

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ASHTON-ON-RIBBLE HIGH SCHOOL**

Ashton, Preston.

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119707

Headteacher: Mr G Hewetson

Lead inspector: Ross Parker

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 259799

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	803
School address:	Aldwych Drive Ashton Preston
Postcode:	PR2 1SL
Telephone number:	01772 513002
Fax number:	01772 513006
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Gutteridge
Date of previous inspection:	16/11/98

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ashton-on-Ribble High School is a smaller than average comprehensive school for boys and girls, situated in an area of disadvantage on the fringe of Preston. It is a popular school, which gained a School Achievement Award in 2001, and a Schools Curriculum Award in 2002 in recognition of its links with the local community. It was awarded the Sports Mark and Education Extra Award in 2003. It is currently applying to be recognised as a specialist science college. More than half of the pupils live in the local estates where traditions and ambitions for learning are not well established. Consequently, pupils' attainment when they come to the school is below average. In particular, their reading and writing lags behind their other skills, and they are hesitant in discussion. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs, and they are well integrated in school life. Some pupils are based in a special unit, which supports deaf pupils, but there are physically disabled pupils, as well as those with learning and behaviour difficulties. There is also a small proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups, though none are new to English.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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12775	Judith Goodchild	Lay inspector	
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English
3516	Adrian Koskie	Team inspector	Mathematics
4720	Graham Carter	Team inspector	Science
17156	Edward Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology Art and Design The work of the SEN Unit
27082	Geoff Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Business education
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
20119	Tony Bell	Team inspector	Information and communications technology
7222	Alan Watson	Team inspector	Music
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	History Physical education
33170	Julie Winterman	Team inspector	Religious education
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Citizenship Special educational needs

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# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<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 PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Deaf Support Department</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>32</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **good** standard of education with some excellent features, and **good** value for money. It has maintained a **good** level of improvement since the previous inspection. The majority of pupils come from a challenging context where there are not well-established traditions or ambitions for learning. The school enables pupils to achieve well to reach standards in line with the national average, and to develop very good behaviour and very positive attitudes. Teaching and learning are good, and the school continues to be very well led and managed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching, based on good planning and good management of behaviour, enables pupils to achieve well;
- The headteacher, together with a tightly knit senior management team, develops effective strategies to keep improving the school;
- The school does not consistently provide an appropriate daily act of collective worship;
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour, and the very good working relationships between pupils and staff, based on trust and respect, support a very good ethos for learning;
- Punctuality is not good enough at the start of the school day and teachers do not deal with this consistently;
- There are very good arrangements to help pupils, who are at risk of exclusion, to remain in school and to achieve well, as well as good extra support for pupils, who are thought to be underachieving, and for pupils with special educational needs;
- Recent curriculum developments are well matched to pupils' needs and interests and there is very good extra-curricular provision;
- The very good integration of deaf pupils is typical of the very good overall care for individuals throughout the school;
- Pupils have too few opportunities to develop independence in lessons, including taking responsibility for their own learning;
- Day-to-day assessment is not consistently helping pupils to know what they can do to improve, nor are all teachers using it to adapt their day-to-day teaching plans or to match the work to meet the wide range of abilities within some classes;
- There is excellent provision for physical education;
- Pupils have insufficient time to study non-examination religious education in Years 10 and 11;
- Pupils lack confidence when speaking in formal situations because they do not have enough opportunities to practise including in drama;
- There are very good links with parents and the local community, but subject links with primary schools are insufficiently developed.

The school responded well to the previous inspection. There is now a good provision for modern foreign languages. Other identified weaknesses have been put right, except that there is still insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 for all students to make satisfactory progress in religious education. Evaluation is now a developing strength across the school, and a range of additional grants has enabled the school to make significant improvements to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and to teaching methods.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	C	C	B	C

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

**Overall, standards are average and represent good achievement. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, standards by the end of Year 9 were average in 2003. They were**

**well above the standards in similar schools. By the end of Year 11, standards overall were above average in 2003, in line with similar schools.**

There is a small minority of pupils, who are disaffected and find it hard to co-operate. The great majority of pupils respond well to the good opportunities for personal development. They show very positive attitudes and have very good relationships with each other, and with their teachers. This is a strength of the school.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The overall quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** across the school, and there is a high proportion of very good teaching. Lessons are well planned and organised. There is good pace in lessons and teachers use methods, which stimulate pupils' interest. Very good relationships give pupils the confidence to learn effectively.

The curriculum has been effectively adapted to meet the needs of current pupils. New courses in Years 10 and 11 cater well for pupils, who prefer different ways of learning, and more practical approaches. There are also good alternative programmes for those, who are not motivated by traditional approaches, or find them too difficult. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which cater for a wide range of interests. Good investment in modern resources is helping to keep pupils interested.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership of the headteacher is **very good** and the school is very well managed. Senior managers have a very clear vision of how they want the school to improve. They have developed an effective teaching team with very high morale. They have also introduced a comprehensive programme of monitoring so that they can identify weaknesses in their systems, and take action to get rid of them. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They challenge the school management team effectively, and support it in the quest to continue to raise standards.

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

Pupils think that this is a good school, where they are listened to, treated with respect, and have a good chance to succeed. Parents agree, but some are concerned lest the small number of disaffected pupils should disrupt learning.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn independently in lessons, and to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning, and to develop their confidence when speaking;
- Ensure that all teachers work consistently to improve punctuality at the start of each day;
- Raise standards in religious education by allowing more time for the subject in Years 10 and 11;
- Enhance day-to-day assessment so that it helps pupils know what they need to do to improve, and enables teachers to adapt their teaching plans to meet the full range of abilities within their classes;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide an appropriate daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Standards are **average** overall. Achievement is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is very good in mathematics and physical education.
- Previous staffing difficulties have restricted attainment for older pupils in modern foreign languages.
- Too little curriculum time affects standards in religious education.

#### Commentary

1. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were above average in mathematics and physical education, and achievement was very good. They were above average overall in design and technology and in art, as well as in history and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11. In these subjects, pupils are achieving well. Standards were below average in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. This is because protracted staffing difficulties since the previous inspection have only recently been overcome, and pupils have a lot of ground to make up. Their achievement in this context is now satisfactory. Standards were below average in non-examination religious education in Years 10 and 11, where there is insufficient curriculum time for them to make enough progress.

#### Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.7 (33.8)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	35.3 (34.8)	35.3 (34.7)
science	34.1 (33.2)	33.7 (33.3)

*There were 159 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

#### Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades	56.2 (49)	50 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades	92.8 (96)	90 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grades	96.1 (98)	97 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.8 (37.6)	34.3 (39.9)

*There were 159 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*



2. Although pupils come to the school with well below average literacy skills, by the end of Year 9, standards in English were average during the period 2000 to 2003, rising along with schools nationally. There have been some staffing difficulties in the English team over the last year, but teachers have maintained a good rate of improvement, principally by applying the new techniques promoted by the National Literacy Strategy<sup>1</sup>. In 2003, the standards were above those reached in other schools, where pupils had similar results at the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics have been stronger than in English over the last three years. The 2002 results were very high when compared to schools where pupils had similar results at the end of Year 6, and in 2003, the comparison showed them to be well above average. Results in science have been similar to those in mathematics. In 2003, they too showed standards well above those in similar schools. Standards in other subjects at the end of Year 9 are reported through teacher assessments. In modern foreign languages, these were significantly below average in 2003, reflecting some of the earlier staffing difficulties. In information and communication technology, they were also lower than would be expected, but this was because the system of assessment was less effective than the one, which is now in place. The high standards in design and technology and in physical education were reflected in above average assessments.
3. The work seen during the inspection confirmed that pupils are achieving well from standards, which are below average when they come to the school. In every subject, pupils are already working at the level expected for their age. In art, design and technology, and physical education, they are exceeding these expectations.
4. Up to 2002, standards in examinations at the end of Year 11 had been similar to the national average for three years, and outstripped schools where pupils had similar results when they were in Year 9. In 2003, they exceeded the national average. This built effectively on these pupils' very good achievements, and still matched other schools with similar standards two years earlier.
5. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment is slightly wider in Years 10 and 11 than it is by the end of Year 9, though both attain close to the national average.
6. The majority of pupils' skills in English, mathematics and ICT are sufficient for them to make progress in all areas of the curriculum. However, a significant number of pupils are hesitant in formal discussion, and this restricts their opportunities to explore and develop their understanding across the whole curriculum.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in class in Years 10 and 11, and very well in Years 7 to 9, where there is a higher level of support and specialist teaching. Where they are withdrawn from lessons for extra tuition, they achieve very well. Pupils from ethnic minority groups and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as their peers.
8. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The school has clearly identified which pupils have particular strengths, and there is a stimulating programme of extra-curricular activities. However, it is not yet common practice to challenge these pupils to use their higher-level skills in each and every lesson.

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<sup>1</sup> **KEY STAGE 3 NATIONAL STRATEGY**

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects, as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information, please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)

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

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are **very good**. The attendance of pupils is **good**. The punctuality of pupils is **unsatisfactory**. The behaviour of pupils is **very good**. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and contribute significantly to the standards they achieve.
- Behaviour is very good, and there are very good working relationships between pupils and with staff.
- The moral and social development of pupils is very good.
- Too many pupils are late arriving at school for the first lesson of the day.

## **Commentary**

9. Pupils respond well to the high quality of teaching evident in many subjects, where the pace of learning and level of challenge are high. A small number of pupils, on occasions, fail to engage in lessons, but there are effective systems in place to prevent this disrupting the learning of others. There are good systems in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good progress where their targets involve improvements in behaviour. Behaviour in the majority of lessons is very good. Pupils are courteous to each other and visitors. Working relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual respect and are a significant feature of the school.
10. The great majority of pupils are well aware of right and wrong actions and have a very clear understanding of what is expected of them. Opportunities for pupils to debate moral issues are provided in many subjects. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of social responsibility is reflected well in their actions, expressing concern for others in both the school and wider community. Each year group supports a charity and pupils organise a range of fundraising activities, such as the Pop Idol contest in Year 7.
11. The Healthy Schools initiative provides very good opportunities for the social and personal development of pupils. For example, they have presented their work on developing a sex and relationships module for the personal, social and health education programme to a large conference of health professionals and are often asked to take part in consultative activities related to national initiatives. The peer-mentoring schemes within the school effectively raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, pupils are not systematically encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and opportunities for them to develop independent learning skills are restricted. When given the opportunity, pupils respond well. In physical education lessons, for example, they work both independently and collaboratively to coach each other and organise warm-up sessions. Team captains have to evaluate the progress to date of their team and change the game tactics. Though pupils are aware of their target grades, many are not aware of how they can improve their work.

## **Attendance**

12. The attendance of pupils is good and above that seen nationally. There is a significant minority of pupils in Year 11, who have attendance problems. The school, in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer, works hard to retain them in mainstream education by offering a range of flexible learning opportunities. The positive start to the day provided by the tutor period is undermined because too many pupils arrive after the start of the lesson. There is not a consistent expectation amongst staff that all pupils will arrive in time for morning registration.

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.5%
National data:	7.9%

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.8%
National data:	1.2%

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

**Exclusions**

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	736	80	1
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12	7	1
Mixed – White and Asian	4		
Mixed – any other mixed background	6		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	25		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8	1	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4		

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are both **good**. The curriculum is **good** and has been developed to be more inclusive.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are both **good**. Lessons are well planned and well managed so that pupils are confident to learn.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Lessons are planned very thoroughly.
- Very good working relationships give pupils the confidence to learn.
- Day-to-day assessment is not effectively used to maintain an appropriate challenge for all pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for independent work in lessons, and for small-group discussions.

**Commentary**

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 ( 2.6%)	36 (31 %)	52 (44.8%)	24 (20.6%)	1 (0.9%)	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 were seen.*

13. **Teaching is good overall and is now systematically monitored by senior managers. There are particular strengths in modern foreign languages, where pupils' enthusiasm is stimulated by a very lively pace, and teachers make challenging use of the target language for even the most trivial transactions. Therefore, to borrow a rubber, pupils are scanning the classroom wall displays for the phrases and words that they will need to string together when they put their hand up. Teaching is also very good in physical education. Here, the very good subject knowledge and very good relationships motivate pupils to meet teachers' very high expectations. Across all subjects, the combination of thorough planning, challenging and interesting activities, and very good relationships give pupils the confidence and the motivation to achieve well.**
  
14. Learning is good. In modern foreign languages, it is very good in Years 7 and 8, where pupils have only experienced this lively and exciting way of learning. Older pupils still enjoy the lessons, but they learn less effectively because they have missed too much basic work in earlier years, and do not have a wide enough repertoire to move at the same pace as the younger pupils. Learning is very good across all years in physical education. It is the norm for teachers and pupils to work hard together throughout every lesson. Overall, pupils are well behaved in lessons because they are well managed, and they concentrate hard on their work. They collaborate well, and appreciate the help that they are given. However, many pupils do not have the skills to work independently in lessons, and are not used to taking responsibility for their own work. This is because teachers plan very carefully to ensure that opportunities for disruption are minimised and work hard, particularly in Year 11, to ensure that all coursework is completed on time. This sometimes leads to them taking too much control of all the activities in the lesson and also inhibits pupils' discussion skills.
  
15. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers know the pupils well and provide work at an appropriate level to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language show very good attitudes to work and this contributes to the good progress they make. Individual education plans are good and provide well-focussed targets for pupils. Not all subject teachers are currently extending these to provide targets that are more specific to their lessons. Good assessment procedures for pupils with special needs help to set targets and raise standards. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language has been adversely affected by the long-term absence of a member of staff. This has particularly affected procedures for identifying pupils' specific learning needs and in providing teachers with information about their levels of competency in English.
  
16. Assessment is good in that teachers mark work conscientiously and give clear feedback to pupils, so that they know how well they are doing. A feature of the very good management of teaching is the thorough system the school has developed to collect data about how each individual pupil is progressing. They use this, along with results of external tests, to set challenging targets for all pupils. Pupils appreciate this guidance, and they are clear about the grades they ought to attain in tests and examinations. However, assessment does not yet identify the next important skill for each pupil to master if they are to make the required progress. Teachers are not gathering this information consistently in every lesson. Consequently, too few teachers are able to plan effectively to meet individual pupil's needs from one lesson to the next. This is a particular disadvantage for the most competent pupils in each lesson because they are not consistently challenged to work at the highest possible levels.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** overall. The school has a clear long-term plan to make it more relevant to all pupils, and has made good progress towards this end.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities is popular with pupils.
- There is some good support for pupils, who have not succeeded in the traditional curriculum.
- There is too little time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

### Commentary

17. The school has made good progress recently in developing more relevant courses to include all pupils in Years 10 and 11. A very high proportion of pupils are now taking vocational courses, which offer better employment prospects. Senior managers have responded to feedback from pupils, introducing a course in leisure and tourism and joint courses with Preston College in hairdressing and motor vehicle qualifications. However, at present, some of this provision is not widely available, and the planned range of different 'pathways' through the options in Years 10 and 11 is not yet fully developed. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have equal access to all the school's activities and curriculum. Appropriate alternative courses are available in Years 10 and 11 for pupils with special educational needs, or those, who would benefit from spending more time on fewer subjects. This is another strong feature, as is the range of key skills qualifications, which is very appropriate for some of the deaf pupils at the school.
18. Pupils, who are at risk of exclusion, are well supported. Learning mentors work closely with individuals to help them to recognise and the attitudes and circumstances that hinder their learning. Special projects such as the 'Playing for Success' scheme at Preston North End capture pupils' interest and then exploit this to improve their basic skills. The most able and talented pupils enjoy a variety of stimulating activities outside school hours. However, teachers are not yet planning from lesson to lesson in every subject to challenge them to maintain the very highest standards.
19. The efforts to develop more inclusive courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 mean that there is insufficient time for pupils, who are not taking the GCSE course to study religious education, and this is affecting standards. This dilemma is clearly recognised as a priority in the school improvement plan. The breadth of study in history, geography, religious education and physical education is limited in Years 7 to 9. This is because these subjects are allocated the minimum recommended time in order to extend the form period at the start of the day. This is where relationships are forged, and achievements recognised to build pupils' self-esteem. At present, this time is not used as effectively as it could be because too many pupils arrive late.
20. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good, and pupils cite these as some of the best features of the school. In physical education, the out-of-hours opportunities are excellent.
21. Additional funding has enabled senior managers to make substantial improvements to the curriculum over the last two years, and staffing shortages have been resolved. The accommodation in the school is good overall. It is attractive and well maintained, though the original design does put some constraints on what can be done. In particular, there is no specialist provision for drama – a subject that could help to develop pupils' below average oral skills.

## Care, guidance and support

The steps taken to ensure the pupils' health and welfare are **very good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pastoral system provides very good support and guidance for pupils.
- The culture of celebrating achievement within the school builds pupils' self-esteem.
- Excellence Cluster<sup>2</sup> funding is very well used to provide support and a meaningful alternative curriculum for disaffected pupils.
- The school is committed to raising pupils' aspirations.
- Pupils know that their views matter and are taken seriously by the school.
- The steps taken to ensure pupils' health and welfare are very good.

### **Commentary**

22. Senior managers have allocated time to a pastoral system that provides very good support for pupils. Pastoral teams stay with their year group throughout Years 8 to 11. They are able to build strong relationships with the pupils and their families that are supportive and promote good learning. Pupils interviewed are confident that they can ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal. Teaching assistants provide a very effective and caring service for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' achievements, whether for personal effort or academic achievement, are celebrated and this helps to build self-esteem and motivation. Effective guidance is provided for pupils in Year 9 when selecting subjects for GCSE and good careers advice helps to ensure that they are well prepared for both work experience and transition into post-16 education or the world of work.
23. There is a very effective programme to provide a Learning Support Unit and learning mentors for disaffected pupils. It is clearly focused on successfully removing barriers to learning for these pupils, whatever they may be, and works with primary schools to anticipate the support that will be needed. Groups of pupils also benefit from workshops such as raising self-esteem. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who might otherwise not be attending school, benefit from alternative curriculum arrangements at local further education colleges. Pupils are encouraged to raise their aspirations and consider going into higher education. Last year, 10 pupils attended a two-week summer school at a local university.
24. The School Forum enables pupils to present their views to senior management and the governing body. They have successfully negotiated for girls to be allowed to wear trousers and the upgrading of toilets and were fully consulted about the drug and sex education and relationship policies through the Healthy Schools initiative. Currently, the School Forum is undertaking a bullying survey and will be making suggestions based on the information found.
25. Pupils are very well cared for, and there is rigorous attention to maintaining an environment where pupils feel secure. Child-protection procedures are fully in place, as are systems to monitor health and safety. Considerable thought has been given to making the dining room into a socially harmonious place so that pupils can further develop their social skills by sitting together and eating their lunch.

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

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<sup>2</sup> Excellence Cluster funding is available to networks of schools in small pockets of disadvantage. The initiative aims to raise standards by providing specialist help and guidance for pupils at risk of exclusion, and extra provision for gifted or talented pupils.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is committed to developing an effective partnership with parents.
- The quality of links with the community are very good and extend and enrich pupils' educational experience.
- Partnerships with other schools and colleges are good.
- Annual reports to parents vary between subjects in quality. Targets for improvement are mainly pastoral and few contain academic targets.
- Subject links with primary schools are not well enough developed.

### **Commentary**

26. Governors and senior managers are crucially aware of the need to work in partnership to raise aspirations and standards across the community. The school's partnership with its parents is very good. Parents are encouraged to become partners with the school in managing their child's learning. Learning mentors and pastoral staff make home visits when difficulties arise if parents are unable to attend for meetings. The education welfare officer has established good relationships with families and this has encouraged them to support the school in its efforts to keep their children in mainstream education. Close links with other professionals working with families are productive and there are termly multi-agency meetings to co-ordinate their activities. Information evenings for parents are held on issues such as sex and drugs education. Additional evenings on topics such as option choice for GCSE subjects and work experience support these and ensure parents are fully informed. Concerns expressed by parents are usually dealt with immediately by the pastoral team. There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils, who have special educational needs and they are properly involved in the review process. Satisfactory reports on academic progress are issued each term, together with a more detailed annual report, though these vary in quality between subjects. The best examples give parents a clear picture of what their child has learned and how they have achieved. However, the targets set for pupils to improve their work are usually concerned with behaviour rather than learning. Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school and the education it provides for their children.
27. The school's links with the community are very good and effective links with local business and industry are a source of both sponsorship and placements that support learning or give pupils work experience. Local industry, for example, provided a course on communication and teamwork that gave pupils taking part in Young Enterprise additional confidence and they went on to win the James Hall Business Trophy.
28. There is a good partnership with other schools and colleges. The induction arrangements for Year 6 pupils coming into the school are very good. Primary schools benefit from curriculum enrichment days for able and talented pupils organised by the school. However, despite the school's best efforts, subject links are underdeveloped and units of work to speed up transition and ensure that pupils do not lose momentum at the start of Year 7 are not yet in place. Links with further education colleges, and other alternative provision providers, are very good and enable the needs of all pupils to be met.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the school is very good. It identifies a very clear vision for raising standards and caring for pupils, which underpins the school's work. Management is very good and is very effective at converting the vision into reality. Governance is **satisfactory**. The governing body performs almost all of its functions well, though the daily act of collective worship does not comply with their agreed policy.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- There is a very clear vision for the future of the school, which is supported by very good planning at all levels.
- There is a very strong focus on the care and development of both pupils and staff, which ensures that pupils achieve well and the professional development of staff is very good.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Some of the systems for setting targets for pupils are in the early stages of development so they have yet to be monitored and evaluated fully.
- New systems for monitoring teaching and learning across the school have not been in place long enough for their impact to be felt.

### **Commentary**

29. The headteacher is well respected and dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement in all areas of the school's work. He and senior staff share a very clear vision for a supportive learning atmosphere and communicate this very effectively to all staff. As a result, the school ensured that pupils, who were academically below average on entering the school, reached above average standards at GCSE in 2003. Very clear strategic thinking and very good planning at all levels makes creative and innovative use of available resources, including the recently awarded Leadership Incentive Grant. The atmosphere in the school is calm, caring, industrious and welcoming and is one where boys and girls of all levels of attainment can reach their potential. Leadership of special needs support is good.
30. The management of the school is very good. Managers are confident, well informed and perceptive. They anticipate potential difficulties and respond effectively. There are very good systems in place, which are not over-bureaucratic, but ensure the smooth running of the school. There is a very strong focus on the care and development of both pupils and staff. Middle managers know the pupils in their year groups and departments well and comprehensive assessment procedures are organised to give the school a clear insight into pupils' progress. New systems have been introduced recently to set academic targets for pupils, but these have yet to be monitored and evaluated fully. All staff are very clear about their roles, responsibilities and personal objectives and are given very good advice, guidance and training in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Senior managers monitor the work of departments very effectively and have given good support to individual subjects, for example modern foreign languages, where teaching and learning are now improving rapidly. Staff absences are delaying necessary developments to the provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Additional systems for consistently monitoring teaching and learning across the curriculum have not been in place long enough for their impact to be felt. The school's financial affairs are managed very well, principles of best value are applied rigorously and resources are well targeted.
31. The governing body performs almost all of its functions well and has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has a significant influence in leading the school's development with a clear focus on raising standards and caring for pupils. The governing body is well organised, self-evaluative and improves its own performance through appropriate training. It provides both effective support and challenge for school leaders. However, they have been unable to ensure that their agreed policy for a daily act of collective worship is effectively implemented.

### **Financial information**



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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,702,164	Balance from previous year	266,473
Total expenditure	2,666,262	Balance carried forward to the next	313,375
Expenditure per pupil	3,319.08		

Larger than usual balances have been carried forward over the last two years as contingency funds to cater for increased pupil numbers. This has enabled the school to sustain teacher-pupil ratios, without additional funding from the local education authority.

### **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

Provision in the **Deaf Support Department** was a special feature of the inspection.

The provision in the Deaf Support Department is **excellent**.

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

- Teaching is good and supports good learning.
- Pupils are integrated into mainstream classes very effectively.
- There is a very good level of in-class support.
- The teachers in the department are experienced and well qualified.

#### **Commentary**

32. Deaf pupils have access to the full curriculum, with specialist teaching to replace English and modern foreign languages. They are limited by their poor language and literacy skills, but the high level of support ensures that they achieve well. Pupils attain good results in entry level courses in English, science, text processing and textiles, as well as Pitman data processing and GCSE business and communication systems.
33. The teaching and support provided by the staff of the deaf department is very good in both mainstream lessons and withdrawal sessions. They have high expectations of pupils. All the teachers are subject specialists with deaf training qualifications. This is a real strength of the department in the quality of the support that is provided. Teachers and support staff work closely with subject teachers, often modifying teaching and resource material from the mainstream lessons to a language level suitable for the deaf pupils to ensure that they can cope with the work. In withdrawal sessions, teachers address individual needs very effectively, enabling pupils to grow in confidence and make very good progress developing their language skills.
34. The leadership of the department is very good and the department has continued to provide the high level of provision evident in the previous inspection. There is a good level of staffing and the department is managed very well. There is good access to a speech therapist, and a good level of resources to support the specialist teaching, although they lack an interactive whiteboard to extend their range of teaching opportunities.
35. There is good liaison with the special needs department. The deaf department enables subject teachers, classroom assistants and pupils to learn signing, which provides extra support for deaf pupils. Pupils are monitored well and every effort is made to keep parents informed of progress and any concerns that may arise.

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

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

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

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good** overall.

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

- Pupils, especially boys, achieve well in writing.
- Leadership gives very clear direction and generates good teamwork.
- Teaching is lively and makes much of the work interesting.
- The planning of work in classes with a wide range of ability lacks precision.

#### **Commentary**

36. Standards at the ages of 13 and 16 are in line with the national averages and above those in similar schools in English. Results in English literature are especially good where almost all pupils are entered for the examination. This represents good achievement by pupils, many of whom enter the school with low literacy skills. The quality of written work is good. Pupils in Year 9 learn to plan their writing and most use paragraphs clearly to give shape and sequence to their ideas. Boys often write well, using a confident, fluent style that engages the reader. In a story about living forever, one higher-ability boy wrote: "You could do anything without fear of danger. You could strike where angels dare not tread." Many use imaginative ideas and respond well to the interesting range of topics set by teachers. Older pupils continue to develop their style with vivid comparisons: "The sky showed a sliver of sunlight contrasting with the dark earth below." Answers to literature essays are well thought out with selective use of quotations to illustrate a point. Although pupils with special educational needs make spelling errors, they show good understanding of the texts they study and do well in GCSE examinations. Pupils, who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in many lessons, contribute frequently, and achieve well.
37. The quality of leadership and management overall are good and aspects of the leadership are very good. The new head of department has managed to overcome serious staffing disruption with the consistent support of the senior management team. The planning for future developments is clear and there is very good teamwork with all teachers sharing a common understanding of the priorities ahead. Despite many changes in staff since the last report, improvement has been satisfactory. The monitoring of plans and pupils' work is good, but there has been less work on sharing the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching in the classroom. The department creates a good climate for learning by displaying apt material to support reading and writing as well as examples of well-crafted work by pupils. Most teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to learn spellings, research on the Internet and publish their writing.
38. Teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well. The strengths are in the clear structure of lessons and in the marking of pupils' written work. Pupils have a clear picture of where they are and what their target grade is, but they have less clarity on how they might raise their levels. Self-assessment of work by pupils is relatively new and has not made an impact on their understanding yet. Teachers apply the literacy strategy consistently and this gives pace and direction to most lessons. In a small number of classes, the discussion work is lively and pupils respond very well to the good use of resources, such as video, carefully prepared prompt-sheets and the use of information and communication technology. Pupils are less assured in oral work generally. Many are satisfied with short, underdeveloped answers and rely on teachers too much to keep the discussion alive. The lack of drama is evident as many pupils lack confidence in speaking, though most listen well.

39. Planning for most lessons is good, especially where there are pupils with special educational needs. They are well supported in class by teachers and assistants, who show good knowledge of their pupils' progress, and occasionally adapt lessons when it is clear that the learning is slowing down. In the middle sets, however, where there is a wide range of ability, some of the work does not match pupils' understanding and a significant number have a tendency to lose concentration.

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

40. Achievement overall is **good**. Standards are below average when pupils come to the school, but they improve to average by the time they reach Year 11. There has been a good implementation of the literacy strategy in most departments with clear guidelines to staff and a useful summary of good practice collated in a booklet. This has led to improvements in the standard of writing generally. In history, there is a clear focus on research and extended writing in a variety of styles. Pupils use developing analytical skills to discuss why the Roman army was so successful. They compose evocative poems about the Second World War and produce imaginative advertisements for textile machinery from the past based on research. Good practice also occurs in religious education where pupils tackle challenging writing topics such as: "Was Jesus a God or man?" In this subject, teachers provide useful writing frames to guide pupils. There is good collaboration between teachers of English and information and communication technology to help pupils with special educational needs, who have difficulty in their spelling. In modern foreign languages, there is consistent reinforcement of language skills in lessons. Pupils' speaking is less well developed because they lack fluency in expressing their ideas in class.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Very good leadership has enabled good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Current standards are low in comparison to national figures.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Management of the department is good.
- Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is very good.

### **Commentary**

41. Very good leadership in the last 18 months, with clear vision and direction, and the work of a committed team, are rectifying the considerable damage the department has suffered in the past two-and-a-half years. Long-term absence of two specialist teachers, and the desperate shortage of specialist supply staff, have contributed significantly to the decline in attainment over the last three years. In French GCSE at grades A\*-C and at the end of Year 9, attainment was low in comparison to national standards in 2003. Although GCSE attainment in German was above average in 2002, there was a decline in grades A\*-C to well below average in 2003. Nevertheless, in both languages, attainment of grades A\*-G was at least in line with national figures. All pupils had suffered considerable disruption to the continuity of teaching and learning, as the remaining teachers felt obliged to rotate classes to ensure that all pupils received some degree of specialist teaching.
42. Current standards in Years 7 and 8 in French are above average. The target language is used consistently as the main means of communication in the classroom. Pupils are therefore speaking and writing confidently in complete and often complex sentences, aided by the effective displays of key vocabulary and phrases. Many higher attainers in Years 8 are handling the past tense fluently and operating at a level similar to and occasionally higher than high attainers in Year 9. Very good teaching is fostering the development of important basic language skills in all areas. When compared to standards in Years 9, 10 and 11, it is the lack

of these skills that underlies the below average attainment in these years. Because of the discontinuity and lack of basic training, many pupils in Year 11 have difficulty simply sifting crucial information to provide short answers to foundation level listening tests. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is very good, and is satisfactory in other years, in view of the disadvantages pupils have suffered previously. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 are performing often above expectations and achieving very well; in other years their achievement is satisfactory.

43. The key issues highlighted in the previous report have been successfully addressed, and all the criticisms rectified. Teaching and learning are very good overall, one lesson being excellent. However, the lack of basic communication skills in Years 10 and 11 can sometimes depress learning in spite of good teaching. Most lessons in Years 7 to 9 are characterised by a brisk pace, and varied, challenging activities, often containing games and fun elements. Pupils have considerable input into these activities, which helps to motivate them and create an atmosphere of enjoyment for the 70-minute period. There is plenty of opportunity for them to exercise independence and responsibility in pair and group work. In Years 10 and 11, teachers patiently encourage pupils to practise the skills that have been underdeveloped in their earlier experience of the languages. The current small groups enable teachers to respond well to individual needs, and materials are readily adapted for pupils to consolidate their achieved level or to accept the challenge of a higher level. Marking is frequent and consistent: pupils in Years 7 to 9 are aware of the levels they have reached and the targets they are aiming for; GCSE pupils receive full constructive written feedback on how to improve their performance and the quality of their language.
44. Management of the department is good. Many strategies are currently in place, but have yet to work through to full effectiveness. Schemes of work are very detailed, having been rewritten in the light of the new strategies for raising standards. Firm policies are in place, and assessment of pupils' progress is used effectively to plan lessons and inform curriculum delivery. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching has been particularly intense in the light of previous judgements of ineffectiveness, and members of the department constantly share good practice, informally day by day, as well as formally in departmental meetings and by opportunities for mutual observation. Materials for enhancing learning and practising language skills via information and communication technology (ICT) have been entered on to the school network, or can be accessed through the Internet. Although they have not yet had time to be integrated fully into the schemes of work, or accessed on a regular basis, pupils have used them to do homework tasks, practise grammar and general language skills, and for independent research. Pupils have contributed good ideas via questionnaires for ways of extending ICT and improving its organisation.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In the light of staffing problems, the school took the pragmatic decision to make modern foreign languages purely optional at GCSE. Consequently, there is one group for each language in Years 10 and 11.** In the Year 10 French group, containing seven pupils with a wide range of attainment, the teacher had at her disposal the French assistante and two initial teacher training students. The organisation of the lesson was excellent: one student started the lesson with practice of future time ("what activities will we/won't we be doing today?"), while the other ended the lesson with practice of past time ("what did we/didn't we do today?"). The French assistante gave a short talk on where she lived, which the teacher skilfully exploited in different ways. Worksheets were adapted to each pupil's needs in writing down information direct from the assistante's talk. Further exploitation of the text of the talk through gap-filling and searching exercises tested understanding of the language and enhanced basic literacy skills of sentence construction and understanding the function of words. The activities covered all four skills and were outstanding in the way they promoted success at individual levels, and for the way the adults in the class were able to support and guide each individual.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very effective in engaging pupils in the study of mathematics.
- Lesson objectives are not consistently shared with pupils at the start of the lesson.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to work independently in lessons.
- All pupils are able to achieve well.
- Learning assistants are very well deployed to support learning.
- Support for numeracy across the curriculum is insufficiently developed.

### **Commentary**

45. From test results at the end of Year 6, attainment of pupils on entry is average in mathematics, although the number of higher attainers is below average. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, in comparison to similar schools, attainment was above the national average and surpassed the LEA target for the school. GCSE A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades were also well above the national average. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 were in line with national expectations and in Years 10 and 11 they were above. This represents very good achievement overall.
46. Teaching is good with many elements, which are very good. Good planning ensures that pupils develop their skills and understanding effectively. Teachers have high expectations and, together with support staff, give pupils lots of encouragement so that they remain engaged in their work. They use a very good range of teaching styles, and most require pupils to work independently at times. Pupils can also work co-operatively, but currently they have too few opportunities. Support assistants are used very effectively to help pupils with special educational needs to make good progress, but teachers do not use sufficient open questioning to provide further challenge for the more able.
47. All pupils learn well, and do particularly well where teaching is stimulating. The influence of the Key Stage 3 Strategy shows in the brisk, often enthusiastic and generally challenging lessons. Very good management of pupils helps keep them on task and enjoying learning mathematics. A clear statement of learning objectives at the start of the lesson also contributes to pupils' learning and should be adopted uniformly. All pupils are treated with respect and encouragement to do their best. Their contributions are well received, even when not correct. The vast majority of both boys and girls are conscientious, engage willingly in their work and generally take a pride in their work.
48. The department is well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department is ambitious to further improve achievements. She has the support of her very hard working staff, for which she is a very good role-model. The department has a philosophy of sharing successful ideas and good practice. New staff have been very effectively inducted into the department team.
49. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Results have risen in all years while the department has embraced the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teaching and learning are good and the department is well managed.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

50. The school has a policy for mathematics across the curriculum. Training for all staff took place nearly two years ago so that pupils are able to use numeracy skills effectively in many subjects.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils achieve well at Year 9 and Year 11 and attain standards in line with the national average.
- Relationships and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the provision for ICT, but still insufficient use by pupils.
- Assessment data is not used effectively to target individual pupils and track the performance of individuals and groups.

### **Commentary**

51. Over the last three years, GCSE results have been variable, though broadly average in comparison with all schools. GCSE results in 2003 were again similar to the national average, but below average when compared to similar schools. Year 9 national test results in 2003 were average compared to all schools, but well above average when compared to similar schools. Over recent years, the results at Year 9 have continued to improve in line with the national trend. The differences in attainment of boys and girls at Year 9 and Year 11 are similar to the national differences. Pupils enter the school with attainment, which is below average, and they achieve well at Year 9 and Year 11 as a result of good teaching.
52. The standards seen during the inspection reflect examination and test results and are similar to the nationally expected levels. Based on their attainment on entry, pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs, by Year 9 and Year 11. By Year 11, average- and higher-attaining pupils confidently draw and interpret graphs, as, for example, when discussing the cooling curves of various organic solvents, and in Year 10, higher-attaining pupils talk confidently about the rate of particle collisions when interpreting different rates of reactions. In Year 9, many pupils have a good grasp of how refraction works and higher-attaining pupils can use this knowledge well in homework to explain common phenomena like rainbows. However, lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 have difficulty naming the products in a reaction between a variety of metals and acid.
53. Teaching is good and this has been maintained since the last inspection, despite significant recent changes in teaching staff. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well in demonstrations and explanations. Their very good relationships with pupils gives pupils confidence to learn. They use homework well to reinforce class work and mark pupils' work carefully. However, they make insufficient use of assessment information to plan different lesson objectives for pupils of different competencies and to inform pupils clearly about how they might overcome specific weaknesses.
54. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and use time well, particularly at the end of lessons to assess and reinforce learning. At the end of one very good lesson in which pupils investigated the role of water in plant cells, the teacher gave ample time to clarify, through skilful questioning and exposition, pupils' understanding of osmosis and the mechanism by which cells change shape. The department's one interactive whiteboard is very well used to provide a stimulating range of learning experiences. In some classes, pupils make good use of their ICT skills to word process, tabulate results, draw graphs, and research themes, such as drugs and make computer presentations. However, the planned use of ICT by all teachers is unsatisfactory and requires further development.
55. Pupils' attitudes to work, including those with special educational needs, have continued to improve since the last inspection and are now very good. Invariably they are very well behaved in lessons and show interest in their work, particularly when involved in investigations. Year 10 pupils worked with enthusiasm and interest in their investigation of enzyme action. Most pupils take their homework assignments seriously.

56. The new head of department has taken a decisive lead in his completion of the school's impressive bid for Specialist College status. This has involved much consultation, sharing of aims and evaluation of the department's strengths and weaknesses in a very short time. He is well supported by very experienced heads of subject with whom he has refined plans for the future. Management is good. The department runs smoothly and good consultation between staff results in consistent implementation of policies, such as those for behaviour, marking and laboratory safety. Since the last inspection, leadership and management have continued to be a strength of the department and the provision of hardware for ICT has improved with the acquisition of wireless laptops and an interactive whiteboard. Very good support by experienced technicians contributes to the good management of resources. Pupils' work is effectively monitored, but the monitoring of teaching and learning in order to identify weakness and share best practice is an area already identified for improvement by the new head of department. Assessment procedures are well in place, and recently improved in Years 7 to 9. However, the analysis of assessment data to improve the achievement of individual pupils and the quality of curriculum planning is underdeveloped and is likely to have contributed to the inconsistency of results at GCSE over the last three years. Since the time of the last inspection, the department has made sound improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average in GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is good across all years, resulting in good achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.
- Some lessons do not fully cater for the needs of all pupils.

### **Commentary**

57. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated standards, which were well below the national average. However, standards in lessons and of work seen show that pupils enter the school with very limited ICT skills, but develop an appropriate range of skills, reaching average standards by the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11, pupils have made good progress and are reaching above average standards. In GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. Other pupils on CLAIT and Certificate of Achievement courses are achieving well.
58. Teaching is good overall, but is significantly better with the permanent staff, where almost all teaching is very good or better. In better lessons, teachers know their pupils well. Planning is detailed, catering for individual needs, and is linked to well-prepared materials and the use of interactive whiteboards. Pupils are kept on task and focussed. Assessment systems are well used to track attainment and progress and address weak areas, particularly with older pupils. They are involved in their own self-assessment, developing responsibility for their own progress. Teachers know their subject well. Explanations are clear and technical terms are used appropriately in context. As a result, all pupils make good progress in their ICT skills and understanding. Homework is well used to enhance work in lessons. Literacy skills are effectively developed with good support from the English department. Lessons have a clear structure and end with a summary of the key points, assisting understanding. Pupils enjoy ICT lessons and learn well because teachers make them interesting, stimulating and challenging. As a result, they are highly motivated and very well behaved, They develop independent good learning skills, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
59. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. They learn well, as do gifted or talented pupils. However, teaching in some lessons does not fully cater for the needs of both of these groups.

60. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the department and has managed improvements very well. Documentation is thorough. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively.
61. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Systems and the network have improved and a new network manager appointed. The system is more stable and little time is lost through failures. New and more appropriate courses are established and improved assessment and recording systems are in place, helping to raise standards.

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

62. ICT is well used in most subjects. Good opportunities for pupils to use ICT are provided in mathematics, science, physical education and the special educational needs department.
63. ICT is very well used in geography, for example, through use of the interactive whiteboard, the school website and research on the Internet. Religious education does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Good teaching where clear explanation of the subject enables pupils to achieve well.
- Good departmental organisation results in well-planned lessons, which engage pupils' interest.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils give pupils confidence in their abilities and enhances learning.
- The department is in the early stages of setting targets for pupils and the results of assessments are not used fully to plan future learning.
- Fieldwork opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are insufficiently developed.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning.

#### **Commentary**

64. Standards in geography are average overall. Pupils' performance in the 2003 GCSE examinations was above average. The relatively small number of pupils, who took the GCSE exam, achieved well. A second group of Year 11 pupils, who took the entry level examination, also achieved well. In teacher assessments in 2003, pupils' standards were average at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement for pupils, whose standards are below average when they enter the school in Year 7.
65. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers explain geographical concepts clearly so pupils gain a thorough understanding of topics taught. For example, pupils in Year 7 can use scales confidently and measure distances on maps accurately. Teachers plan lessons carefully and make good use of attractive resources to engage all pupils' interest. The interest of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 11 was captured by a dramatic and humorous video about migration. This led to very good learning where pupils selected information and formed balanced opinions about issues of human rights. The use of information and communication technology in lessons supports pupils' learning well and gives them access to a wide range of maps, graphs and photographs. Pupils in Year 11 produce fieldwork enquiries of a high quality, but the fieldwork opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are insufficient. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and all pupils are given the confidence to contribute to lessons in an atmosphere of respect and trust.



66. The leadership and management of the department are both good. All aspects of its work are highly organised and reviewed and evaluated regularly. There are clear priorities for development. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and teachers share good practice. The setting of targets for pupils and using data to plan future learning is still at an early stage of development.
67. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection because the standards of work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 have risen and teaching is consistently good. The department has both the commitment and the capacity for further improvement.

## History

Overall, provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good in Year 11.
- Good teaching and learning results in good achievement throughout pupils' time in school.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Lessons are not consistently meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities.

## Commentary

68. The teacher assessments for Year 9 pupils in 2003 and 2002 showed standards that were close to national expectations. The inspection confirmed that standards are average for both boys and girls in knowledge, understanding and the skills of evaluating historical evidence. The 2003 GCSE results, which were an improvement on the good 2002 ones, were well above average for the higher grades, with boys attaining particularly well. The inspection confirmed that standards in Year 11 are above average. Pupils join the school with below average standards, particularly in literacy, which restricts their skills in communicating historical understanding. Throughout their time in school, pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils, achieve well as a result of good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils towards the subject. The good achievement is also related to the strong emphasis given to improving literacy, and this enables many pupils to make good progress in their ability to write relevantly and at length, as seen, for example, in projects on social and economic developments in Preston.
69. Teaching and learning are good, resulting in the good standards reached by Year 11. Where the teaching is good or better, there are high expectations to which pupils respond well, so that a strong working atmosphere is sustained during lessons and pupils learn effectively. Teachers make pupils learn actively and co-operatively, for example, by producing First World War simulations, which make them apply their knowledge constructively. Teachers also use interesting resources such as contemporary newspapers, which help to extend understanding. Marking is helpful in showing pupils how they can improve, and older pupils are given clear guidance on how they can do well in examinations. Occasionally, the teaching is over-directive, with pupils given insufficient opportunities to develop their speaking skills or follow up aspects such as citizenship, which would improve wider overall understanding. Work is not always sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils in classes with a wide range of ability.
70. Leadership and management are good. The department is making more use of ICT to extend learning, has improved the use of assessment to set meaningful targets, and has carried out extensive monitoring and evaluation to develop good practice. Previous strengths, such as good teaching, good progress, and good leadership and management, have been maintained. Therefore, overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## Religious education

The quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards achieved in GCSE examinations are high because of the effective teaching of examination groups.
- Pupils develop a detailed understanding of Christianity and Islam throughout Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE courses because of the informed and imaginative teaching.
- The achievement of the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is restricted by the inadequate amount of time given to the subject.
- Pupils demonstrate a growing ability to interpret religions and to make a personal response because teachers set challenging questions for reflection.
- Developing assessment systems do not yet fully support pupils in improving their learning.

### **Commentary**

71. Pupils achieved standards, which were well above average in the GCSE examinations in religious studies in 2003. Effective teaching led 45 per cent of pupils to improve on their school targets by a minimum of two grades. Standards of work seen in current GCSE lessons are in line with national expectations. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 attain standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and with national expectations for pupils of their age. Achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE, including for pupils with special educational needs. This is the result of good planning and informed and imaginative teaching. Standards of work seen for pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are not studying for GCSE, are below expectations, overall. The work of these pupils lacks depth and their achievement is restricted because the time allowed for the subject is well below recommendations.
72. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Pupils develop a detailed knowledge of Christianity and Islam, in particular, because of the very good subject knowledge of their teachers. They demonstrate a growing ability to interpret the impact of religions and to make a clear personal response. This is because teachers regularly set challenging questions for reflection. Teachers foster good relationships with pupils and show an obvious respect for their views. This means that pupils are able to discuss beliefs and values in a knowledgeable and mature way. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to encourage independent learning in their eagerness to meet lesson objectives. Emerging systems of target setting and assessment are beginning to benefit pupils and are well placed to have significant impact in the future. The individual learning needs of the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not met because teachers are not given sufficient time to support achievement.
73. The leadership and management of the religious education department are now both good, though overall improvement since the time of the last report has been unsatisfactory. The new head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject within the school. Good planning reflects a sharp focus on the continuous raising of standards. The head of department is a good role-model for the newly qualified teacher in the area and offers good levels of support and guidance. Opportunities for pupils to review their own performance are currently being improved in Years 7 to 9 with the use of assessment levels allowing accurate self-evaluation. This work has yet to be extended to Years 10 and 11. Improvements have been made in planning and in the provision of resources for pupils with special educational needs. These have supported pupils' achievement. However, the school has still not addressed the inadequacy of time given to pupils, who do not follow an examination course in Years 10 and 11. Standards achieved and progress made by these pupils remain limited because they do not have time to study the subject in depth. The use of ICT in teaching and learning is underdeveloped, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- GCSE results in all the design and technology subjects are good.
- Pupils in all years make good progress.
- The teaching areas are conducive to teaching and learning.
- The school Intranet is not sufficiently used as a resource.
- Product evaluation is not fully exploited to broaden technical knowledge and experience of design, particularly in resistant materials.

### **Commentary**

74. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national averages for design and technology. In lessons, standards are also above average. Pupils enter the school with standards lower than expected, but by the end of Year 9 they have made good progress. They gain a good experience of the design process and develop good practical skills. There is good technological challenge in the work, although product evaluation in resistant materials is not used effectively to broaden experience of design, materials and assembly techniques. Homework is used well to reinforce and support learning. In lessons, there is good emphasis on developing literacy skills.
75. GCSE results in 2003 for resistant materials, food and textiles were above the national averages and well above for graphics. In lessons, the standard of work is above average and achievement is good. Folios are generally good and make appropriate use of ICT. Pupils are starting to make good use of computer-aided design and manufacture in resistant materials, but this has yet to become sufficiently embedded to help raise standards.
76. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well. They have a good rapport with pupils, share lesson objectives effectively and set clear expectations. Pupils behave well and progress well with their learning because the work is demanding, challenging and interesting. Teachers set a good pace in lessons and effectively challenge pupils to respond to questions and to become fully involved with the activities. Teachers monitor the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties well to ensure they make good progress. Additional in-class support is very good, particularly for pupils, who are deaf. Modified worksheets and notes help to ensure their full involvement and contribute to their good achievement.
77. The leadership of the department is good with a clear ethos and high expectations of work and behaviour. The management of the department is good and staff work together well as a team to plan and agree strategy. The head of department monitors teaching, assessment, and the progress of pupils well. Accommodation is well organised with effective displays to inform pupils and identify standards. Limited use is made of the school Intranet as a resource, but there are good extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to complete their work.

There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Good provision has been sustained, standards have improved, and the introduction of GNVQ textile studies has broadened the curriculum.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is of a high quality.

- There is a stimulating environment and good access to resources.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The use of sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 requires further development.
- The use of ICT as an artistic medium requires further development.

## Commentary

78. The 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national averages for art. However, in lessons, achievement and standards are above and, in some instances, well above expectations. Pupils are gaining a good breadth of experience and covering a wide range of activities and skills. The work is challenging, but pupils succeed at all levels because of the high expectations, enthusiasm and support of the teachers. Pupils make good use of resource material they have collected to develop their own creative artwork. The recent introduction of the monthly sketchbook in Year 8 is particularly good with pupils building up their own resources linked to different themes, for example other cultures and religions. This practice is not yet supporting all pupils in Years 7 to 9.
79. GCSE results in 2003 for art were above national averages. However, in lessons, artwork is well above expectations and in some instances, there is exceptional creativity and originality in the work being produced. Pupils have developed excellent sketchbooks as a resource for ideas and have the freedom to experiment with different graphical techniques. This is contributing to some excellent coursework that also demonstrates pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. With the high level of support, pupils at all levels are achieving and progressing very well, including the pupils, who are deaf.
80. In lessons, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. The wide range of resource material in the department, including the work of other artists, is well used to support teaching and provide stimulus for pupils. Lesson planning is very good: practical sessions are well organised and lesson objectives are shared with the pupils. Teachers have a very good rapport and working relationships with pupils, which contribute to their progress. A number of classes have a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers monitor their work effectively to ensure they make good progress. Additional in-class support is very good, particularly for pupils, who are deaf, ensuring their full involvement, and contributes to their good achievement. The teachers provide extra-curricular time for pupils to complete their work and in some instances for pupils to take GCSE art as an extra subject. Good use is made of homework to extend learning.
81. Accommodation is very good, though recent damage has limited the use of an excellent computing resource. Display is effectively used throughout the department and in some areas of the main school to show the work of pupils and to identify expectations of quality and creativity.
82. The leadership and the management of art are excellent, and very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. There have been radical changes with the appointment of new staff and a head of department and there is now a clear vision for future development. Planning is good and assessment is well established and used effectively to track attainment and provide feedback to pupils and parents.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- The pupils have a good attitude to the subject.

- Marking of pupils' work needs further development.

### Commentary

83. Teachers' assessments and standards seen and heard during the inspection indicate that the substantial majority of the pupils achieve well to reach the national expectation by the end of Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Boys and girls perform equally well. The pupils in Year 10 have a good understanding of key signatures and accidentals and are familiar with chord sequences, cadences and syncopated rhythms. The pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of experimental music in a variety of 20<sup>th</sup> century styles. They make good progress in using a range of styles in their own compositions. Up to 75 pupils make good progress as a result of instrumental tuition.
84. Teaching in every year is good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and are able performers so pupils learn well. For example, in Year 7, the class showed good understanding of note names, values and basic rhythmic patterns. They were able to compose on the glockenspiel a three note *bossa*. This was effectively performed by the pupils and assessed by the teacher and the pupils. However, pupils are not made sufficiently aware of their individual levels of performance, or how to progress to the next level. Relationships are mature and productive, and teachers use a range of teaching methods, which adds significant pace to lessons and helps to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Management and planning of lessons is very good and pupils with special educational needs and more able and talented pupils are carefully identified and make good progress. The wide range of extra-curricular activities involving approximately 140 pupils, together with performance in the community, makes an important contribution to the pupils' learning.
85. Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good with a clear vision and direction for the department. Accommodation and resources are good, though the development of information and computer technology has been impeded by a recent arson attack. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good in that the good standards have been consolidated.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **excellent**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average overall, and well above average at GCSE.
- Pupils achieve very well throughout their time in school, in response to very good teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are both excellent.
- There is excellent provision for extra-curricular sport, contributing to the very positive attitudes of pupils.

### Commentary

86. The teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003 showed results well above the national average for both boys and girls, maintaining the high attainment of previous years. The inspection showed that in the activities observed, mostly games and dance, standards are above national expectations for 14-year-olds, both boys and girls. The proportion of pupils in Year 11 attaining A\*-C grades in the 2003 GCSE examination was well above the national average, continuing the trend from 2002 when girls did better than boys. The inspection showed that standards of boys and girls on the core course in Year 11 are above the national average, both in knowledge and understanding and in practical skills, whilst pupils on the GCSE course attain standards well above the national average. The pleasing standards are attributable to the very good teaching and learning and the positive attitudes engendered in pupils, reflected in the very good take-up of extra-curricular sport. Pupils join the school with below average standards, and those of all abilities, including pupils with special educational

needs, achieve very well by the time they leave. Gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities such as specialist coaching, enabling them to achieve very well.

87. Teaching and learning in physical education are very good. A combination of very good subject knowledge by specialist teachers, their high expectations and the very good relationships they have with pupils result in learning and progress of a high quality. Pupils are given frequent feedback on how they can improve performance, for example, in developing technical skills in netball and basketball and in developing personal fitness programmes. Pupils also rise to the challenge of learning how to take responsibility for evaluating their performance, which helps to develop their literacy skills. Their success in showing innovation and creativeness was evident in the choreographing of dance sequences in Year 8. Creative forms of revision keep pupils revising for theory examinations motivated. The high quality of the teaching to some extent compensates for the relatively low time allowance given to physical education.
88. Leadership and management are both excellent. Evaluation and monitoring are extensive, and despite the department's obvious successes, there is no complacency. Rather, the department is committed to further developments, such as the extension of dance provision. The department effectively exploits community links, for example with local sports clubs, to increase sporting opportunities, and the range and take-up of extra-curricular sport are excellent and much valued by pupils.
89. Previous strengths, such as above average standards and positive attitudes, have been maintained. In other areas, such as leadership, monitoring and teaching, what were already strong features have been further strengthened. Therefore, there has been good improvement.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Three vocational courses were sampled during the inspection. One lesson was seen in each course.

### **GNVQ Textiles Foundation Course**

90. The GNVQ textiles course is a comparatively new course for the department and the current Year 11 pupils will be the first to be entered for the examination. Course planning is good and pupils are progressing well. They are developing a good understanding of manufacturing systems and the concept of quality control. There are good links with the local college and industry.

### **GNVQ Leisure and Tourism Course**

91. The GNVQ leisure and tourism course is a new course in Year 10. Pupils are progressing well, coming to terms with both new methods of learning and factual content. Teaching is good, and pupils are conscientious because they are enjoying the course.

### **GCSE Child Development**

92. In child development, the GCSE results for 2003 were in line with expectations. In lessons, standards and progress are satisfactory. A good foundation of knowledge is being established. The development of case studies is satisfactory and pupils enjoy the course.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are average for the course.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The good curriculum ensures good coverage of personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to work.
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching citizenship across the curriculum.

### Commentary

93. Standards are average for the course both at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve well. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Where citizenship is taught as a separate subject, teachers plan lessons carefully so the factual content is covered and other important aspects, such as showing responsibility and working together, are fully developed. Where the subject is taught in other lessons, teaching is still good, but is not yet consistently in the thinking and planning of all teachers in all lessons. As a result, opportunities are missed to develop pupils' thinking. The school is developing good assessment procedures to track pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils show very good attitudes to work and behave very well in lessons. They show sensitivity to the views and feelings of others when discussions involve people's personal experiences.
95. The school has carried out a detailed audit of where citizenship can be taught across the curriculum. A curriculum plan is now being developed to ensure even better consistency in subjects and lessons. Citizenship makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leadership and management of the subject are both very good. The school has made very good progress in developing the subject and clear priorities are in place for further development.
96. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Coverage is mostly within form time in the mornings, but there are also separate lessons for some year groups. It is an integral part of a number of subjects. Teaching of personal, social and health education is good and there are good links with teaching of citizenship. Pupils achieve well in lessons and show very good attitudes in the subject. The course makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and to their ability to play a positive role in school life. The sex and drugs education programmes give good guidance on facts, decision-making and relationships that enable pupils to make informed choices. The co-ordinator organises the courses very well and this ensures a consistent and progressive course for pupils.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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