year ensures they are kept up to date. Reports are useful and celebrate what students are doing well and where they need to improve. A new initiative involving Year 7 parents who can 'drop in' to specific surgeries with the acting head of year has been well received.
70. There are some imaginative and developing links with colleges and universities that especially benefit students in the sixth form. The science department is a leader in this area and university links, particularly related to the 'fruit fly' project, could accurately be described as fruitful! The Young Chef's club, linking with the catering department of Lancaster and Morecambe College, raises large amounts for charity by hosting fundraising dinners.

71. Partnerships with primary schools are also good, especially in English, mathematics, physical education, drama, music and food studies. There is also good practice in science where Morecambe High teachers teach in nearby primary schools.

### **Sixth form**

72. Very good communication keeps parents well informed about the school and sixth form parents are encouraged to attend induction interviews, the regular reporting evenings and guidance days. Parents are very pleased with provision in the sixth form. The school is outward looking and has very good links with the community. Many local firms and organisations provide speakers and allow visits to enhance the taught curriculum. Concerts are performed for local primary schools and old people's homes. Good links have been established with further and higher education institutions particularly with Lancaster University. A regular number of visits contribute positively to students' learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is well led and managed and the governors are well-informed and effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good leadership and management by the headteacher and leadership team.
- Governors are closely involved in the school's plans for improvement.
- There is strong leadership by subject leaders in almost all departments.
- Leadership in design and technology and ICT is not sufficiently effective.

Commentary

73. The headteacher provides good leadership. In the two years since his appointment he has shown himself to have a very clear vision for the school's future based on an ethical philosophy and a determination to serve the whole community. He consults widely amongst staff, governors, students and parents before taking a decision. Thus he takes all arguments into account and those consulted feel valued members of the community. He has a good sense of priorities, for example in concentrating on teaching and learning as the main means of raising standards. The headteacher and leadership team, with the full involvement of the governors, have managed the difficulty in recruiting staff well. Appointments already made mean that the school will be fully staffed from September, thus removing the need for so many temporary teachers that has plagued the school for the last two years. Strategies for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, including performance management of staff, are generally effective. Good arrangements for professional development are helping to improve teaching standards.
74. The leadership team provides good support for the headteacher. Its members play a major role in forming strategy and in decision-making. Good relations help ensure that discussions reach sound conclusions based on educational grounds. The quality of leadership of heads of departments is good. It is particularly strong in English, drama, geography, psychology and physical education. Only in design and technology and ICT is it unsatisfactory. In most cases heads of department are successful in creating effective teaching teams, providing support where necessary. They analyse departmental performance well, make good use of statistical data, and take appropriate action.
75. There are, however, some details of management that do not receive enough attention. Primarily, the behaviour policy is not fully successful because not all teachers are comfortable in its use. There are other issues that require action to improve the school's efficiency. Although financial management is good, and initiatives are planned and budgeted for carefully,



with the full involvement of the governors and the financial manager, the workload of teachers in the learning support unit is not well planned and is inefficient.

76. The governors fulfil their role well. They are committed to ensuring the school is fully inclusive and know how this can be achieved. Because they are involved in discussions of policy at an early stage they have a full role in making decisions. They have a good understanding of the school and a shrewd understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors meets the headteacher frequently and plays a key role in advising and supporting him. The governing body has met all the issues for action listed in the previous inspection report but fails to meet its statutory duty to ensure a daily act of corporate worship for all students.

### **Sixth form**

77. Leadership and management are good. The leadership provided by the director of sixth form studies is reflective, self critical and innovative. The management team is highly committed and there is a very clear vision for future development and a drive for improvement. Evaluation of past and current performance is well embedded. Relationships between staff and students are very positive and are characterised by mutual respect. Strategic planning fully reflects the school's goals and objectives. The management team is committed to running an equitable and inclusive sixth form in which each individual matters. At present the sixth form is not fully cost-effective. It requires a small increase in numbers to raise the income of the sixth form sufficiently to cover the cost of sixth form teaching.
78. The sixth form is organised well. Members of staff are clear about their roles and there is effective delegation of responsibilities. Target setting and the monitoring of achievement are well established for individual students. The weaker aspects include the limited common-room provision, which does not help social development, and the need to widen enrichment activities outside the formal curriculum. Both problems are being actively tackled. The curriculum is also limited in its provision for advanced and intermediate vocational courses.
79. Leadership in individual subjects in the sixth form is good overall. In English, mathematics and physical education it is very good. In English, management is excellent. Reasons for poor performance in the AS examinations in 2003 were immediately sought and there were discussions with students. As a result changes were made that have led to much better achievement. In most subjects there is clear vision and a commitment to improvement.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,164,890
Total expenditure	4,172,614
Expenditure per student	3,076

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	27,423
Balance carried forward to the next year	47,122

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

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in English and English literature in 2003 were well above average.
- Teaching is good so students learn well and achieve very well from Year 7 to Year 11.
- Excellent leadership and very good management drive standards forward.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation impedes the effectiveness of the department.

## Commentary

80. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average. There has been some improvement over the last three years following the national pattern. Girls do better than boys by about the same amount as in most schools. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average, reflecting the test results. As many higher attaining students choose to go to local selective schools, this represents good achievement. The best written work is imaginative and technically very accurate. Most students make themselves understood in writing although lower attainers have trouble in structuring sentences and their spelling and punctuation are weak. Reading standards are sound with most students able to select information from reference books and the Internet. Standards of speaking range from the articulate to the limited.
81. Results in the GCSE examination in English in 2003 were well above average. It is particularly praiseworthy that 20 per cent of students attained grades A and A\*. The GCSE English literature results were also well above average with boys doing particularly well. Although higher proportions of students are being entered each year, the entry rate is below average. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are above average, showing good achievement in these years, and overall very good achievement from Year 7 to Year 11. The highest attainers show very good understanding of literature, for example in exploring Wordsworth's relationship with nature, and their free writing is of very good quality. Students of average attainment write clearly although they make too many technical errors such as punctuation mistakes. They have good understanding of literary texts. There are a few students with poor writing skills. Speaking skills are generally good.
82. Students learn well because teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised as teachers make good use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. They are enthusiastic about the subject and quick to praise good work. This helps create a climate where students want to do well, as in a Year 8 lesson on persuasive writing. After a brisk starting activity in which students were all involved, an interesting piece of writing was used as a model for the students to base their own work. They became very enthusiastic and the lesson ended with a number reading their own work aloud very expressively to the evident interest of the rest of the class. Students have good attitudes to English although many do not take sufficient care over the presentation of work in their draft books. Work is marked carefully with very helpful comments often relating to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. As a result, students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Lack of enough English classrooms increases the workload for teachers, who have to carry books and other resources from room to room.
83. The leadership of the department is excellent and its management is very good. Subject leaders are excellent role models and there is an exceptionally clear concentration on raising standards. This is seen by the way in which the performance of the department is analysed thoroughly in department meetings and in key documentation. Very good use is made of data about students' performance. However, there is still some work to do to ensure that all teachers in the department perform as well as the majority, for example in the effectiveness of comments on students' work. Weaknesses described in the previous inspection have been remedied and improvement is good.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. The school makes good provision to raise standards of literacy across the curriculum. There has been suitable training for teachers and the literacy co-ordinator has begun a programme of providing support to individual subjects. There is, for example, a wide selection of materials to

be used to enhance literacy in history. Emphasis is maintained by various competitions provided for students to encourage them to improve reading and spelling. Some departments give literacy more emphasis than others. In ICT, for example, any support for literacy arises only incidentally, while in drama, teachers are particularly aware of literacy needs. The library is a very good resource and there is generally good use made by subjects for research. Overall standards are satisfactory and a more focused approach is needed by all subjects in order to raise them.

## Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved and most students learn well as a result.
- Standards are still below average because there have been recent problems with staffing.
- The achievement of a minority of students is undermined by lack of motivation.
- The modern languages faculty is well led and efficiently managed.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to use ICT in the foreign language.

Commentary

85. The modern languages faculty has suffered in recent years from disruptions in staffing which have taken their toll on the morale and achievement of many students. This came out in the disappointing German results in the 2003 GCSE examinations. This legacy remains in the below average standards of work of some students. The faculty is more settled than it was, however. Teaching is good and more students are achieving to their potential. With committed leadership and effective teachers the faculty is now well placed to raise standards.
86. In 2003, GCSE results in French were below average and similar to 2002. Most students achieved satisfactorily and did as well in French as they did in their other subjects. Girls, however, did less well than boys, contrary to the national picture. German results were very low in 2003, but similar to French in 2002. Students of German in particular suffered from disrupted teaching. Almost all students were entered for a foreign language at GCSE – a much higher proportion than average.
87. Standards of work seen in Year 11 in French and German are below average. Overall, however, students are achieving satisfactorily in both languages. The situation in German has been put right and students receive teaching that is well suited to their needs. Disaffection still persists among a few lower attaining students, but the majority are well focused on the demands of GCSE. Higher attaining linguists, boys and girls alike, understand and speak French and German well. A few of them have authentic-sounding pronunciation because they hear the language well spoken by their teachers. Their writing, too, is above average, though a little over-cautious because they are doing coursework for the first time. In this respect girls are doing better than boys because they pay greater attention to accuracy and have a firmer grasp of grammar rules. Written work in French is rather better than in German because students are given more opportunity of writing longer, freer pieces in French.
88. In Year 9, standards are below average overall. However, students' achievement is satisfactory given their attainment when they entered the school. Higher-attaining students speak well and understand the language spoken in a familiar situation. However, they are not yet secure in their use of past and future tenses so cannot achieve well above average results. Students of average and lower attainment, including those with learning needs, achieve well when they are stimulated and well managed. They understand their teachers' use of German or French. Boys on the whole are more ready to volunteer an answer in the foreign language, and often get it

right. Their pronunciation is very English-sounding, however. As in the older years, younger students of German have less opportunity to develop extended writing than in French.

89. Teaching is good and so is the quality of students' learning. At its best teaching has a very strong brisk pace and involves students in lots of vivid activities, such as games and role-plays, which help them practise new language. Learning in such lessons is both swift and enjoyable. Lessons start well in the foreign language and students know clearly what they are going to learn. Equally, at the end of most lessons teachers have imaginative ways of reminding students of what they have learnt. Teachers' good command of their language and their sensitive use of it encourage students to listen carefully and thereby gain in understanding. Students' behaviour, sometimes unacceptable, is mostly managed well, with a blend of firmness and good humour that students respect. Teachers do not insist enough that students use the language for routine requests, such as asking to borrow a pen, or give them enough systematic practice with their accent and pronunciation.
90. Homework is mostly well set and appropriate, but marking in some cases is not rigorous enough in getting students to correct their own work. Teachers do not take enough opportunities to give students different tasks, or varying amounts of work to do, according to their learning needs and speed of working.
91. The modern foreign languages faculty enjoys strong energetic leadership and efficient management. The head of faculty is a very good role model for staff and students. Teachers work increasingly as a team and share ideas and resources. This is helped by a very good programme of observation and monitoring which is spreading good practice and holding teachers to account. The faculty evaluates its performance well and does not delay important decisions such as changing to a new syllabus for the GCSE examinations from which students are already benefiting. Students have good opportunities, through trips abroad and after-school classes, to extend their experience of learning a language. In this context, however, they do not have enough exposure to ICT or reading in the foreign language for pleasure. The possibilities offered by the library have not yet been explored. Teachers make good use of the classrooms but there are not enough of them to allow each full-time teacher to take "ownership" of one room. The language rooms need brightening up and to be made more welcoming. Since the previous inspection improvement has been satisfactory. Teaching and learning have improved, but standards still lag behind.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and lead to good achievement.
- Good leadership and management have developed effective assessment systems.
- The behaviour of a small number of students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is slowing their own learning, and sometimes that of others.
- Most students enjoy mathematics and work hard.

Commentary

92. Students' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 is average, but at the bottom end of that category. There is also a smaller proportion than expected of higher-attaining students. Year 9 test results have risen in the past three years but in 2003, the improvement was not as great as the national one. Standards reached in the 2003 tests were below national averages. GCSE results have also risen over the past three years. In 2003 the proportion gaining an A\* to C grade increased and nearly all Year 11 students attained a grade at A\* to G. Results were above average.
93. Test and examination results in 2003 were below those of similar schools in Year 9 and in line in Year 11. There were staffing problems in the past two years, which have now been resolved.
94. There is no significant difference in the attainment or achievement of boys and girls. However, sometimes boys dominate discussions, especially when they are in the majority.
95. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average, but at the top end of the category. In Year 11 standards of work seen are above average. The cumulative impact of good teaching is a key factor in this improvement. Students make good progress in acquiring a wide range of mathematical techniques and are able to apply them with understanding to increasingly difficult problems. Higher attainers develop better analytical and algebraic skills than other students. Lower attainers have a secure foundation in basic mathematical skills and are able to use these in straightforward problems.
96. Most students work hard and their positive attitudes to mathematics are shown in their written work, including completion of homework, and their lively participation in class activities. A well-planned curriculum and good teaching, help higher, average and lower attaining students to achieve well. Teachers use assessment well to see which students need additional support. These are all contributory factors to the good achievement in Years 9 and 11.
97. Teaching and learning are good, with about a quarter very good. Teachers adapt their methods well. For example in a lesson on algebra with lower attaining students in Year 7, the teacher continually referred to practical everyday examples whenever students found the conceptual ideas difficult. In a Year 11 lesson on manipulating algebraic expressions, higher attaining students were moved quickly on to more demanding questions. This rapid escalation in difficulty and their persistence with complex questions enabled them to learn very effectively. When teaching is satisfactory but not good, sometimes too much time is spent dealing with problems on an individual basis rather than with a larger group. Occasionally, too much time is spent dealing with a number of students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with behavioural difficulties. This adversely affects their own learning, and at times that of others. These students, and those identified as having other learning difficulties, work more productively when there is additional learning support for them, but there is not enough of this.
98. A wide range of extra-curricular activities such as after-school revision classes and mathematics competitions, helps students to improve their work.

99. Problems with access to computers have restricted the consistent use of ICT for all students. The mathematics computer room is too small for large groups to work effectively in it.
100. The good leadership and management of the head of the department are shown in the effective use of assessment information. Systems are used well to track students' progress and identify areas for improvement. Staff form a cohesive, specialist team, with a clear emphasis on encouraging students to achieve well and enjoy learning.
101. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching has improved. Many rooms have been refurbished, although some staff still teach in rooms well away from the main mathematics area. Teachers have worked hard to create a good mathematical environment through colourful displays.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

102. Students' mathematical skills are satisfactory and help them in other subjects. The school has a numeracy policy and a cross-curricular working group. This helps to establish common techniques, for example tackling problems using percentages. Students in science represent experimental data in tabular and graphical form; they carry out calculations such as in distance, speed or time problems. Students use similar skills successfully in geography. Students can measure, weigh and "mark out" materials in design and technology.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership of the subject is good.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' progress is good.
- The final parts of lessons are not consistently used to review effectively the learning that should have taken place.
- Higher attaining students are not consistently challenged to reach higher levels.

Commentary

103. In 2003 test results at the end of Year 9 were average. In relation to students in similar schools the results were average. The trend over the last three years is one of marked improvement. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. Attainment in science of students on entry to the school is broadly average. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. They have sound investigative skills and present their data well. They have sound knowledge of the topics covered, although lower attaining students have limited recall of previous work.
104. In 2003, GCSE results in the double award examination were below average. In relation to similar schools the results were below average. The trend over the last three years is of steady improvement. In the 2003 examinations, boys performed significantly better than girls, but this had not been a consistent pattern over recent years. The girls' performance was particularly disappointing in the physics and chemistry module tests, and staffing difficulties with some sets was an additional factor. A small number of students entered for the single award, and all were awarded a grade. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are broadly average. Recent staffing problems have had an effect on standards but students overall achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11 in relation to their prior attainment. Higher attaining students respond to high

expectations but are not consistently provided with extension work to reach higher levels. Most students discuss their work clearly but are less confident when trying to apply knowledge.

105. The quality of teaching overall is good. It is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, where the challenging behaviour of a small minority of students often reduces the rate of learning. Lessons are generally well planned and appropriate to the needs of students, whose positive response contributes to their learning in most lessons. Clear learning objectives are identified but not always effectively reviewed to assess learning. Appropriate homework is regularly set, and marking is supportive but does not always give clear guidance for improvement. Students with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as others because teachers are quick to see when help, for example with unfamiliar words or ideas, is needed. When teaching assistants are available, they contribute effectively to making the lessons accessible to all.
106. Leadership is good. The head of faculty has only very recently been appointed. There is a clear commitment to further raising standards, shared by all staff, and strategies have been developed to achieve this. There is good curriculum enrichment through an active science club and a major research project planned for Year 9 students with funding from the Royal Society.
107. Since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement. Standards have steadily improved over the last three years at both Year 9 and at GCSE level. Procedures for monitoring students' progress are proving increasingly effective. Some improvements have been made in the accommodation, although much remains to be done in refurbishing out-dated laboratories.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Schemes of work are well planned for students in Years 7 to 9.
- There is insufficient use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 to help students understand how well they are doing in the subject and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the subject.
- The short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is unsuitable for some students.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- Students' work is disorganised as they do not save their files efficiently on the school Intranet.

### Commentary

108. All students in Year 11 took the short GCSE course in 2003, just over one fifth gained A\* to C grades, these results were well below average.
109. Standards in Year 9 are below nationally expected levels. A new ICT curriculum has recently been introduced and students in Year 9 are taking the same units of work as students in Year 8. This is helping them catch up with their knowledge and understanding of software such as spreadsheets and databases which they have not previously experienced. They understand cell location in spreadsheets, and how formulae can be used to perform calculations. However they are uncertain of the construction of formulae. They have learned how to construct and query a database. Achievement by students in Year 9 is unsatisfactory, and standards are below average in the subject for this age. In Year 11, students are completing the second major unit of work for the short GCSE course in developing a slide show presentation. Although there are some good presentations with transition slides and navigation buttons, many students have

only a few slides and a lack of presentation features. In the database unit students understand the importance of validation. They can identify fields and primary keys in databases but do not always recognise the difference between text and numeric data. Students use word-processing skills to complete their units of work. Standards are varied, many students make inappropriate use of font and colour, and their work lacks the sophistication expected for students in Year 11, showing underachievement in the subject.

110. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and give clear explanations, which help students make some progress. Three-part lessons are planned, but in practice this does not always happen, and learning is sometimes not reinforced at the end of the lesson. A few students are poorly behaved, and teachers do not always effectively manage the situation. This leads to time being wasted and the pace of the lesson dropping, resulting in insufficient learning. Some students do not get fully involved in the lesson, have poor work rates and achieve very little. No use is made of National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9 to help students understand how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. However assessment is better in GCSE where examination board criteria help students to understand how to gain marks in their course work.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of vision for the subject's development. Teaching is not being effectively monitored and improved. Standards are below national levels and many students underachieve in the subject. The Key Stage 3 Strategy has recently been introduced and this has improved the curriculum for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. The short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is too difficult for some students, and lacks challenge for higher attaining students. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection as standards have fallen.

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

112. The use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. Most, but not all, departments have planned use of ICT in their schemes of work. There is very good use of ICT in business studies, and good use by students with special educational needs. In science, students use the technology to log data. Many students make use of word-processing skills in their preparation of course work in different subjects. This is particularly good in sixth form business studies and geography, and in English where students are able to e-mail their work for marking. The low number of interactive whiteboards, two in the school, and the few data projectors means that teachers are unable to make effective use of work prepared on their lap top computers, and, therefore, little use is made of ICT in teaching. The below average number of computers to students, at the ratio of 1 to 7 against a national average of 1 to 5, means that there is a shortage of computers in the school. Although some subjects have their own computers for class use, there are not sufficient for a normal-sized class. Some computers are in need of upgrading, and in music, the old computers cannot run the new and up-to-date software.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 11.
- Teaching is good overall but non-specialist teachers sometimes reduce the impact on learning.
- The department makes good use of the literacy strategy to support all students.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Too little use is made of ICT by students in Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

113. By Year 9, students reach average standards. Their work is detailed and impressive and represents good achievement when compared to their level on entry to the school. They have acquired good map skills and their written work shows a good understanding of how physical and human processes shape the landscape. Higher attaining students make good use of case studies to explain environmental issues such as the clearance of the Amazon rain forests. Lower attaining students are given good support, tasks are adapted and they achieve well. Most students in Year 7 and Year 8 show little practical use of ICT in their work and the position is little better in Year 9.
114. In 2003, GCSE results were above average. In relation to students in similar schools, the results represent good achievement and there has been a steady improvement over the last three years, especially of boys who are performing better than girls. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 11 are above average. Most students write well and can link cause and effect in some detail. Most students can apply a range of skills to their GCSE coursework. Lower attaining students do less well with coursework and strategies such as completion checklists and after school coursework clinics have recently started to improve standards for this group. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
115. The quality of teaching overall is good. Students benefit from a core of specialist teachers who are well prepared and have good subject knowledge. This is evident in their whole-class teaching and their explanations to individual students. Non-specialist teachers in the department cope well but in some lessons they have less impact on learning because of their lack of a wider geographical knowledge. Considerable thought has gone into the scheme of work to produce lessons that are stimulating and relevant, for example the Year 9 Morecambe local study, and there are many issue-based topics that stretch the highest attaining students as well as catching their imagination. Teaching is helped by the fact that most students want to learn and by behaviour that is often very good. Teachers know their students well and provide resources that match the needs of the majority, including the highest attainers. All students and especially those with special educational needs are well supported by the department's use of the literacy strategy. Key words are emphasised in all lessons, marking also corrects grammar, and classroom display is used to highlight and re-enforce geographical terms and words. Teachers set homework regularly and marking is supportive and helpful.
116. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision for further improvement and collaborative planning is evident. Assessment arrangements are impressive and there has been a real attempt to make assessment a meaningful process for the students involved.



117. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. National Curriculum levels are now well used and understood, marking is diagnostic and supportive and standards are rising. However, ICT is underused.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership, monitoring and supporting teaching.
- The embedded Key Stage 3 Strategy is improving teaching and learning.
- Improvement in GCSE examination results is slow because examination techniques lack sharpness.
- Good assessment contributes to good achievement.

Commentary

118. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. Students have accurate knowledge and understanding of how Britain has changed through glorious, though often ignominious, events and movements. Students effectively analyse a variety of sources and select evidence to support a viewpoint. They understand bias and critically assess the reliability of visual, text, poetic, video and other sources. All students can describe the differences between sources. Many students are less confident in judging the relative strengths of sources and explaining why this matters. All students are sensitive writers putting themselves in others' shoes and respecting the culture of other societies. Given the limited specific history skills on entry to the school, students' achievement is good. Those with special educational needs make no better than satisfactory progress because there is insufficient specialist support in lessons. Word processing clarifies the quality of their extended writing, unimpeded by literacy problems, although provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
119. In 2003, GCSE results were below average and have remained around the same level in recent years. Improved assessment, changes to the examination and resources and better teaching are targeted at raising standards. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average. History skills are applied to understand issues about, how governments influence people's attitudes whether in Nazi Germany or America during the Vietnam War for example. Note-making, devices for sorting information and the planning of writing streamline learning especially for lower attaining students. These strategies contribute to students' good achievement.
120. Across all years, students know their targets and what to do to improve. They are not familiar with the language of specific history skills because these are not explicit as lesson objectives. Year 11 students do not apply GCSE criteria for creating and judging model answers.
121. Teaching and learning are good. The unusual proportion of temporary staff recognise the valuable support they receive and specialist and experienced teachers are carefully deployed. Satisfactory rather than good teaching occurs when very good departmental resources are not used well and when the school behaviour policy is not followed closely enough.
122. The Key Stage 3 Strategy, evident in all lessons, makes for good learning because it provides a clear pattern for the lesson based on shared objectives so students know how learning is building up. Literacy is developed through reading aloud and use of lists, grids, spider-grams etc. in preparation for writing at length. Impressive writing about trench life in World War 1 is done in four episodes, enabling all students to write at much greater length. In this, and other ways, teachers provide opportunities for students to express their feelings about the drama and tragedy of history. Homework is successfully integrated in lessons.

123. Leadership and management are good. Regular monitoring of standards, team meetings reviewing and sharing ideas, very good resources and schemes of work with clear guidance about teaching styles, are some aspects exemplifying good improvement since the previous inspection and are maintaining stability in challenging circumstances.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching strategies promote good learning.
- Good leadership and management provide a stable framework for improved attainment and achievement.
- The material used is not always suited to the learning needs of the students.
- The use of ICT to support independent learning is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

124. By Year 9 standards are average. Students are able to distinguish between the main world religions, and they understand the symbolism of ritual. Through class discussion, they learn to identify the connection between belief and behaviour, for instance, in moral stances on abortion or euthanasia. Although there are good examples of thoughtful written work, particularly by more competent students, many students find it difficult to express themselves in writing at any length, and in the case of less competent students there are many instances of unfinished work. Students with special educational needs keep pace with the others because they are given extra help and support in lessons. Homework assignments which involve three or four weeks research are usually well done, and contribute significantly to rising standards because they are interesting and allow students to work at their own pace. Short projects on Egypt, Indian religions, creeds and beliefs were very well done and encouraged independent learning. Students' achievement, taking account of all the work done, is satisfactory.
125. In 2003, GCSE results were below average and an exception to the trend over the previous three years. This reflected an extended period of disruption because of staffing problems, which was a barrier to learning. This legacy prevents students from achieving more than satisfactorily in spite of current good teaching and learning. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are now average. Students write very sensitively on a range of topics, although evaluation skills are often underdeveloped. The opportunity to discuss and listen to other points of view in lessons helps the students in their written work, but the less competent still produce work which is minimal and unsupported by evidence and argument. Standards are improving because of the now stable situation.
126. Teaching is now good and leading to good learning. Students learn best when they are involved in their own learning, and teachers' strategies promote this. A practical seder meal which allowed students in Year 7 to taste the symbolic Passover food was an excellent way to help students really understand its meaning, and gave them the opportunity to re-enact the ceremony and recite the prayers. In the only unsatisfactory lesson seen, students' attitudes and behaviour slowed down the lesson, and the teacher's strategies were not effective in coping with disruptive or uninterested students. Generally, students work purposefully and the higher attaining ones have developed a genuine interest in the topics covered. Lower attaining students often struggle with the assignments because the content and length are not tailored sufficiently to their learning needs and ability. Assessment and monitoring are now in place and students know what steps they must take to raise their level of attainment. Standards are improving as a result.

127. Leadership and management are both good. The department has entered a period of stability with vision and commitment to improvement. Schemes of work and forward planning are having a significant effect on standards. The subject makes a good contribution to the personal development of the students, especially the spiritual and moral dimensions of their lives, and links with other faith groups outside the school are being forged. A long-running partnership with a Burmese refugee camp in Thailand has been an excellent experience both in the exchange of views and customs, for instance, on marriage, but also in active citizenship in a practical concern for human rights. There is little access in lesson time to ICT, to promote self-learning, and this is unsatisfactory. Resources are good and the library is well used for project research, as is evident from the many impressive examples displayed on the classroom walls.
128. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, particularly the improved standards at the end of Year 11 and the effective assessment procedures.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall management of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- There is a good range of material areas and projects.
- Assessment procedures are not used consistently and routine marking of students' work does not provide clear information about how to improve.
- There is unsatisfactory provision for ICT, and computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM).

Commentary

129. There has been a high level of instability of staffing over the last three years and this has disrupted learning and affected attainment.
130. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average by Year 9. Students' achievement in relation to their standard when they enter the school is unsatisfactory. Most students make satisfactory gains over time in their knowledge and understanding of materials through working in a range of materials, and on a variety of projects and activities. They are able to select and use a range of hand tools and equipment with some accuracy. However, their research and design skills are below average. Higher attaining students complete tasks well, but others do not always pay enough attention to detail or finish their work, and their drawing techniques are less well developed. Most students evaluate their work identifying what worked well, but they do not always make suggestions as to what could be improved. In food technology good use is made of sensory analysis to test and evaluate products.
131. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the overall results for design and technology were slightly below average and below that of the school, but have improved since 2002. Girls performed better than boys. Results in food technology and textiles were well above average, and students' achievement in food technology is good. However, achievement is unsatisfactory in the other material areas. In lessons seen most students are currently working at average standards. Students develop a sound understanding of design processes and by the end of Year 11, higher attaining students produce work that shows detailed research, good design skills and drawing techniques. They consider the views of clients and make good quality products. Industrial application is explored in detail in food technology and textiles, and is done well by the more able students. Other students' work reflects limited design skills, weaker

drawing techniques and organisational skills, and lack rigour in the evaluation of their design ideas.

132. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, and lessons have clearly stated learning outcomes and starter activities that focus students straight away. Good use is made of end of lesson plenary discussions in some lessons. However, learning is not always tested during lessons or specific targets set to show students how to improve work in lessons. Assessment procedures are not used consistently across the subject. Students' work is marked but the methods used are not as helpful to students as they might be, often lacking in constructive comments and targets for improvement. Teachers mostly manage students well. In many lessons teachers give considerable direction as they guide students through structured tasks. Although this ensures the development of basic knowledge and skills, it often inhibits students' opportunities to decide how to approach work for themselves and so become independent learners. Where teaching is less effective the pace and demand of students lacks challenge, some students become uninterested, learning is slow and attitudes are unsatisfactory. Literacy skills are reinforced as students are positively encouraged to use appropriate technological vocabulary. Students are given very few opportunities to use ICT including CAD/CAM to explore, develop, model and communicate design proposals, or to shape and form materials. Provision for the use of ICT, CAD/CAM and Control is unsatisfactory.
133. Taking into account the unsatisfactory achievement in Year 9 and in most material areas in Year 11, the below average results in GCSE overall, and most teaching being satisfactory, the overall leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The management of food technology and textiles, however, is good. The department has good links with community and other schools, and provides a range of extra-curricular activities. The outside workshops are in poor condition, and materials and tools have to be brought from the main building for practical work. This has an adverse effect on learning. There is an over reliance for students to bring ingredients in food technology which excludes some students from practical lessons. Technician support for the subject is excellent. The subject has made insufficient progress since the last inspection and improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- Standards in Year 11 are above average.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development.
- Teachers do not always manage behaviour well enough to promote higher levels of concentration and effort.

Commentary

134. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. Students' achievement is good, considering their below average standards in this subject when they join the school in Year 7. They paint well, using colour very thoughtfully. For example, they use pale blues and purples to create moody landscapes, or bright reds and yellows to produce eye-catching posters. They use wax and ink vigorously, and their work based on the wartime drawings of Henry Moore is dramatic and eye-catching. However, they do not use ICT often enough to support their work, and their independent research is too narrow as a result.

135. In 2003, GCSE results were above average, and have shown a steady improvement over the last five years. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. Students' achievement continues to be good, and they make good gains in their skills and understanding of painting, drawing and three-dimensional work. Their clay modelling is strong, and they create humorous ceramic portrait heads, which show a good grasp of pinch-pot techniques. Their colour work continues to be a strength, and compositions become more sensitive and complex. Gifted and talented students produce impressive drawings from the life model, rising successfully to the challenging work set.
136. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, methods are active, and materials are used vigorously. For example, in a lesson on ceramics, students rolled and cut clay, building large hollow shapes and then creating the textures of hair and clothing using wooden and metal modelling tools. They enjoyed physically getting to grips with the clay, they worked at a good pace, and good learning was the result. Lesson planning is also strong, and students know what they need to do to succeed. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers do not manage behaviour well enough to create higher levels of concentration and effort. As a result, students do not try as hard as they could, and learning is no better than satisfactory.
137. Course leadership and management are good, and the quality of teaching and learning, and standards of work, are regularly monitored. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, and standards and good achievement, have been maintained. In addition, the subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. For example, students study the art of non-western cultures, make many trips to galleries, take part in life drawing classes, and go on outdoor sketching trips to local beauty spots.

## **Drama**

Four lessons of drama were observed in the main school during the inspection.

138. The department has undergone a turbulent period with staffing and is only now recovering thanks to good and sometimes very good teaching. Standards in drama are currently average by Year 9. Students are achieving well. Students in Year 9 perform their plays thoughtfully, with understanding of characterisation. Boys were much more confident in the performances than were the girls who were more hesitant and spoke too softly. Their group and self-evaluation was very helpful in thinking of ways to improve. Students listened well to each other and gave quite sensitive criticism, which was to the point.
139. Standards are above average by Year 11 and students are achieving well. In Year 11 students enter roles which are truthful and convincing. They have the skills to maintain these roles effectively throughout their devised scenes. These are realistic but so far they lack real sensitivity to the subject matter.
140. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 9, although there was one unsatisfactory lesson where the students' behaviour was not sufficiently mature to allow real learning to take place. In a Year 9, lesson the good questioning from the teacher challenged them to think more carefully as to why they had chosen a particular action. Good teaching strategies allowed the students to work independently and evaluate their achievement. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching is very good with excellent features. Teaching was incisive, questioning thoughtfully to help establish the practicalities of devising their drama and cutting effectively through problems with students' absence which threatened to slow down their rehearsal.

### **An example of outstanding practice – innovative and imaginative teaching**

In a Year 10 lesson students explored the moral dilemmas faced by characters that have witnessed a crime and must decide whether to tell or keep quiet about it.

The teacher used highly imaginative and innovative means to help students look at the inner thoughts of their characters. All students had to assume some definitive relationship with the witness, and express their approval or disapproval about the actions in words and body language. These were used to create a freeze-frame around the witness, allowing students to explore distance, shape, level and physical expression using their body language. Students were able to use repetition, volume and choral speaking with their statements these to devise short scenes that explored the worst consequences of reporting or not reporting the crime. They were able to deepen their understanding of drama and increase their repertoire of drama skills. All work was enhanced by secure relationships and excellent attitudes from the students. The students worked in an atmosphere in which the teacher rated their abilities highly. Trust was very evident and allowed two students with special needs to work and achieve highly in this unique environment.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and especially in Years 10 and 11
- Problems recruiting temporary teachers in previous years have resulted in no music lessons for many and consequently students' progress has been inconsistent
- The bands and groups in the department are very good and frequently provide live music for all students to listen to.
- Computers are old and failing and need upgrading.

Commentary

141. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average and achievement overall is satisfactory. This is commendable given the fact that the department has had problems finding teachers to fill temporary posts. In their previous years some students now in Year 9 had no music lessons for a whole year. Musical skills have, therefore, not been developed consistently over this period. Most students are learning well at present because there is now sufficient good teaching and lessons are regular. Many students play rhythmically and enthusiastically, singing well in tune. A few, though, do not listen carefully enough to keep together with other players
142. In 2003, GCSE results were below average. Results over the last few years have fluctuated widely, reflecting the unstable situation. Standards in the current Year 11 are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. In the small group of eight students half the students are making good progress, composing orchestral music in particular structures, or for films. Poor attendance among some of the other students is affecting their progress. In Year 10 standards are above average, particularly in performance.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is good and especially so in Years 10 and 11. Students' knowledge and understanding of the current topic is checked by very focused questions from the teacher to which students respond well. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on what they have done in the lesson by first listening to what groups and individuals have achieved. They talk about the quality of the work. They are fully involved in the assessment process. They mark themselves and their peers by applying the National Curriculum levels and the GCSE marking scheme in Years 10 and 11. They set small targets for their next lesson in the light of this reflection and in the light of good individual support from the teacher during practical work. This is patient and painstaking enabling these students to make good progress. However, some students lack the skills to rehearse effectively without the teacher. They need effective and speedy advice from the teacher so that they can learn more productively on their own. For some classes, consistent progress is hampered by alternate lessons being taught in the second music classroom. This is set at some distance from the main music room, with insufficient equipment and in close proximity to other taught subjects.



144. The leadership and management of the department are good, and have ensured that improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in spite of the unsettled period. A particular part of the vision of leadership has been to ensure that students have the opportunity to perform music regularly either in assemblies or in concerts in and out of school. This includes music composed in class. All students in school, therefore, have the opportunity to hear live music regularly. During the inspection, the Saxophone group played to different years on each day of the week and their audience of different years listened attentively and appreciatively. The standard of bands and groups is very good. The school has been at the forefront of developments in technology in the past and all students in the school use computers. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult as the computers are dated and failing and can no longer be upgraded.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and lead to good achievement.
- The range and quality of opportunities provided for students are very good.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.

Commentary

145. Standards of work are above average by Year 9. Students have good understanding of skills necessary for successful performance. They are able to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own work and that of others. They work hard to reach the best standards. A good example of these strengths was noted in a girls' badminton class in Year 9. Achievement is good in Year 7, particularly in activities of which many students have little earlier experience such as gymnastics and rugby. Achievement in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory because, although learning and progress during lessons are good, the rate of improvement over time is less good. This is because in these years students are grouped differently in each of their lessons, and this slows development and prevents achievement from being good.
146. Results at GCSE were above average in 2003, as they were in each of the two previous years. The proportion gaining A\* to A was very high. High standards of performance in games and athletic activities achieved by boys and girls are illustrated by the successes of teams and individuals at district and county levels. Overall standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students are well motivated and work hard and with enjoyment as was evident, for example in a Year 11 aerobics class. Achievement of students following the GCSE course is good. They demonstrate good levels of performance skills, make appropriate decisions in games and can identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and the reasons for them. They have good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the course. Written work is usually well presented and of satisfactory quality. The quality of understanding is not always matched by the quality or accuracy of expression.
147. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers know their subject well. This enables them to help students of all levels of attainment to enjoy their work and to achieve their potential. They explain tasks clearly, vary activities and keep up a good pace so that concentration is sustained. They are generous in praise and intolerant of lack of attention. Good learning is evident in the good recall students have of earlier work, and in standards reached. Learning is good because all students respond positively to teachers' expectations of behaviour, effort and progress. They enjoy working hard.

148. Leadership of the department is very good. Teachers form a strong team with very effective sharing of responsibilities. With good support from colleagues, they offer a wide range of opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities. The excellent programme of outdoor and adventurous pursuits enriches students' experience and contributes significantly to their personal development.
149. Improvement since the previous report is good. Standards have risen and examination results have improved. The quality of teaching and learning is better as is the quality of assessing students' progress and achievement. Flooding of pitches and the necessary use of departmental accommodation for assemblies and examinations continue to challenge teachers' planning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Morecambe Outdoor and Adventurous Education**

150. The school has a unique system of giving students in all years very high quality experiences in outdoor and adventurous activities.
151. The planned programme for all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 includes a wide variety of activities, including fell walking, rock climbing, kayaking, sailing, caving, orienteering and gill scrambling. All students in these years have five days' experience of these activities, as well as an overnight stay in a climbing hut.
152. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, students are able to opt for a variety of shorter courses in specific activities. For many students this is used as part of their practical activity for either GCSE or A Level physical education. For some students it is to continue their interest in outdoor activities, which they have gained in earlier years in the school. Sixth-form students who take part in some of the activities value it greatly. Not only does it enable them to reach higher levels of performance, but also to qualify as assistants. This is particularly helpful as they provide additional staffing when groups are taking part in activities. There is also very good support by former students and parents who give up much of their time to assist with activities. A permanent support assistant however would be a valuable asset in the planning and staffing of activities.
153. A technical support assistant ensures that the high quality equipment is maintained to the highest standards. Management of the subject area is of the highest quality, and students experience excellent teaching by a highly qualified professional, who not only teaches the skills they require but also instils in them a love of the subject. Safety standards are at the forefront of all planning, and the daily faxed weather report ensures that in every activity students' and staff safety are paramount.



### **An example of outstanding practice – teacher’s planning, encouragement and expectations**

A Year 9 mixed ability class was completing their five days of outdoor and adventurous education on the climbing wall in the school. The teacher was meticulous in preparing the students, emphasising safety precautions and ensuring that all students could rope up correctly. The trust between the teacher and between the students was such that all succeeded in their climbs, learning fully the correct techniques for using harnesses, keeping ropes taut and supporting each other. Climbs were matched to students’ aptitude and ability so that some were able to conquer the overhang, while the less athletic students completed simpler climbs although they found them challenging. The teacher’s encouragement, high standards and high expectations meant that all students learned a lot about the techniques of climbing and experienced success they had not known was possible.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good, and the curriculum is planned in great detail.
- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- The school council is effective, and students successfully bring about change through its workings.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop fully their active citizenship skills in the community.

Commentary

154. Standards in Year 9 are average. Students’ achievement is good, and they make good gains in the skills knowledge and understanding needed to develop into responsible citizens. They recognise the importance of the election process, and they produce lively posters, which encourage people to use their right to vote. They understand the need for rules and order in society, and they consider the impact that imprisonment has on prisoners and their families. They also realise the importance of recycling waste, and protecting the environment. However, their written work is stored away by teachers straight after lessons, and this makes it difficult for students to review and improve their work, or develop ideas fully after topics have been covered in class.
155. Standards in Year 11 are average. Students’ achievement continues to be good. They study topics such as law and order in more depth. For example, they recognise the need for punishment to be fair to try to get offenders to change their behaviour. Discussions are often lively, and students learn to justify and defend their opinions about topical issues. They raise money for good causes, organising events such as charity dinners and concerts. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to fully develop their skills in citizenship activities in the local community.
156. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, planning is good, teachers are enthusiastic, and relationships with students are strong. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the different activities were clearly set out in the planning, the teacher’s introduction was lively, and it communicated a genuine sense of interest in the topic. The teacher knew the students well, and so was able to personalise the issues by relating them to events in their lives. Students’ interest levels increased as the lesson went on, and they tried hard to do their best. As a result, learning was good. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers do not know students well

enough, behaviour management is not fully effective, and the class does not listen as carefully as it could. In these lessons, learning is no better than satisfactory.

157. Leadership and management are good. The citizenship curriculum is planned in great detail, and the resources that teachers need are well organised. Assessment systems are effective, and encourage students to reflect on their experiences. The school council is well established, and manages considerable amounts of money, deciding how it should be spent. For example, the council has provided outdoor seating in the school grounds, and established a Millennium garden.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

### *Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	100	96.7	60	55.6	90	88.8
English literature	26	100	99.5	19.2	46.5	66.9	86.5
VCE business	18	100	88.6	16.7	20.6	72.2	60.1
Geography	25	100	98.7	28	44.5	72.8	84
History	18	94.4	99	33.3	44.6	75.6	84.6
Physical education	11	100	98	45.5	30.9	83.6	75.2
Psychology	14	100	97.4	42.9	42.7	81.4	81.8
Biology	11	100	96.4	36.4	39.2	81.8	78.6
Art and design	7	100	98.6	28.6	50.2	74.3	87.5
Drama	5	100	99.5	0	40.1	52	83.6
Physics	6	83.3	96.7	0	44.6	53.3	81.7
Sociology	10	90	98.2	20	44.3	72	83.6

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

**English literature** was inspected in full and **French** and **German** sampled. One lesson was observed in each language. Standards are below average in Year 12 French and above average in Year 13 German.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work in the present sixth form is average and students achieve well
- Very good leadership and excellent management ensure that weaknesses are rectified.
- A-level results have declined over the last three years and in 2003 students did not achieve as well as expected.
- AS results in 2003 were very low with many students failing to obtain a grade.
- Students in the present Years 12 and 13 learn well because of good teaching and their own good attitudes.

#### Commentary

158. Students enter the A-level course with standards that are below average. In 2003, results at A-level were well below average and students did not achieve as well as suggested by predictions based on their performance at GCSE. Results were similar to those in 2002 but showed a decline from the previous two years when they were above average. The 2003 AS results showed a steep decline from 2002 with nearly half the students failing to obtain a grade. Standards of work seen during the inspection are much higher and are average. This is evidence of good achievement by students. They have a sound grasp of the work of writers ranging from Shakespeare to modern American authors.
159. Students' files show very clearly a progression from naïve work at the start of the course into a more confident and sophisticated approach. Early work in Year 12 often does not go far beyond telling the plot of a play or novel but later work shows much more perceptive textual analysis. Although students illustrate their work with quotations, many are less adept at explaining their impact.
160. Students learn well because the teaching is good. There is good emphasis on students working independently. This was seen when, in small groups, Year 12 students were given the task of analysing poems by Wordsworth in preparation for a presentation to the whole class. Students themselves say this is a feature of the course. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to improve learning by asking questions judiciously or picking up appropriately on a statement from a student. Students' own very good attitudes and willingness to participate ensure that discussions are fruitful. Thus students gained deeper insight into the mind of Othello in a discussion that also involved role-play by the teacher.
161. Teachers mark students' work very conscientiously. Comments are copious and detailed and show students how to improve. It is only fairly recently, however, that teachers have begun to pay sufficient attention, both in teaching and marking, to the examination's assessment objectives. This is now leading to much more focused written work and higher standards. However, students are not given enough practice in essay writing.
162. English literature is a popular choice for students and retention rates this year are high. This reflects the good teaching and the very good relationships between teachers and students. Students appreciate the good research opportunities that exist in the library and the ready access to the Internet.

163. The leadership of the curriculum is very good and management is excellent. Strengths and weaknesses are constantly analysed. This is best illustrated by the reaction to the very disappointing results in 2003. Reasons were immediately sought and there were discussions with students. As a result, changes were made that have led to much better achievement. An immediate effect was the good improvement in grades when students re-sat their AS papers. There was not enough detail in last inspection report to make it possible to measure improvement since that time.

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

164. There is good provision for literacy in the sixth form. Students' standards are average. Discussion plays an important part in students' learning in all the subjects inspected and they participate well. Similarly, extended writing figures largely in subjects such as English, geography, history, business education and physical education. In all cases teachers give due prominence to the need for students to express themselves fluently and accurately. Students also gain from the library, which is well stocked in most subjects. However, classes are often being taught in the library at the same time as students are using it for study and this diminishes its effectiveness.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A level courses in mathematics. The retention rates in mathematics in both years 12 and 13 are good.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment of students' work is very good and is raising standards.
- Curriculum leadership and management are very good. This is demonstrated in the detailed guidance given to students at the beginning of their courses.
- Students achieve well and reach above average standards.
- ICT is not used as a tool for learning consistently enough by all students

Commentary

165. Students' standards on entry to Year 12 are generally below average. Results in Year 13 in Advanced Level examinations fluctuate from year to year depending on the ability of each cohort. In 2003, the standards were above average, and in 2002 they were even higher.

166. The work seen during the inspection in Year 13 was above average, with high attainers reaching very high standards. There are more male than female students studying mathematics; there is no significant difference in attainment or achievement by gender.

167. Higher attaining students show a high level of analytical thinking and can choose appropriately from a wide knowledge of different methods to solve problems. For example, they can manipulate algebraic expressions, and then integrate them using partial fractions. Lower attaining students can use standard procedures well, for example using the chain rule to differentiate. They find it harder to apply their skills to unfamiliar situations.

168. Overall, in Years 12 and 13, students' achievement is good. This is due to good teaching, students' hard work and very positive attitudes to mathematics. The achievement of some average and lower attaining students is very good. This is because they find the work initially difficult and persisting with it helps them to do very much better than expected. The

achievement of higher attainers is good but not very good, as there is as yet no further mathematics course to challenge them to the same extent.

169. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is knowledgeable, well structured, and sets high expectations in terms of the quality and quantity of work expected from students, both in and out of the classroom. Students are expected to do a great deal of additional work outside lessons. Assessment is detailed and helpful, and so students know how well they are doing. Regular end of topic tests helps teachers to check how well students are doing and identifies who is struggling and may need additional help. Students find there is always a member of staff available to help them outside their mathematics lessons. This very good use of assessment and strong support and encouragement from teachers are key factors in raising standards.
170. Leadership and management are very good. The detailed guidance given to students at the beginning of Year 12 helps them to develop good, independent study skills. Analysis of a wide range of data is used to identify areas for improvement, and appropriate action is quickly taken. The tightened course entry requirements for the current Year 12 are an example of this. ICT is used to develop understanding of a new topic; for example to investigate trigonometric functions. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use ICT themselves to further their learning.
171. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as the positive picture in that report has been maintained, and in some areas improved.

#### Mathematics across the curriculum

172. Students' mathematical skills are good and contribute well to their progress in other subjects. In biology, students are able to carry out a statistical analysis of data collected during fieldwork, for example comparing natural and man-made ponds. Students in psychology have good skills of statistical analysis to analyse experimental data. In geography and business studies, students are able to analyse numerical data effectively.

## SCIENCE

**Biology** was the focused science subject. In both **chemistry** and **environmental science** one lesson was observed. Teaching and learning are good and students are achieving satisfactorily in chemistry and well in environmental science in relation to their prior attainment. In **physics**, satisfactory teaching overall, led to satisfactory achievement.

### Biology

The quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is good and develops students' independence as learners.
- Students' work is assessed well with much detail explanation on how to improve.
- Lessons are well structured with different activities to help students learn.
- Very good relationships exist between students and teachers.

#### Commentary

173. Results in 2003 were below average at AS level. Less than half the students attained a pass grade, the majority failing to reach their target grade. However, results at advanced level were above average in 2003, which is an improvement on previous years when results were below

or well below. All students attained a pass grade, over a third of them at the higher grades. The majority of the group was made up of girls and their results were well above average. However, students did less well in biology than in other subjects.

174. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are below average. Biology continues to be a popular subject particularly in Year 12 where there are two groups; many students study it as their only science. Students start the course with at least average grades in double science at both foundation and higher level. However, not all students complete the first year of the course but all of those who start the second year complete it. Given their different starting points at GCSE, the achievement students make is satisfactory overall but it is good in Year 13. Within the two Year 12 groups there is a wide range of attainment and many students find the course very demanding. Several students fail to achieve their target grade during the course and in the final examination, while others attain in line with their target. In the smaller Year 13 group, achievement of the majority is good with a third already attaining grades above those predicted, the rest being in line.
175. Teaching is good and this is similar to the last inspection; most students learn well. Those whose achievement is satisfactory, in spite of good teaching, do not consolidate their learning sufficiently with thorough revision. Teachers' very good knowledge of their subject allows them to use a variety of ways to develop students' independence and confidence in understanding. In most lessons there are plenty of opportunities for students to work on their own or in groups. Theory is reinforced by practical activities on different types of enzymes and revision of different biochemical substances. Year 12 students learn well by presenting their findings to others after researching different crops and the factors affecting their growth. Teachers give students many opportunities to learn and recall facts by answering both long and short examination questions, often giving tips on examination technique. These questions, together with coursework, are marked thoroughly with comments on how to improve. All students demonstrate good application to work and relationships are very good. Files are well kept and organised.
176. The subject is well led and managed with many monitoring systems in place. A detailed course handbook and fieldwork guideline is given to each student, which they find a great help. Performance in examination questions is assessed by the students themselves, consequently many realise that their revision is insufficiently detailed. Students are very appreciative of the feedback and help they receive from teachers both in and out of lessons. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Information and communication technology was only sampled. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory.

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

177. In most subjects, ICT is used effectively to research information and to present data. This is particularly so in business education and geography. In mathematics, computers are used to develop understanding of a new topic but there are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to widen their learning.

## HUMANITIES

**Sociology** was sampled; teaching and learning are both good and students achieve well. Present standards are just below average. Most students fall in the C to D band and all are predicted a pass in the coming examinations. Given the open-door policy of entry onto the course, achievement is good.

### Geography

Overall the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers have high expectations and very secure knowledge of the subject.
- Students are motivated and show interest in their work.
- The subject is well led and there is regular monitoring of teaching and learning
- Students achieve well in relation to their level of attainment on entry to the course.
- There are good opportunities for field-study and the development of computer and practical skills.
- Marking and assessment are good and students appreciate the oral and written feedback they receive to help them improve their work.

#### Commentary

178. A level results in 2003 were below average but all 25 students obtained a pass grade. Girls' attainment was close to average. This was an improvement on 2002 when results overall were well below average. Most students achieved well in relation to their predicted grades at the start of the course.
179. Current standards in Year 13 are below average as there are few high attainers and this affects standards. However, most students are working well and are achieving well in relation to their targets. Files show that many students have a sound understanding of both physical and human aspects of the subject, for example, renewable resources and glacial and peri-glacial processes and landforms. Good gains in learning were observed in lessons exploring the differences between weathering and erosion and in developing an understanding of changing patterns in tourism in Great Britain. In Year 12, standards are close to average. In one lesson students made very good progress exploring succession in a sand dune environment effectively representing data graphically. The main weakness for students other than the small number of higher attainers, is difficulty in evaluating geographical ideas and processes.
180. Teaching and learning are consistently good with some very good practice. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well planned and contain a good balance of explanation, group and independent research and opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills. Marking and assessment are very thorough and helpful guidance is provided to assist students to improve the quality of their work. Very good use is made of computers to research and present work. Most students react positively to the accurate and enthusiastic teaching with positive attitudes and a determination to succeed.
181. Courses are well led and managed. Teachers work well together, with good team spirit in sharing ideas and resources. The head of department has a very clear vision for the future growth of the subject and appropriate priorities have been identified to raise standards in the future. Lessons and students' files are effectively monitored to enable progress to be tracked and best practice to be shared. There is a good range of field study visits to enable students to relate theory to the real world and effectively develop practical skills. A computerised system of recording assessments would enable their use in raising standards to be more efficient and



user friendly. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous **in** inspection in 1998.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong specialist teaching coupled with students' commitment leads to good learning.
- Achievement is good because assessment monitors students' progress well.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the lack of a permanent history base makes it more difficult for teachers to make research materials readily available.

Commentary

182. In 2003, A level results were below average although the number of A grades was above average. Students did not do as well as students in similar schools. Retention rates, until 2003, have consistently been good. The number of students choosing history is increasing and includes a few who did not take history at GCSE. Achievement in lessons is good considering the below average attainment on entry to the sixth form. Progress is well supported by teachers' one-to-one discussions with students about their work, detailed marking and techniques for targeting the highest marks in exam questions.
183. Current standards are below average. In Year 13, students demonstrate good note-making, planning and re-drafting skills. They use a variety of devices for organising complex historical knowledge, which underpins research. They are confident and critical users of the rich variety of library resources and the Internet although access to computers during lessons is insufficient. They examine sources efficiently, automatically applying the "continuum" technique for judging strengths and weaknesses of evidence. The higher attaining students enjoy testing and arguing an unconventional theory because they can tease out subtleties in evidence. Students are convincing speakers, always using accurate terminology such as hyperinflation, volksgemeinschaft, and untermenschen. In extended discussions they collectively build up an interpretation of events to understand a fundamental question like the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic, although they do not refer to each other's views or pursue a debate across the group unaided.
184. Good teaching from specialists who are excited by their subject ensures that students are in touch with a range of interpretations. Teaching acknowledges the work of major historians and challenges students to unpick quotations, "Hitler's willing executioners" for example, as they track the emergence of anti-Semitism. Teachers' recommendations focus students' individual research so that it is more productive and in turn the students themselves know the value of bibliographies and footnotes. The lack of a permanent history base for sixth formers limits opportunities for students to extend this type of work during lessons. Learning is good. Objectives are shared with students in lessons and, intermittently, learning is assessed against these so students know what and how they are learning. Individual assignments develop students' responsibility and independence.
185. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory in creating effective teams and keeping teaching under focus. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to discuss innovative developments with colleagues from other sixth forms, which would stimulate objective review. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good subject knowledge and teaching support very good learning.
- Marking and assessment are diagnostic and show the students how to improve.
- The students' own positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning and achievement.
- The department's self-evaluation informs teaching and learning by becoming more flexible in tailoring the course to students' learning needs.
- Because of the present open door policy, not all students are well matched to the course.

## **Commentary**

186. Results over the last three years have been average. Present standards at the end of Year 13 are average. Students have a good grasp of terminology and methodology, and are able to apply psychological perspectives in their analyses of case studies. The higher attaining students write well-argued essays, using evidence from a variety of sources to back up their arguments. Achievement is very good. Evaluation skills are generally well developed, but lower attaining students provide a narrower range of sources, suggesting they have not read round the topic sufficiently and therefore their conclusions are less convincing. Students in Year 12 quickly come to terms with the new vocabulary, and how to structure their essays, but some struggle because of weak writing skills and need extra help in marshalling their ideas and arguments.
187. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers know their subjects well and their experience with examinations is helpful to the students, both in the delivery of the lessons and also in the diagnostic marking of students' work. Students learn well because they know what they must do to improve, and one-to-one tutoring and assessment, which encourages self-evaluation and sets achievable targets, reinforces teachers' advice. The students respond well to the high expectations of their teachers, and their own intellectual efforts play a significant part in their very good achievement. Not all students are able to cope with the demands of the course, and this is one reason why the retention rate from A/S Level to A Level is low.
188. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear vision and commitment to improvement. The self-evaluation of the department is positive, in that it is flexible and responsive to the learning needs of the students, for instance, in the choice of modules or extra provision for encouraging writing skills. Stronger links with other psychology teachers or enriching experiences outside the school would be useful. Its contribution to the personal development of the students is good through its exploration of human behaviours and motivations. ICT is well used for research and presenting statistical analysis. There is no judgement on improvement since the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No subjects were inspected in this area

**Electronics** was sampled. Teaching and learning are satisfactory

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

None of the subjects in this area of the curriculum were inspected in full

### **Art and design**

One lesson was sampled in art and design. Students were interested in the work and good gains in learning were made as a result of good teaching.

Drama

One Year 13 drama lesson was observed. Teaching and learning were very good

### **Music**

Two lessons were sampled in music one in each year. Standards are average. Teaching and learning are good. Students are achieving well.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The quality of provision for physical education is **good**.

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

- Excellent quality of assessment contributes to above average standards.
- Course leadership and management are very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.

#### **Commentary**

189. Results in 2003 were above average and well above average for male students. The proportion gaining the higher grades (A and B) was well above average. This is an improvement on the previous year and a return to the good standards achieved in the two years prior to that. The proportion of students completing was low with a high number of those who began withdrawing before the end of the first year and only half completing the course. Currently, entry has been tightened and retention is high. Results at AS level were well above average.
190. Current standards are above average and students are achieving well. In Year 12, they are building upon their successes at GCSE and have adapted well to the challenges now facing them. For example, secure knowledge of anatomy and physiology established earlier has provided a firm base for development to current good standards. They work well as individuals, in groups preparing demonstrations of skills in their chosen areas of activity and within full classes. Good humour is well balanced by serious intent. Students contribute confidently to lessons because they are secure in their relationships with teachers and each other. Writing is less consistently good. Most communicate at least clearly enough to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. The work of some is marred by faults of sentence construction, misspelling of words in common use and a tendency to use colloquial expression when formal language is required.
191. Students in Year 13 match targets set for them. Coursework shows sound understanding and notes are sensibly ordered to provide effective aids for revision. All have at least good performance skills in one or more areas of athletic activity. They have relevant knowledge to

contribute to discussion of, for example, means of enhancing performance in sport. Good achievement is evident in improvements in writing skills. Students show that they can produce organised and logically structured, relevant responses to set questions. Standards improve because students respond well to advice from teachers, they understand the criteria used to assess their work and know how to undertake research.

192. The quality of teaching is good and is sometimes very good. Teachers have good experience, high levels of subject expertise and commitment to their students' success. They provide an appropriate balance between instruction and requiring students to contribute to their learning in discussion, undertaking research, and in group projects. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is matched by that of students and encourages good learning. Students of all abilities benefit from the very high quality of assessment of their work, which praises them for their successes and indicates in detail how they might improve further. This contributes to effective learning and good achievement. It is especially evident in the excellent assessment of students' coursework which is based upon expert knowledge, and detailed analysis of students' work. The course is very well managed with a clear structure for development of skills and understanding and standards are improving.

## **BUSINESS**

AVCE business is provided at 3 levels. 3 unit part award (AS), 6 unit award (single A level) and full or double award (2 A levels)

Overall the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent marking and assessment has a very positive effect on learning and standards
- Leadership and management are good and considerable improvement has been made since the last inspection.
- Students achieve well in relation to their overall GCSE performance.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good and this results in good learning.
- Resources are good and effective use is made of the real world of business to enable students to relate and apply theory to practice.

### **Commentary**

193. Results in the part (AS), single and double advanced awards in 2003 were average. Students achieve well in relation to their level of attainment on entry to the courses. Results in 2002, with a more able group of students, were well above average.
194. Observations in lessons and an analysis of work indicate that standards achieved by current students in both Years 12 and 13 are average. They are achieving well in relation to predictions based on average GCSE scores. No significant variation was observed in the standards of male or female students.
195. Students are good at research and are developing independent learning skills. They use computers well to research and present their work. This was seen in a single award lesson when students were successfully exploring different sources of finance for their own business assignment. The strength of students' work lies in their steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in files and in assignments. While most students can research, describe and even analyse business ideas, processes and functions, they find evaluation and justifying decisions and conclusions much more difficult. This was seen in assignments on business planning, particularly when evaluating the costs and benefits of a particular business plan. They are, however, able to relate theory to the real business world.

196. Teaching is good overall with some very good practice. Students' learning closely matches teaching. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and the world of business, and lessons and assignments are well planned. Continuous assessment of students' work is outstanding and a model of best practice. The regular reviews and interviews with students combined with detailed written advice has a positive effect on standards achieved. Students very much appreciate the guidance they are given. Good use is made of case studies to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Most students work well, know what they are meant to do and learn effectively. Students are challenged to think and opportunities are provided for them to develop independent learning skills. Teachers are very secure in their subject and the pace of lessons is appropriate and expectations high. In many lessons an engaging and purposeful learning environment is created. Most students are well motivated and this, combined with good teaching, results in good learning.
197. The subject is well managed. Assignments and schemes of work are well written. Considerable improvement has been made in the stability and management of the department since the last inspection. There is now good leadership and vision for the development of the subject. This is a well-resourced subject area. There is a good range of visits to enable students to complete assignments and relate theory to the real business world.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Currently there is no health and social care course.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **General studies**

This subject is taken by a significant number of students at AS and A level. Three lessons were sampled. Teaching and learning overall were good, with one very good lesson on genetic engineering. Students responded positively and good gains were made in knowledge and understanding.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	5	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	3	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	3	5
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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