

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ALL HALLOWS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119802

Headteacher: Mr M Flynn

Lead inspector: Mr R B Higgs

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2005

Inspection number: 268334

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: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 years  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 888

School address: Crabtree Avenue  
Penwortham  
Preston  
Lancashire  
Postcode: PR1 0LN

Telephone number: 01772 746121  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr M Perry

Date of previous inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> March 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

All Hallows Catholic High School is an average size, mixed comprehensive school serving communities around the Penwortham district of Preston in the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool. It is a very popular school and almost all pupils come from Catholic backgrounds. Very few boys and girls are from minority ethnic heritages and none is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic circumstances, but, overall, these are more favourable than average. Relatively few join or leave the school other than at the usual times of joining or leaving. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement, is below average. No single special educational need predominates. The school acquired Specialist Technology College status in 1994 and this has an important influence on its development. It is a leading member of the South Ribble Learning Federation, and recently was designated a Leading Edge school following the receipt of a School Achievement Award in three successive years.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1608	Mr R B Higgs	Lead inspector	
11358	Mrs V Lamb	Lay inspector	
1622	Mrs L Aers	Team inspector	English
31550	Mrs S Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics
22083	Mrs K Hinton	Team inspector	Science
22906	Mr B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8751	Mr J Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology
2626	Ms M Thompson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
32087	Mr J Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education
32340	Mr P McKay	Team inspector	Geography History
18955	Mrs C Earlam	Team inspector	Art and design
16890	Mrs M Potter	Team inspector	Citizenship Work-related learning
8009	Mr J Forsyth	Team inspector	Music
16359	Mr J Farrow	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language
8248	Mr C Riches	Team inspector	Business education

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

All Hallows is a **very good school** with many excellent features. The school is a compassionate and very caring community based on its strong Catholic ethos, with a well-established culture of achievement. It has a deservedly high reputation reflecting a sustained period of high standards and very good achievement. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school continues to strive for improvement. The school provides excellent value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The climate for learning is excellent, fostering excellent attitudes and relationships; pupils behave very well and strive to do their best.
- Teaching and learning are very good, bringing about high standards and very good achievement amongst all groups of pupils.
- Attendance is excellent, reflecting the excellent partnership the school has built with parents and its commitment to pupils' well-being.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, supported very well by governors and senior managers, and by the strong commitment of staff to the success of the school.
- Excellent provision is made in English, modern foreign languages and history, and very good provision is made in most other subjects.
- Opportunities for independent and creative learning are inconsistent.
- Achievement in art and design in Years 7 to 9 is not good enough.
- The organisation of curriculum provision for art and design, music, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9 restrict pupils' progress.

The school's improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been very good. Standards have risen considerably and been sustained at high levels. Achievement is now very good rather than good. Teaching has improved, with a larger proportion being very good, although opportunities for pupils' independent learning are insufficiently developed in some areas. Attendance is excellent and the provision for pupils' personal development has strengthened. Previous key issues have been mainly resolved, although those relating to the timetabling of music and art and design have not.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	A	A	A	A

*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.*

**Achievement is very good overall** amongst all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Boys' achievement is very similar to that of girls, and much better than in most other schools. Pupils enter Year 7 with above average attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and with standards in other subjects that are generally average. They make rapid progress to reach well above average standards by Year 9 and Year 11 in most subjects. These high standards have been sustained across recent years, with a particularly strong feature being the very high proportion of pupils who gain A\* and A grades in GCSE examinations. It is only in art and design in Years 7 to 9 that pupils underachieve, and this is mainly because of weaknesses in curriculum planning and assessment practice. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent.** Their attitudes, relationships and attendance are excellent and their overall behaviour is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. Teaching is very good** as is learning throughout the school. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory is low and only one instance of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Characteristics of very good teaching across the school are the thorough planning and preparation of lessons, and the variety of challenging activities provided. These are very well matched to pupils' capabilities to ensure that both boys and girls learn and progress very well. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well because teaching caters effectively for their individual needs. Pupils have very good learning skills and many show considerable independence, although in some lessons, teaching does not allow this independence and associated creativity to flourish as it is over-directive and constrains pupils' thinking and progress. Assessment is used well overall to help pupils learn but the picture is mixed, with outstanding practice in some areas and only satisfactory practice in others. The curriculum is very good overall but has some weaknesses in Years 7 to 9 that are a barrier to detailed study and consistent progress in several subjects due to the timetabling arrangements and insufficient allocation of time. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. A wide range of opportunities for out-of-hours learning considerably enhances the curriculum. Care, guidance and support are very good overall and have some excellent features. The school's partnership with parents is excellent.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding, based on very high expectations and a very clear vision for the school. He is very well supported by senior staff and by the very good contribution made by the governing body. Strategic planning is very good and a very strong culture of professional development has been established that allows subject leaders and teachers to flourish. Very good systems of self-review are in place, although there is some variation in the effectiveness of middle managers in carrying out planned improvement. The school continues to make very good use of its Technology College status to develop learning using ICT and to extend local partnerships with other schools.

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

Parents are extremely supportive of the school and a much higher proportion than usual are very satisfied with what it provides. They are pleased with the high standards and with the way the school fosters good behaviour and attitudes. Pupils are proud to attend All Hallows and are very appreciative of the commitment of staff, who, they say, go out of their way to help them, and of the many and varied opportunities the school provides.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that opportunities are provided in all teaching for independent and creative learning.
- Improve achievement in art and design in Years 7 to 9.
- Re-organise and plan curriculum provision for art and design, music, ICT and design and technology in Years 7 to 9 to overcome the current constraints on learning in these subjects.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards of work are high compared to schools nationally by Year 9 and Year 11. Achievement is very good amongst all groups of pupils.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities make very good progress overall from entry in Year 7 and their achievement is very good by Year 11.
- A very high proportion of pupils gain A\* and A grades in GCSE examinations.
- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good in most subjects by Year 11.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the high quality individual support they receive.
- Pupils' achievement in art and design by Year 9 is not good enough.

#### Commentary

1. Standards on entry to the school are above average overall. Whilst attainment in the national tests in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) in Year 6, before pupils join the school, are above average, and sometimes higher than this in some year groups, standards in other subjects on entry are similar to those in most schools, and are broadly average.
2. Over the last five years, results in the national tests taken in Year 9 in the core subjects have been well above the national average. The trend has broadly followed the national trend over this period. The gap between the results of boys and girls is considerably less than their respective performance nationally. Pupils' performance in these subjects placed the school in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally in 2004.

#### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004***

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.6 (36.5)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	39.9 (39.3)	35.5 (35.4)
science	38.3 (37.8)	33.1 (33.6)

*There were 184 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. In Years 7 to 9, standards in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are well above average, although they are above average in design and technology, and average in ICT, music and citizenship. Taking account of pupils' standards on entry, their achievement overall is very good as they make rapid progress in acquiring subject specific knowledge, understanding and skills in most subjects. It is only in art and design that standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory by Year 9. This is mainly due to weaknesses in the curriculum and assessment.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004**

<b>GCSE/GNVQ</b>	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
5 or more A*-C grades (%)	81(78)	52 (52)
5 or more A*-G grades (%)	98 (98)	89 (88)
1 or more A*-G grades (%)	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	56.8 (55.4)	41.4 (40.6)
Capped average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	46.1 (44.9)	34.9 (34.7)

<b>GCSE and equivalent qualifications</b>	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
5 or more A*-C grades (%)	81	52
5 or more A*-G grades (%)	98	89
1 or more A*-G grades (%)	98	96
Average point score per pupil	441.8	340.3
Capped average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	355.0	282.8

4. Standards in the GCSE examinations rose strongly following the last inspection in 1999 from 60 per cent to 80 per cent of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C, the level which, with minor fluctuations, it has sustained since. A particular feature of these results is the very high proportion of pupils who gain the highest grades of A\* and A. In several subjects, very high results have been maintained, notably, for example, in English literature and physical education. Overall, these results are well above the national averages and represent consistently very good achievement compared with similar schools. In 2004, the value added measure of the achievement of pupils in GCSE examinations from their performance in national tests at end of Year 9 was in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils (those of above average, average and below average capability) shows that each of these groups achieves very well in relation to their respective starting points in Year 10. Boys and girls attain standards that are well above the national average and the gap between their respective performance is small compared to what is found in most other schools.
5. Pupils' achievement is very good overall in Years 10 and 11, reflecting similar standards to those gained in recent GCSE examination results and sustaining the school's very impressive record of success. The headteacher's excellent leadership, with its relentless focus on standards, the very strong commitment of staff to the success of the school, and the excellent attitudes to work that pupils display, combine to produce this very good achievement. Pupils build very well on their learning in Years 7 to 9 to make very good progress in their GCSE courses. In most subjects, they achieve very well. In ICT, music and citizenship, achievement is good; in art and design, it is satisfactory.
6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and make very good progress throughout because their teachers and teaching assistants support them very effectively, for example through setting challenging but achievable individual learning targets. The school's gifted and talented pupils are routinely and successfully challenged to achieve as well as they can, with some well-established, enhanced provision in most subjects. It is this level of expectation that brings about the very high proportion of grades A\* and A that pupils gain in

GCSE examinations. However, the performance of these pupils is not systematically tracked across the school and so their specific achievements cannot be identified and measured.

7. Pupils' skills in language and literacy are well above average and contribute significantly to their achievement across the curriculum. Their well-developed oral skills and personal confidence enable them to participate very well in lessons. Pupils' competence in mathematics is very good, and their high levels of numeracy enable them to learn well when these skills are needed in other subjects, such as in science and geography. In ICT, pupils' competence is satisfactory overall, soundly supporting their learning in other subjects. All subject areas have the use of ICT to support learning planned into their schemes of work and, overall, it is used satisfactorily. In design and technology, it is an integral part of learning and plays a very important part in the very good achievement in that subject. In some subjects, such as English and music, limited access to computers reduces pupils' opportunities to learn using their ICT skills.

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

Pupils have excellent attitudes and behave very well. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attendance is very high because pupils enjoy their work and feel secure and confident in school.
- Relationships in the school are excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes are excellent; they are extremely enthusiastic about the activities provided and keen to work hard.
- Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school.
- The school makes excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### **Commentary**

8. Attendance is consistently very high when compared with other schools nationally and this is a further improvement on the very good attendance reported during the last inspection. Pupils have very mature attitudes towards school. As well as enjoying their work and feeling secure and confident, they want to succeed, and realise the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The very effective pastoral system and excellent partnership with parents ensure that any issues of attendance or punctuality are effectively resolved.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data	0.2
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

9. Pupils are happy and proud to be part of the school and develop excellent relationships with each other and staff. They report in discussion that they are very pleased with what the school offers them. The vast majority clearly enjoy their lessons and are very keen to involve themselves in the activities provided and the opportunities to assume responsibility. Many pupils take part in out-of-hours activities, including revision and homework clubs, and

residential trips are always oversubscribed. Pupils particularly appreciate taking part in retreats and are keen to return to them. In many lessons, attitudes are exemplary. Pupils say and show by their actions that they have a high degree of respect for teachers and each other and are serious learners. They are very well motivated and get on with their work quickly, concentrating very well. Not only do pupils work very well on their own, but they also work together very co-operatively and are confident in sharing their ideas with each other. In mathematics, for instance, pupils respond to the supportive atmosphere and excellent learning ethos with the confidence to try out problems at the front of the class without any prior demonstration from the teacher. However, the attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils in a few lessons are not typical of the rest of the school. In these cases, good relationships are not well established and, consequently, pupils are noisy, chattering or calling out, and generally behave immaturely.

10. Behaviour in school overall is very good and the school has clear objectives and constructive strategies to respond to any that challenges the very high standard expected, extending these strategies out of school in an attempt to eliminate reported poor behaviour on the school buses. There is very little bullying, or oppressive behaviour in school and, as at the time of the last inspection, the school acts quickly and effectively to stop it. A comprehensive pastoral support programme specifically designed to support pupils in danger of exclusion is highly effective. The governing body also play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of this policy. Two isolated incidents of extreme anti-social behaviour led to the school permanently excluding one pupil last year and one so far this year. The incidence of fixed period exclusions is low and the use of this sanction is effective in almost all cases in halting patterns of unacceptable behaviour developing.

***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	865	42	1
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

11. Pupils are very keen to take responsibilities within a wide range of opportunities, some of which require huge personal commitment. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11, who train as peer supporters, follow an intensive course and then work on a rota to ensure that there is someone available each lunchtime, either in their base or around school, to provide personal or practical support for any pupil. They are extremely conscientious and caring in the support that they give, to each other as well as to those who seek their help formally. Pupils with special educational needs make very significant progress in their personal development largely because of the excellent relationships and the very positive climate for learning

established by the school. Consequently, these pupils thrive in response to the school's high expectations, develop very positive attitudes towards learning and expect to do well.

12. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This leads to exemplary attitudes, high levels of care and concern for others and extremely courteous relationships. The daily routine of prayer, reflection and celebration promotes a strong sense of purpose and an enthusiasm among the pupils to do well. The Catholic ethos and clear Christian values establish a common basis for the pupils to learn to distinguish right from wrong. They are eager to apply these principles in their daily life in school and are happy to respond to the high standards expected of them. The school is very successful in fostering their interest in taking responsibility and joining in. The pupils say they are proud to be part of a high achieving school and to work together to maintain the harmony and quality of their community.
13. Pupils have a profound awareness of their own cultural and religious identity. This is the result of regular observance and participation in shared activities during, for example, residential retreats. Many opportunities in the curriculum encourage pupils to appreciate the diversity of other cultures, and to gain respect for the rights of others to hold beliefs that are different from their own.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall, although with some variations. The curriculum provided is very good with very good enrichment opportunities. The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well and the guidance provided is very good. The partnership established with parents is excellent and the links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with a relatively small proportion that is less than good. Assessment is good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching and excellent attitudes enable pupils to learn very well.
- The school has developed and implemented a range of innovative teaching and learning strategies that extend and enthuse pupils where they are used.
- Pupils' capacity to work collaboratively and independently is excellent.
- The management of teaching and learning has not ensured sufficient improvement in all curriculum areas, and the provision for independent and creative learning is inconsistent.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 121 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	54 (45%)	42 (35%)	21 (17%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

14. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is good or better in four out of five lessons and very good in nearly a half. Although the proportion of excellent teaching is small, the evidence in pupils' books and their other work shows that very good quality teaching is maintained throughout the school year. Teaching is equally effective in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and

11. The combination of consistently high quality teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils enables them to learn very well.
15. The school gives a high priority to the development and support for teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with a much higher proportion of very good teaching than before. Initiatives have been generated through involvement in the Leading Edge programme, the South Ribble Learning Federation and, from within the school, the teaching and learning group and individual curriculum areas. A strong collaborative ethos and consistency of staffing lead to the widespread sharing of innovative ideas and good practice. Whole-school training has been provided for 'accelerated learning' and 'assessment for learning' strategies and for the use of computer technology to enhance learning both in and beyond the classroom. Action plans in each subject area ensure an overall process of continuous improvement. Whilst most curriculum areas have welcomed the autonomy to develop new strategies, the lack of a specific whole-school policy on teaching and learning has led to some inconsistencies in progress. Where teaching is less effective, existing systems of monitoring have not brought about improvement.
16. Characteristics of very good teaching across the school are the thorough planning and preparation of lessons, and the variety of challenging activities that are very well matched to pupils' capabilities to ensure that both boys and girls learn and progress very well. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well because teaching is well planned and caters effectively for their individual needs. Teaching assistants are well deployed and also make a significant contribution to the quality of provision. All adults relate very well to these pupils, expecting them to work hard and succeed. The school's gifted and talented pupils are frequently challenged to achieve as well as they can with some well-established, enhanced provision in most subjects. For example, in English, a class of higher attaining pupils in Year 10 successfully tackled analytical work about *Hamlet* at the level normally associated with sixth form students. However, arrangements to co-ordinate and evaluate the impact of such provision, especially for uniquely talented individuals, are underdeveloped at a whole-school level.
17. Teachers know their subjects and the requirements for examination success very well, notably in mathematics and science. They have very high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour and set clear learning targets. Very skilful classroom management, particularly of the short single periods, ensures almost all lessons have good pace and momentum which maximises opportunities to learn. In most subjects, ICT is used very effectively to illustrate teachers' explanations and to demonstrate skills and techniques, particularly in science, geography, history and design and technology. Constructive homework is a regular feature in all subject areas and the use of the Extranet is becoming an important feature in extending opportunities for independent learning. In many areas, notably in English, much is done to develop pupils' ability to think and learn independently. In mathematics, for example, pupils' confidence in asking questions is a significant aid to learning. In geography and history, there are many opportunities for pupils to work individually and in groups to arrive at reasoned opinions and conclusions supported by evidence. In physical education, pupils are encouraged to perform different roles in games and to organise themselves.
18. Excellent attitudes and very good relationships with teachers and with each other are crucial to pupils' learning. They respond to high quality teaching by working very productively, at a very good pace, and their retention and application of earlier learning are very good. Whilst pupils show a very high degree of self-reliance in learning, the opportunity for them to do so is not consistent. Some lessons, particularly in science and art, are too prescriptive and dominated too much by the teacher, with not enough time for pupils to think independently or creatively. In design and technology, limited strategies for the teaching of design skills restrict pupils' capacity to work creatively in some material areas.
19. Overall, the use of assessment is good. There is a mixed picture across departments, with excellent practice across all elements of assessment in modern foreign languages and very

good practice in English, history, geography and business studies. Pupils in mathematics show very good understanding of their targets and of what they need to do to improve. Innovative, on-line self-assessment is used in citizenship. Marking of pupils' work is generally good. The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is generally good, except in art and design in Years 7 to 9, where it is unsatisfactory. In art and design, these pupils also have an unsatisfactory understanding of what they need to do to improve. There is some inconsistency of approach to assessment for learning and to the tracking of pupils' progress across subjects. The limited monitoring of assessment practice has meant that the potential for dissemination of some of the very good and outstanding practice that exists in the school has not been realised to improve weaker subject areas.

## **The curriculum**

Curriculum provision is very good overall. Curriculum enrichment is very good. Accommodation and resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's technology status is used extremely well to provide pupils with innovative and enriching opportunities for study.
- The enrichment programme makes a major contribution to the pupils' motivation and achievement.
- Time allocation and curriculum organisation for ICT, art and design, music, and design and technology inhibit progress in learning in Years 7 to 9.
- The staffing of the school is very good.
- The all-weather pitch and netball courts are poor playing surfaces, and playing fields frequently become waterlogged, adversely affecting the playing and learning of team games.

### **Commentary**

20. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is very good. It is broadly academic and meets all requirements. The range of subjects caters very well for the particular needs and interests of the pupils, and leads to high standards. The curriculum is based on a clear set of aims and Christian values which permeate learning. It provides equality of opportunity and helps pupils to achieve very well. The school has capitalised very well on Specialist Technology College status to enhance the provision in related subjects, and to extend the use of ICT across the curriculum.
21. Strengths also lie in the degree of challenge that subjects often include in their planning to add pace and diversity to learning and in the variety of enrichment activities offered. In English, modern foreign languages and history, for example, activities are often designed with flair and imagination, deepening pupils' experiences. A wide variety of enrichment activities is built into the work of most subjects, such as the visits programme in history. The introduction of citizenship has been well managed and the provision for work-related learning is very good. However, there are some weaknesses in Years 7 to 9 in the organisation of the curriculum in design and technology, and lower than average time allocated to ICT, art and design and music, which restrict learning opportunities. In Years 10 and 11, a wide range of compulsory and optional subjects is offered leading mainly to GCSE qualifications. Valuable curricular innovations have been introduced as a result of Specialist Technology College status, leadership of the South Ribble Learning Federation, and, more recently, designation as a Leading Edge school. These include the development of the Extranet, opportunities for more capable pupils to study two modern foreign languages, a combined business and graphics course, and additional provision for pupils with special educational needs.
22. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers routinely make adjustments to learning to overcome potential barriers to the achievement of these

pupils. This helps to support an inclusive whole-school approach where every child matters. Provision for the higher attaining pupils is very good as seen in the very high proportion of pupils who gain A\* and A grades in GCSE examinations. However, the school does not identify and systematically track the progress of gifted and talented pupils, and so is not able to ensure that they are all being fully challenged. The school is successfully tackling the needs of pupils who are less motivated than others by introducing additional courses and qualifications in Years 10 and 11, such as vocational courses in collaboration with Preston College. Other pathways are being developed, and the school has taken a leading role in establishing a local vocational centre, to expand opportunities.

23. The out-of-hours programme provides very good opportunities for joining in a variety of activities, particularly in sport, music and residential events. For example, the 'Music School' provides instrumental tuition to about a quarter of pupils. There is an impressive level of participation. Master classes in science, mathematics, Spanish and technology are among the imaginative activities on offer for the most capable pupils. Many pupils of all levels of attainment are involved in interesting enterprise projects, especially those carried out in association with local business and industry.
24. The school makes very effective provision for personal, social, and health education, and fully meets legal requirements for education on sex and relationships, and on drug and alcohol abuse. The programme meets requirements for careers education, which results in very good guidance to support pupils in moving towards career goals and personal aspirations. The personal, social and health education course helps pupils become independent learners, which is noticeable in their mature attitudes, confidence and high self-esteem.
25. The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teaching staff, with a very good match to the curriculum. There is very little turnover, and so the school benefits considerably from a well-established achievement culture and the strong commitment that staff make to the school's success. Teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs very well. The provision of technical support benefits several subject areas, although it is limited in design and technology. Faculty assistants provide very good administrative support for teachers, and the school is involved with a number of other strategies to benefit from workforce re-modelling.
26. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Facilities for design and technology are very good and most science laboratories have been refurbished. Some subject areas are good, but some only satisfactory. Several classrooms are too small for the size of the class. There are significant deficiencies in physical education facilities, and improvements to playing fields are the subject of discussion with the local education authority. There are weaknesses in the accommodation for music, with rooms that restrict planned activities. There is limited access to some areas of the school for pupils with restricted mobility. Resources are generally good, although access to computers is more limited in some subjects than expected in a school with technology status.
27. Since the last inspection the school has strengthened its curriculum provision although the issue regarding provision for art and design and music has not been fully tackled. The school's Technology College status, its involvement in the South Ribble Learning Federation and designation as a Leading Edge school are used very effectively to learn with and from other establishments and to further develop curriculum provision.

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

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent. Support, advice and guidance are very good, and processes for seeking and acting on pupils' views are very good.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The emphasis on building self-esteem in a caring, compassionate community is a major strength of the school.
- The school provides a safe, supportive environment and gives excellent regard to pupils' well-being.
- Arrangements to help pupils settle into the school are excellent, being comprehensive and highly supportive.

## **Commentary**

28. The school's very caring ethos is evident throughout all of its work, but especially where it comes to the valuing of individual pupils and the promotion of their personal development. The school has a well-established pastoral system that operates efficiently in monitoring pupils' attendance, behaviour, academic and personal progress. Form tutors are directly involved in teaching personal, social and health education, and citizenship, so they know pupils very well. Pastoral care arrangements monitor pupils' personal and academic development very effectively, linking home, school and support agencies very well. Links with academic staff are well established to provide timely support that takes account of individual needs. In particular, the roles of form tutors and heads of year complement each other very well and provide a very strong basis for care and guidance. Staff get to know pupils very well and establish excellent relationships to help pupils develop the confidence to seek support as well as enable staff to step in if pupils become unhappy.
29. Pupils' welfare is carefully considered alongside the Catholic ethos that the school seeks to promote when new developments are implemented. Although pupils have raised several issues through the school council that have not brought about desired improvements, most feel that the school listens to them and seeks their views on important matters. Parents are very satisfied with the care that is provided, and almost all consider that the school treats their children fairly and values them as individuals. Suitably trained staff have responsibility for child protection and maintain appropriate links with support agencies. However, training for all staff on new requirements is not yet complete.
30. Staff and pupils are very well aware of health and safety, and very effective procedures are in place for identifying and responding to hazards. The management of health and safety is very good. The school frequently reviews catering arrangements, involving the school council, and is increasing healthy meal options and reducing sugary drinks as part of its commitment to promoting healthy living. As a further commitment to pupils' welfare, the school has implemented several very good initiatives that provide personal support for pupils with a wide range of needs. For instance, a very well structured and organised chaplaincy programme has been established. It plays an integral role in the school's guidance and support systems through fostering excellent relationships and developing pupils' ability to reflect and gain inner strengths to help themselves and others.
31. Induction arrangements are excellent. They are carefully considered so that staff are able to prepare thoroughly and get to know pupils in good time so that they enter their new school with confidence and an enthusiasm for all that it offers. Year groups are organised so that staff with responsibility for Year 7 are able to build positive relationships with primary staff, parents and pupils early as they become well known in the partner schools over the years. This enables the airing of common worries, and encourages the sharing of concerns, and means that there are very few pupils who are reluctant to come to school. In addition, the school is able to adapt provision to meet changing and individual needs. A very wide range of activities, of long standing, provides pupils with opportunities to meet staff and see the school environment, and particularly to meet their form tutor and peers from other primary schools. The well-established procedures enable the school to work alongside all of the many primary schools from which pupils transfer, as well as in very close partnership with its main

contributory schools. Pupils feel very well prepared to join the school and parents are satisfied that the school helps their children to settle in very well.

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

The school has established an excellent partnership with parents. Links with the community are very good, as are those with other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school enjoys a very positive partnership with parents, which makes an excellent contribution to pupils' well-being and learning at home and school.
- The school has very good links with different agencies, commercial organisations and businesses in its community.
- Links with other schools, particularly through the South Ribble Learning Network, are very beneficial to all partners.

### **Commentary**

32. The school has a very strong partnership with parents. Information for parents is wide ranging and of high quality. The school is in regular contact with the vast majority of parents through reports, newsletters and homework diaries. The school is developing electronic communications between home and school and more regular consultations with parents to involve them in evaluating its work. Recent questionnaires show that parents want more involvement. The school is committed to this because staff value the opportunities to learn from parents to enhance the support provided for their children. Parents have very high levels of confidence in the school. They are very supportive in their day-to-day contact. Almost all parents attend consultations with staff to find out how their child is getting on and the few who do not are offered telephone consultations with heads of year. Written reports are informative and clear and form a very good basis for these consultations. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully and appropriately involved in consultations about their progress.
33. Parents and staff support one another in helping pupils who are experiencing problems, for instance with their attendance, behaviour or learning. The school is very well supported by a small core of parents who work with staff to organise social events and raise funds for extra resources. Several parents give their time and skills to help staff stage mock interviews for pupils as part of their work experience. Special events are extremely well supported by pupils' families. Staff and parents are united in their appreciation of the shared values and aspirations for pupils that form the basis of their partnership. Very few parents raise concerns about the school and those who do cite isolated issues, and are otherwise very satisfied with what is provided.
34. The long-standing partnership that the school enjoys with its main contributory primary schools is one in which staff enjoy open communications, reflecting on what is provided and working together to achieve common aims. Links with partner primary schools are especially beneficial in providing personal and academic support for pupils and their families on transfer to the school and in the sharing of professional, high quality information and skills between staff. The school has been a leading member of the South Ribble Learning Federation for a number of years. The relationships that arise from this engagement with other schools have been very beneficial to them. There has been collaboration about innovative ICT developments and pupils with special educational needs, to expand provision and support professional development. All Hallows has recently become a Leading Edge school and the emerging partnership is already producing some exciting developments, for example in science. Developing links with Preston College are helping to extend the provision for pupils who need an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

35. The school has very good links with different agencies, commercial organisations and businesses in its community. These are used very well to provide opportunities for learning through study visits, involvement in work-related learning and other enrichment activities.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership based on a very clear vision for the school. He is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the leadership team. Governance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher, senior managers and governing body share a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and a common determination to focus on the main priorities for future improvement.
- The excellent climate fosters a culture of innovation amongst staff and allows creative solutions to flourish.
- The highest professional expectations have brought a very strong commitment from staff to the success of the school and its pupils.
- The leadership and management of most middle managers are very good overall and a significant factor in enduring improvements.
- Whilst the emphasis on delegation of responsibilities to faculties is a strength, provision and improvement in some subjects and some cross-curricular elements are inconsistent.
- Leadership of art and design is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

36. Governance of the school is very good. Governors bring a wide range of professional expertise, experience and local knowledge to their work and share a very strong commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school. Consequently, they make a very important contribution to shaping the school's strategic direction and carry out their role to support and challenge the leadership of the school very effectively. They organise their work through an appropriate committee structure, which allows them to consider issues and decisions in fine detail, demonstrating a very good appreciation of the school's values and priorities. However, they are aware that their first-hand knowledge of the school is based on a considerable range of informal contacts rather than systematic involvement with curriculum areas. Nonetheless, their working practices have considerable strength and they play a significant part in school development planning and self-review. They apply the principles of best value very well and ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
37. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has very successfully maintained the school's high academic reputation and its strengths as a compassionate and friendly Catholic school. He has led with great drive the school's involvement in an increasing number of wider partnerships that continue to strengthen the quality of education. The school continues to make very good use of its Technology College status to develop learning using ICT and extend local partnerships with other schools. A very strong culture of achievement has been established which has allowed subject managers and teachers to develop professionally and their creativity to flourish through their leadership and teaching. The headteacher is an excellent role model for staff, leading by example, expecting and garnering the very strong commitment of staff to the success of the school. Other senior managers have complementary skills, and, in particular, the deputy headteacher plays a very significant role in strategic developments. They combine very effectively with the headteacher to sustain the school's high expectations of pupils and staff and have a very rigorous approach to the analysis of school and faculty performance, which ensures that priorities remain on track.

38. The leadership and management by heads of faculty, department and pastoral leaders is very good overall, although with some variation in quality. A significant feature is the very good leadership and management of the three core subjects, which ensure that standards in these crucial areas remain high. Leadership and management in modern foreign languages and history are excellent due to the innovative and pioneering work that is brought about in teaching, learning and assessment. Only in art and design is leadership unsatisfactory, as this subject has not shown the necessary improvement since the last inspection. A very good feature of the school's approach to self-evaluation is the annual review produced by each faculty and department. This is a comprehensive and rigorous document that provides a very good basis to identify priorities and scrutiny of progress. In most subject areas, leaders set a very good example and have clear views about the improvements that are needed. Less well established in some areas is effective monitoring to ensure change occurs. Sometimes this is at a faculty level, for example to bring about improvements in art and design, and sometimes within a department, such as in design and technology, to achieve more consistency in teaching and learning.
39. The co-ordination of whole-school aspects is generally very good but also variable. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well led and managed. The special needs co-ordinator and her team of teaching assistants work together well with subject teachers and are in turn very effectively supported by the headteacher and the school's senior leadership team. The leadership and management of work-related learning and citizenship are very good, ensuring that these new priorities are effectively implemented. However, the monitoring of other cross-curricular elements such as ICT, literacy, numeracy and assessment is less well developed, as there is too much reliance on the response of subjects to these developments. The high expectation that departments should take responsibility is usually well founded, but does lead to some inconsistency of practice and missed opportunity to share the very effective and sometimes outstanding practice that exists. Whilst the school is very successful in challenging its higher attaining pupils to gain high grades in national tests and in GCSE examinations, the identification and monitoring of these pupils to check that they are reaching their potential are not systematic.
40. A considerable strength of the school is the attention given to the recruitment, retention and professional development of all staff. Senior managers and governors analyse staffing needs in detail and set high expectations for appointments. Very good induction arrangements are in place for new staff, including newly qualified teachers, although turnover is very low. Staff feel very well supported and are quickly incorporated into the very effective continuing profession development arrangements which are in place for all. Very good performance management systems are in place, which contribute significantly to school improvement. The school has approached the flexibilities offered by workforce reform very positively and introduced a range of measures ensuring that it complies with new regulations and to provide support to teachers to enable them to focus on their main duties.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,106,362
Total expenditure	3,056,163
Expenditure per pupil	3,366

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	130,078
Balance carried forward to the next	180,907

41. The financial management of the school is very good. Financial planning is linked very well to development planning, and rigorous processes are in place to make decisions at whole-school and faculty and departmental level. The budgeting process is very secure. A strong feature is the detailed attention given to budgeting for strategic objectives and the detailed analysis of the changing financial environment, which shows a very good appreciation of potential future problems. The expertise of the governing body plays an important part in this planning. The

school keeps prudent balances, which are lower than in the above table, as the school holds money for the South Ribble Learning Federation that it leads. Excellent day-to-day monitoring controls are in place. Patterns of expenditure are logical and indicate a similar picture to most other secondary schools. However, the school has only just begun the process of benchmarking its costs against similar schools nationally as well as locally. The school can clearly demonstrate that it applies best-value principles very well to financial tendering, comparing performance and considering alternatives to existing practice. The income of the school is below average and, given its overall effectiveness, the school provides excellent value for money.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision in work related learning (WRL) is **very good**.

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

- Work experience is well planned and monitored to ensure that pupils in Year 10 have good quality experiences.
- Highly effective leadership and management ensure strong teamwork and efficient co-ordination.
- A comprehensive audit has been carried out to inform further planning and development.
- The school's strong learning culture contributes significantly to pupils' very good preparation for the world of work.

#### **Commentary**

42. The school works closely with the local Education Business Partnership to provide pupils in Year 10 with two weeks of well-organised work experience. A good range of local and regional employment sectors is represented, including manufacturing and engineering. All pupils are visited at their placement and, with the help of their mentor, they evaluate what they have learned. Personal review statements are well presented and include perceptive comments on the various roles and responsibilities in the workplace, including health and safety issues. Preparation and follow-up discussions with form tutors are well designed to encourage pupils to reflect on the qualities needed for success in the world of work. This is introduced by an earlier internal work experience project that gives all pupils in Year 8 an opportunity to gain insight into the administrative processes in their own school. Pupils regard this 'job for a day' initiative as a useful experience.
43. The school has built on its existing provision to prepare a carefully planned programme of WRL in accordance with recently introduced national guidance. A variety of departments, including mathematics, business studies and history, have identified curriculum activities that are well linked to business and enterprise operations. In mathematics, for example, a unit on 'Maths in the working world' – in Year 9 – provides a useful connection to careers education in Year 10. Other subjects have been identified to develop further the use of work as a context for learning.
44. The school's enrichment programme involves pupils in a good range of design and enterprise activities. A good example is a cross-curricular project with the Construction Industry Training Board, which combines technology, mathematics, science and geography. This is a 'design and make' project based on the challenge of using a disused warehouse to create a multi-entertainment complex. Working with business advisers, pupils in Year 10 have gained a Young Enterprise Board award for the quality of their presentations. The South Ribble Learning Federation has a partnership with a local manufacturing firm that engages pupils in interesting and challenging design projects.

45. Pupils have very good careers guidance, including individual interviews with the Connexions service. It was not possible to observe the teaching of careers education but the programme of study meets requirements and is well designed to help pupils build a wide range of skills. Pupils evaluate their own work conscientiously. A formal assessment system has not been introduced but teacher and pupil comments in their progress files are useful in helping pupils to recognise their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 9 and 11 say that they are well supported and guided about future careers and aspirations. Mock interviews in Year 11 with ambassadors from local industry are particularly well regarded by the pupils. The annual careers convention provides a further good opportunity for Year 11 pupils to gain first-hand knowledge of local employment.
46. The pupils' excellent attendance record, punctuality and enthusiasm for learning establish a firm foundation on which to base WRL. Very good leadership gives clear direction to further planning. Strong teamwork and efficient management of the various strands ensure good co-ordination. This has led to the effective implementation of this aspect of the curriculum.

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

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

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

#### **English**

Provision in English is **excellent**.

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

- Standards are well above average and very high in English literature, representing very good achievement.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of teaching is very good, with some excellent activities to develop independence of thought.
- A very good system of assessment is currently being developed.
- Pupils do not have equal opportunities to create using ICT.

#### **Commentary**

47. Standards in English are high and pupils' achievement is very good. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results in 2004 were well above average, particularly so at higher levels. Results were also well above average in the GCSE examinations in English and they were very high in English literature. Both boys and girls do very well.
48. Pupils enter the school with standards in English that are above average and they make good progress between Years 7 and 9, reaching well above average levels of attainment. The English department has high expectations that pupils will move on two levels from their attainment at the end of Year 6. Higher attaining pupils are successful in reaching this goal, and others move on at least one level. By the end of Year 9, pupils gaining the highest levels are very accomplished writers, adapt style to purpose and use a range of punctuation skilfully, including semi-colons. Some lower attaining pupils still write over-long sentences, but are making good progress with paragraphing. In Years 10 and 11, the rate of improvement quickens still further, and pupils at all levels of attainment make very good progress and reach high standards. They develop very good understanding in their reading and are able to discuss, for example, symbolism in pre-twentieth century poetry and in poems from other cultures. They construct an argument very well in writing, using supporting evidence. The higher attainers write with flair and describe their feelings powerfully in personal writing. Sometimes their coursework is over-long.
49. Many pupils arrive in school able to speak confidently, giving articulate, extended answers. However, some only give brief utterances. The department creates very good opportunities to develop speaking and listening and, as with other aspects of English, improvement is very good. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs develop their skills systematically and make very good progress. Overall, achievement in English is very good.
50. This impressive achievement comes about through very good teaching. Staff have excellent knowledge of test and examination requirements and prepare pupils very thoroughly. Nevertheless, teachers are also concerned to develop pupils' independence of thought, and use very good questioning to elicit pupils' own opinions. Some excellent activities are set up which enable pupils to make their own individual interpretations. The quality of learning is very good because pupils are highly motivated and respond very positively to the knowledgeable, committed and challenging teaching, which they receive.

51. The department makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff are, without exception, excellent role models. They set up very good opportunities for pupils to collaborate, and ensure that pupils pay attention to each other's contributions. Teachers choose literary texts, which raise moral problems, and these are discussed to a good depth. They bring issues of social and political importance to pupils' attention. Staff convey their own love of reading and of theatre, and work hard to inspire this in their classes.

An excellent lesson was observed which challenged a high-attaining Year 10 class studying *Hamlet*. The teacher used video so that pupils could compare two contrasting versions of Hamlet speaking the soliloquy 'To be or not to be'. This resulted in lively discussion. Then pupils annotated the speech themselves as the director of the play, to show how they would want it performed. This generated a wide range of original ideas, giving precise stage directions. Pupils suggested a variety of specific actions, and inflections in the actor's voice, to back up their interpretations. They showed they were able not just to understand the speech, but to appreciate the different ways in which it could be delivered to emphasise Hamlet's feelings. Everyone was engaged and the class produced high quality response worthy of A-level students.

52. Leadership of the department is excellent. All staff have a shared vision, with high aspirations for all pupils. This is a reflective department, which is working constantly to improve its practice. Management is very good. The tracking of pupils' progress is extremely thorough. A very good system of assessment is being developed which will ensure that all pupils know what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Links with primary schools are very good and a transition unit of work is in place, which has been devised together with Year 6 teachers.
53. The English department received a good report in the last inspection, but there have been further improvements since then. The GCSE examination results in English have improved and the results in English literature are still very high, yet this is with a much higher entry than was reported last time. Pupils now make very good progress in English during their time at All Hallows. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now receive their entitlement in drama, which is included in the scheme of work. However, although some classes have the opportunity to use ICT creatively, limited access to equipment means that all pupils do not have equal opportunities to create work using ICT. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

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

54. Pupils' skills in language and literacy are well above average and make a very good contribution to pupils' achievements in other subjects. Many pupils are confident and articulate when they enter the school, although a few tend to give brief answers and do not speak audibly. All pupils develop their skills well through opportunities for speaking and listening that are set up in different subjects, for example group discussions and individual presentations in history and geography. The structures of written forms required in each subject are carefully taught, for example in science. All departments pay attention to the teaching of terminology specific to their subject, so in mathematics, classes discuss the roots and derivations of mathematical terms. Pupils who find reading difficult are able to participate in a successful 'reading partners' scheme with older pupils. There is no overall co-ordination of literacy across the curriculum, but good strategies were observed in operation.



## Modern foreign languages

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Assessment of pupils' work and the tracking of their progress are excellent and are major factors in raising standards.
- The department's focus on increasing pupils' motivation and maintaining very high expectations has created a very positive climate for learning.

### Commentary

55. Results in the GCSE examinations in French in 2004 were well above average and were an improvement on the previous year. In German, taken only by higher attaining pupils, results were very high and were higher than the previous year. Standards in both languages have risen over the last ten years. By the end of Year 9 in 2004, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels was much higher than the national average.
56. Standards are well above average for both boys and girls in both languages throughout the school and represent very good achievement for pupils of all capabilities. From Year 8 onwards, pupils produce sophisticated extended writing, using complex sentences in a range of tenses. Work is accurate, and use of grammar demonstrates a very good level of understanding. By Year 11, much work is of the highest standard. Older pupils are confident speakers, especially in response to prepared questions, or when giving memorised presentations. Pronunciation is authentic as a result of the teachers' insistence on correct pronunciation. Younger pupils successfully elaborate on their responses, using connectives to enhance the quality of their language. They have an impressively wide vocabulary, which is memorised well, due to a very good emphasis on homework. Prepared work is of a much higher standard than their skills in speaking the language spontaneously. Reading and listening skills, whilst still well above average, are not quite as well developed. Pupils respond with understanding to classroom instructions and, by the end of Year 11 understand complex written texts and lengthy passages of spoken language.
57. Teaching and learning are very good and assessment is excellent. Very high expectations are evident in the very good planning of lessons that are well matched to the needs of all pupils. Lessons present a high level of challenge and are taught with verve, pace and energy. A wide range of learning styles is used, including very good opportunities for independent learning. Teachers consciously use a wide range of strategies to motivate and encourage pupils, especially boys. Pupils are made aware of National Curriculum and GCSE criteria, and are taught how to use them to improve the quality of their work. Pupils become mature, serious learners who are ambitious to succeed, work very hard and make rapid progress.
58. Leadership and management are excellent. The department works as a highly effective and reflective team, incorporating the outcomes of their own extensive professional learning in a very well organised work programme. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development due to the wide range of learning opportunities provided. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as the quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen, particularly in Years 7 to 9, where the teaching programme is demanding.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make increasingly rapid progress from entry in Year 7 so that by Year 11 standards are high and achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and present their work very well; they know their targets and what they need to do to improve.
- The mathematics department is very well led.
- There is no planned progression of opportunities to use and apply mathematics in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

59. In 2004, the national test results in Year 9 were well above average. These results represented satisfactory achievement overall and very good achievement for lower attaining pupils compared to attainment on entry. Current standards are also well above average but achievement is better as results in tests on entry in Year 7 were lower than those of the previous year group. Pupils present their written work very well. It is neat and methods of solution are fully presented. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is good overall and particularly good amongst average and lower attaining pupils.
60. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was well above average and the proportion gaining higher grades was almost double the national rate. These results represented good achievement compared to results in national tests in Year 9. This standard of work has been maintained, and taking account of this group of pupils' lower starting points, achievement by Year 11 is now very good, particularly for the large proportion of higher attaining pupils.
61. Achievement is improving by Year 9 and by Year 11 because of the consistently very good quality of teaching that pupils receive and to their very good attitudes to learning. Both boys and girls do very well. A significant factor leading to this achievement is the way in which teachers create a climate for learning in the classroom, which encourages pupils to contribute and feel at ease when seeking clarification. Teachers value pupils' responses and thinking. Consequently, pupils are confident to extend their learning by trying to solve problems in front of the class without prior demonstration of examples by the teacher. Pupils openly share incorrect answers when seeking to know where they went wrong. Teachers handle these situations very sensitively. They acknowledge the incorrect thinking, and then often invite other pupils to improve on the answer given. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively included in lessons and teachers challenge the highest attainers very strongly.
62. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan effective lessons in which they engage pupils very well. Teachers and pupils each use mathematical language very well. The very good quality of pupils' written work is a result of the equally good modelling of solutions by teachers. Teachers' questioning is very good and they seek to involve all pupils. They use ICT well to enhance teaching and learning and use praise to motivate and encourage pupils. In response to the very good quality of teaching, pupils work with very high levels of concentration and are productive.
63. The tracking of pupils' progress is very effective and enables useful analyses of achievement. Pupils are not only aware of their target levels or grades and of their rate of recent progress, but also know what they need to do to improve. One higher attaining group in Year 11 is involved in trialling a formal self-assessment system at the end of modules, leading to the

identification of specific curricular targets. The introduction of self-assessment techniques into some lessons allows teachers to be confident that the pupils are ready to move on.

64. The department is led very well, with clear vision and high aspirations, which are focused on raising pupils' achievement. There is a very good team spirit in the department with some collaborative planning. The monitoring and analysis of performance data is very good and leads to actions such as the move to a modular GCSE course and the re-writing of the scheme of work for Years 7, 8 and 9. This task is not yet complete as there is no planned progression of using and applying mathematics to support pupils as they prepare for coursework in Years 10 or 11. Management of mathematics is good and improving. The head of department has prioritised workloads to develop schemes of work and tracking systems to raise achievement. However, some of the other departmental documentation has not been updated to reflect current practice and to guide the newer members of staff. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and all the previous issues have been dealt with effectively. Standards continue to be well above average and achievement has improved.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

65. Pupils' competence in mathematics is very good and effectively supports their progress in other subjects. Pupils use mathematical skills in other subjects, such as when they make, record, present and analyse measurements relating to limestone pavements in geography or when making estimates relating to three-dimensional products in design and technology. The co-ordinator for numeracy across the curriculum is committed to raising the profile of numeracy across the school and provides good leadership and guidance, but monitoring arrangements are not yet in place.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high and pupils' achievement is very good by Year 11.
- Teaching is very well focused on the requirements of national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The climate for learning is excellent and teachers' expectations are high.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The teaching styles adopted limit pupils' opportunities for independence, creativity and debate.
- Assessment and marking provide too little feedback to pupils on how to improve their work.

### **Commentary**

66. Standards at the end of Year 9 in national tests are well above average and have been for the past few years. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with above average attainment, and due to good teaching build very well on this previous learning so their overall achievement is good.
67. Standards in the GCSE examination are also high compared to the national average, with a very high proportion of pupils, especially girls, gaining the highest grades. Almost all pupils gain a double award in science and, overall, pupils do very well in science compared with the other subjects that they take. Pupils make rapid progress from entry onto the course in Year 10. Results have improved over the past few years and are expected to remain high.
68. Standards of work are high and achievement is very good by Year 11 amongst all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. The majority of pupils have good recall of previous lessons and give fluent descriptions of it. Higher attaining pupils readily apply their understanding to new contexts, such as a top set Year 10 applying the concept of reactivity to the behaviour of metals, and confidently use abstract models, such as the arrangement of

electrons in atoms. Lower attaining pupils are able to describe the work they are involved in and use scientific terminology correctly but have more difficulty in applying abstract ideas, such as acidity and alkalinity. Almost all the work in pupils' books is of a high standard, demonstrating good understanding and considerable care with the completion and presentation of work. The majority of pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills and are able to write extended descriptions and explanations. The majority are also confident with simple calculations, chemical equations and the construction of block and line graphs.

69. Teaching overall is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and the requirements of national tests and examinations. They use this knowledge well in planning and preparing lessons. Explanations and instructions are nearly always clear with the main learning points emphasised. Pupils develop their understanding through well-focused practical activities, such as the construction of electrical circuits or the testing of household chemicals for acidity/alkalinity. In some of the laboratories, the use of interactive whiteboards benefits both teachers and pupils in sharing their thinking with the rest of the class. In the best lessons, there is good pace and a variety of activities, and pupils are really challenged to think for themselves. However, in many lessons, the teacher does most of the talking, which limits pupils' independence and creativity. School test results are used very well to monitor pupils' progress but marking and feedback for improvement are not used well enough to be helpful to pupils.
70. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a strong focus on standards, which has set the agenda for the recent rise in GCSE examination results. There is a very good climate for learning and an exciting programme of extra-curricular activities emphasises the value of science. The department works well as a team, with staff sharing resources and good practice. However, other than performance management, the monitoring of teaching is not systematic. The outcomes of professional development in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is apparent in a few lessons, but the provision of greater challenge and independence for pupils is not clearly evident in the vision for the department. Financial and development planning are good. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. More pupils gain the highest grades in GCSE examinations and most laboratories have been refurbished.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in the GCSE course in ICT are above expected levels and achievement is good.
- Pupils have insufficient time in specific ICT lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 to extend their skills and understanding of the subject to above average levels.
- Teaching and learning are good, based on pupils' very good attitudes and levels of interest.
- Insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels for assessment purposes.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the ICT experiences of those pupils who do not take an accredited ICT course in Years 10 and 11.

### **Commentary**

71. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results were above average, as over half of pupils gained grades A\*-C in double award ICT. There was particularly good achievement by these pupils as their results were higher than predicted.
72. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national levels and similar to teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory by Year 9, with boys and girls doing equally well. In some respects, standards are above average. For example, pupils make

very effective use of desktop publishing to produce various types of posters and brochures. Slide-show presentations are well presented as pupils make good use of font, colour, clip art and images. They show good understanding in using features such as screen transitions and flying text. However, standards using more technical software such as spreadsheets and databases are below the expected levels for their age. Pupils have some understanding of applying simple formulae in spreadsheets, but lack in-depth knowledge of the use of more complex formulae, and of the use of spreadsheets to make predictions.

73. Standards in the GCSE classes in Years 10 and 11 are above nationally expected levels. Boys and girls of all capabilities make good progress in these courses as they develop higher-level skills. Desktop publishing is used well as pupils produce sophisticated brochures, letterheads and business cards for their projects. Pupils show a good understanding of spreadsheets, and use more complex formula, use 'if' statements, and know how to validate data.
74. Achievement is no better than satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 because the lack of time in specific ICT lessons limits the pupils' depth of knowledge, understanding and skill development. Learning and progress are restricted as the short units of work, and the organisation of one unit per year, prevent pupils reaching their full potential. In GCSE classes in Years 10 and 11, however, achievement is good, as pupils make more rapid progress. They learn higher order skills and apply these well to complete coursework projects of an above average standard.
75. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject, and give pupils good explanations about the use of software, leading to pupils making good progress in lessons. Lessons are well planned and the work matches pupils' capabilities, so that all groups of pupils learn well. Pupils have very good attitudes in lessons, and their work rates contribute to the good progress they make. Although marking is conscientious, National Curriculum levels are not used in teaching and assessment in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils do not fully understand how well they are doing and how to improve.
76. There is good leadership of the subject with a clear focus on improving standards. Management is satisfactory. The amount of curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 is half the national average and constrains pupils' achievement. The GCSE course in ICT, which has been introduced since the last inspection, has been a success and pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining above average standards. Although there is good awareness of the value of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum, and it is often used well, there is insufficient monitoring of the experiences of pupils who do not take the GCSE ICT course. Taking account of the increased opportunities for independent learning provided by the development of the school's Extranet, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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

77. Pupils' competence in ICT is satisfactory overall, soundly supporting their learning in other subjects. All subject areas have the use of ICT to support learning planned into their schemes of work and, overall, it is used satisfactorily as a teaching tool. In design and technology, its use is very good. The department has a very good range of software, which allows pupils to view electronic components, and both design and create artefacts using computer technology. There is good use of ICT for teaching and learning in mathematics and history. Pupils' use of computers in other subjects is generally satisfactory. However, in several subjects, such as in English and music, limited access to computers restricts pupils' opportunity to apply the skills they have acquired in ICT lessons. The rapid development of the Extranet is having a positive impact on the use of ICT for learning independently in a growing number of subjects. There has been good progress since the last inspection in the provision of cross-curricular ICT.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- The GCSE examination results are rising after a period of decline.
- Very good leadership and management have brought significant improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes are a major factor in their achievement.
- There are not enough opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.

#### Commentary

78. Results in the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average, and are matched by the standards seen in the present Year 9. This represents very good achievement, given that pupils enter Year 7 with broadly average geographical skills and knowledge. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above average in 2004, a significant improvement on those of the previous two years. Boys and girls performed very well in relation to targets based on their earlier attainment. Results already gained in coursework and the decision-making exercise show that pupils in the present Year 11 are achieving very well in maintaining similar standards.
79. Standards are high because pupils of all levels of attainment are able to describe and explain geographical features and processes using a good range of presentational techniques. The majority analyse and select information from a variety of sources to reach and justify conclusions and decisions. Above average standards of literacy enable pupils to write and talk fluently about geographical issues. They make very good use of the frequent opportunities for learning independently and demonstrate good research and ICT skills, particularly evident in the high standard of GCSE coursework.
80. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers set very high expectations for both work and behaviour. Pupils of all capabilities learn well because they progress towards clear learning targets and build on their prior knowledge through a series of tasks of increasing challenge. Most lessons have very good pace and momentum, with pupils constantly engaged in varied and stimulating activities. Teachers know pupils well and support them with good individual attention and materials matched to their capabilities. The interactive whiteboard is used to very good effect in providing a powerful visual focus to enhance and support learning and ICT is used imaginatively. The Extranet provides access to an increasing range of resources and support materials. Assessment practice is very good. The marking of pupils' work gives very good guidance on the standards attained and on how to improve, although in Years 7 to 9 pupils are not always aware of their target levels. Pupils' enthusiasm, enjoyment, hard work and very good behaviour are significant factors in their achievement.
81. Leadership and management are very good. Despite the high standards attained, there is a clear determination to improve further, with no sense of complacency. Strategies driven by the school development plan and by the rigorous analysis of performance data are translated into detailed programmes for action, which have been very effective in improving teaching and curriculum. Self-evaluation is continuous and thorough, although a lack of clear success criteria means that the impact of actions and strategies is not always easy to assess. A very strong element of teamwork is apparent in the sharing of responsibilities, ideas and good practice. Teaching is monitored effectively through lesson observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Assessment procedures produce accurate information. Systems for target setting

and for tracking and monitoring progress are well established, and very effective in identifying both underachieving and high performing pupils.

82. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. Standards are higher and pupils achieve very well. Teaching has improved significantly and is monitored very effectively. Weaknesses in assessment and the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 have been dealt with, although there are still too few opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning through fieldwork away from the school.

## History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of stimulating and challenging teaching, and reach well above average standards.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure a continuous process of improvement.
- ICT is used very effectively to stimulate and extend learning.
- The department makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes are a major contributor to their achievement.

### Commentary

83. In 2004, standards judged by teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 were well above average, maintaining the department's previous record. The GCSE examination results in the same year were average, a significant decline from the previous year. This is attributable to difficulties with the deployment of staff, the lack of additional in-class support and unfavourable timetabling.
84. In Year 7 to 9, pupils of all abilities achieve very well, given that they enter the school with below average historical skills, particularly those of source analysis and understanding of causation. They build very well on their existing satisfactory knowledge of historical events and personalities and begin to understand the importance of evidence. Pupils at all levels select information from a range of visual and written sources and most offer convincing explanations of the causes and consequences of events and changes. By Year 9, standards are well above expectations and provide a firm foundation for studying a GCSE course in history.
85. In Years 10 and 11, all groups of pupils achieve very well in applying these skills to the more complex demands of the GCSE course. They develop the ability to make inferences and use prior knowledge when analysing evidence. Higher attaining pupils make some critical evaluations of the usefulness and reliability of sources. The majority write fluently and at length in constructing historical arguments. Standards in Year 11 are well above average, with a significant number of pupils on course to attain the highest GCSE grades, and reflect the success of strategies put in place following a review of the results in 2004.
86. Teaching is very good because teachers have very high expectations and set clear targets linked to both previous and future work to ensure very good progression in learning. Both boys and girls learn very well because tasks of increasing challenge enable them to acquire knowledge incrementally and are structured to the demands of test and examination questions. Materials are well matched to pupils' capabilities and the lower attainers are well supported by teachers and learning assistants. Higher attaining pupils are consistently challenged to do their best. In Years 10 and 11, there is a clear focus on examination technique through the use of mark schemes and the development of a persuasive style of historical writing. Teachers are very skilled in utilising the potential of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. Pupils have access to an increasing range of Extranet resources and

support materials to assist independent study. Marking gives very good guidance on the standards reached and what pupils need to do to improve. There are many opportunities for pupils to review and evaluate their own performance. Pupils' hard work, very good behaviour and enjoyment of history are significant factors in their achievement.

87. Leadership and management are outstanding. The department's pioneering developments in assessment, the use of ICT and provision for citizenship are acknowledged both within and beyond the school. Planning has a clear focus on raising standards still further through improvements in teaching and curriculum. A very strong ethos of teamwork ensures the sharing of ideas and collaborative development of the curriculum, with continuous review of work schemes and assessment. Procedures for target setting and for tracking and monitoring pupil progress are very well developed. Teaching is closely and regularly monitored through lesson observation and work sampling. The detailed analysis of performance data identifies areas for development and informs action planning.
88. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards are higher, pupils achieve very well and there have been further improvements in teaching and in leadership and management. The department makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. A range of enrichment activities has been developed through visits to theatres, museums and sites of historic interest. There is a History Club and sessions for critical thinking and revision for GCSE examinations. Particularly impressive is the involvement of pupils in developing a bridging course for use in primary schools and in planning a programme for the Quarry Bank Mill visit.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Standards in Year 11 in textiles technology, electronic products and graphic products are well above national averages, representing very good achievement.
- The use of ICT is very well established in pupils' learning.
- Very good leadership has established a highly effective work ethic and ethos for learning, supported by teachers who provide very professional role models.
- The system of curriculum organisation in Years 7 to 9 restricts progression in learning.

#### **Commentary**

89. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and similar to the results in recent GCSE examinations. Pupils achieve very well overall by Year 11. In textiles technology, electronic products and graphics products, standards are well above average; they are above average in resistant materials and satisfactory in food technology. In textiles particularly, thinking about design permeates throughout pupils' portfolios. Pupils' files are very creative and contain a coherent 'story' of a design experience. They use an extensive array of graphical techniques and sketches, including ICT, to develop ideas and to enhance their presentation and layout. Conversely, in food technology, pupils spend their time on too many activities, resulting in low levels of presentation and layout, sometimes using outdated information and terminology such as 'disassembly'. As a result, their achievement is only satisfactory.
90. Standards by Year 9 are in line with the outcomes of the teachers' assessments in 2004, which were above average. The achievement of all groups of pupils is good, particularly when they are learning to make items. The scheme of work provides an interesting range of projects across the different materials. Pupils enjoy these projects and obtain very successful practical outcomes. However, the curriculum arrangements mean that pupils experience design and



technology by covering the five material areas (including ICT) in a rotating pattern. This carousel arrangement leads to a focus on the completion of tasks in separate units of work in each area and insufficient emphasis on learning progressively from Years 7 to 9.

91. Teaching is good overall, more consistently so in Years 10 and 11, but ranges from satisfactory in food technology to excellent in electronic products. In the very best lessons, teachers plan and prepare very well, matching the knowledge and skills to be covered in the lesson precisely to the capability of pupils, enabling them to progress very rapidly in the time available. A very good variety of teaching strategies is used and the very positive relationships with pupils promote an excellent work ethic and ethos for learning throughout the department. Consequently, pupils' enjoyment of learning keeps them on task throughout lessons. In electronics products and textiles technology, ICT is integrated very well into teaching and well in most other areas. Sometimes, in the few lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, teaching is too directive and pupils undertake low-level activities such as copying out. Pupils are not consistently provided with sufficient information about their progress during project work.
92. Leadership of the department is very good. An excellent work ethic has been promoted, which is supported by professional and committed teachers who provide excellent role models. Strategic planning is very good and clear schemes of work are in place, providing a corporate approach to the teaching of the subject. Management is good; staff are well deployed in the specialist areas. However, opportunities to share good practice and to standardise the National Curriculum levels between the different material areas are not systematic. The department lacks a full-time technician to help maintain a busy, leading-edge department, and to keep up routine maintenance and health and safety consciousness. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. However, although the accommodation for food technology is better, the work surfaces do not comply with the recommended code of good practice.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are improving in Years 10 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory as the result of a revised curriculum and system of assessment.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average and many pupils do not do as well as they should because of weaknesses in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment.
- Good teamwork is bringing about greater consistency, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Some of the teaching is too prescriptive and does not encourage independence or creative development.

#### **Commentary**

93. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average overall. Teachers' assessments from 2004 show that attainment is below national expectations, and few pupils gain the higher levels. This is because there are few opportunities for them to develop their own ideas, to work with independence, or to express and justify their opinions about art and design. Progress in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent because the curriculum is not planned to ensure that pupils learn progressively, and many do not do as well as they should. However, by Year 9, standards in observational drawing are average. Pupils are aware of the proportions of body and head and there are examples of larger-scale accurate and well-observed drawings from life. There is some high attainment from the most capable, where good quality research for homework has informed confident large-scale designs for African masks. However, most sketchbooks show

limited quantity and quality of work and there is too much use of dry media, such as pencils and crayons, so that pupils' attainment in painting is below average.

94. In 2004, the GCSE examination results were above average, as was the number of pupils entered for the examination. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are in line with expectations, partly due to pupils entering the course with lower overall standards, and their achievement is satisfactory. However, there are encouraging signs of improvement, especially in the sketchbook research and development of ideas, which is a strength. Pupils are able to experiment with an appropriate range of media, including three-dimensional work. Pupils use graphic media and collage effectively and there is some annotation and evaluation, although this is not often in sufficient depth from the most capable. Painting and sculpture are often ambitious and large scale, but skills in using colour and three-dimensional media are unrefined and so much achievement is satisfactory. Pupils study too many projects to have sufficient time to refine and modify their work to reach a higher standard.
95. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and there are some examples of good teaching, where pupils respond well to carefully planned design briefs. However, some gaps in teachers' subject knowledge and an over-prescriptive approach result in slow progress for some groups. Conversely, the pace in other lessons is often too brisk to allow pupils time to develop ideas and improve their skills. The time allocated for art and design in Years 7 to 9 is well below average as it varies across the year along with the allocation for music, but teachers do not take account of this well enough in their planning. National Curriculum assessment objectives are not made clear or shared with pupils and opportunities for independent work are very limited. This results in underachievement for many pupils.
96. The management of the department is satisfactory. Resources are managed effectively and teamwork is good. The curriculum and assessment for the GCSE course have been revised and are now satisfactory and resulting in improving standards. There are some deficiencies in the accommodation and there is some noise intrusion into the open-plan area. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory as improvement since the last inspection has not been good enough to resolve the issues regarding curriculum provision, although pupils' progress is better in Years 10 and 11.

## **MUSIC**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Extra-curricular instrumental provision is excellent.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Leadership and management are good; recent changes are promoting improved learning.
- The organisation of the curriculum and lack of enough time in Years 7 to 9 inhibit progression in learning.
- There are weaknesses in accommodation and the availability of ICT resources.

### **Commentary**

97. Standards in Year 11 are above the national average, reflecting the results in GCSE examinations in recent years. The system of setting the GCSE groups into upper and lower bands is successful and the performance standards of both groups are above average. Achievement is good. Standards of composition overall are satisfactory, with some examples of above average work. The relatively new ICT provision, although limited in quantity, has improved the quality of composition. However, pupils are less responsive when describing their compositions.

98. Standards in Year 9 are line with national expectations, and similar to recent teacher assessments in 2004, with examples of above average work in composition. Achievement is satisfactory. There are a number of pupils who have instrumental lessons and their performance skills are often utilised in lessons. However, the keyboard skills of the majority are not as advanced as they should be by Year 9. There are several reasons for pupils' achievement being no more than satisfactory: there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching with lower ability groups; the new scheme of work has not yet established the progression of core skills across Years 7 to 9; and assessment and monitoring procedures have only recently been introduced. The timetable arrangement with art and design, which provides a rotating allocation of time throughout the year, inhibits the progression of learning.
99. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Teachers are well-qualified and very competent musicians. They use their piano skills very effectively in demonstrating, supporting group work and accompanying. They have good skills in classroom management, particularly in one room where space is very limited and instruments have to be continually moved. Lessons are well planned and structured and help pupils acquire subject specific skills and knowledge effectively. There is some weaker teaching with lower attaining groups in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' attitudes are generally very good, however, and most are keen to learn. Teachers involve all pupils very well in lessons and there are examples of gifted and talented young musicians in all groups who respond very well to the opportunities provided. The extra-curricular instrumental curriculum provided by the 'Music School' is excellent. A quarter of the pupils receive lessons on a wide range of instruments, although provision of bass instruments such as double bass, cello, tuba and bassoon is limited. There is a very healthy ensemble programme and the Music School supports a junior department for pupils from primary schools.
100. Management and leadership are good overall. Two teachers work well as a team, discharging joint leadership roles, with one teacher having responsibility for the Music School whilst the other co-ordinates the school curriculum. Management is effective because it is shared. Excellent management ensures that the Music School runs smoothly, and adds a strong community dimension to the work of the department. Music in assembly is good, with enthusiastic and tuneful singing. The present curriculum co-ordinator was appointed in September 2004. Since that time, she has made an impressive impact through a series of new and long overdue initiatives: a new scheme of work and supporting policy documentation; new assessment and monitoring procedures; and a new emphasis on analysing data. However, assessments do not focus specifically on skills to enable pupils to understand fully how to improve.
101. The school has an excellent theatre/concert hall, but there are deficiencies in classroom accommodation. Rooms are small and there is little storage space; ICT resources are limited with only a small number of computers available. Other resources are adequate. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. High instrumental standards and good GCSE examination results have been maintained, but the organisation of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 remains a weakness. The primary liaison programme is very good and the revision of procedures and documentation is a welcome addition to the measures needed to improve attainment and achievement.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is very good as the direct result of high quality teaching and learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent.
- The department is very well led and managed.

- High levels of participation in after-school sport contribute towards the high standards attained in lessons.
- There are some weaknesses in assessment and target setting.
- The all-weather pitch and netball courts are poor playing surfaces, and the playing fields are frequently waterlogged, restricting the development of skills in team games.

## Commentary

102. Standards in Year 9 are well above the level expected nationally. Pupils in Year 7 have a wide range of handling and decision-making skills in netball and football, although their gymnastic skills are under-developed. They have a very good understanding of games play, organise themselves in attack and defence and explain the most effective ways of scoring. Girls are particularly good at selecting and applying skills developed in netball to basketball, which they play to a high standard. In a few activities, such as boys' rugby in Year 9, standards are below average as insufficient time is spent acquiring and developing basic handling skills. However, time to practise and good advice on how to improve performance in most other sports ensure that all pupils make rapid progress and achieve very well overall by the end of Year 9.
103. Standards in Year 11 are well above national expectations and pupils' achievement is very good. For example, in netball, girls in Year 10 work hard to find space and link passes together; shooting for goal is accurate and consistent. They listen to advice and apply new knowledge to improve their performance. Pupils' fitness is good; they work hard for sustained periods of time. The many pupils who play competitive sport after school, support other pupils in lessons by sharing their knowledge and leading by example in team games. In outdoor lessons, the quality of skills in ball games, especially in football and hockey, is restricted due to the poor quality of the outdoor playing surfaces. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were high and have been sustained at similar levels for five years. Standards are high partly because very good teaching in practical lessons helps most pupils to achieve very good scores for their performance in their selected sports before sitting the final written examination. This record of success has made the GCSE course increasingly popular. However, the use of ICT, such as video analysis software, is not fully exploited to enhance learning and raise standards further.
104. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have high expectations, resulting in the excellent standard of kit pupils wear. Lessons are well planned, and have vigorous warm-ups, demonstrations and high rates of activity. Enthusiastic teachers use their effective class management skills and good subject knowledge to set tasks that give pupils time to practise and refine their skills. They offer very good quality feedback on how to improve further, rewarding hard effort and encouraging all pupils, including the less capable, to do their very best. Pupils are encouraged to perform different roles, including those of referee, coach and leader. They support each other and organise themselves in teams to play to their strengths. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and there are very few non-participants in lessons.
105. Whilst pupils with special educational needs are included in all lessons, the same activities are set for all learners including those who typically cope easily with the tasks. Pupils are not given a choice of different equipment to use and are rarely challenged to plan their own work, review their learning or evaluate the quality of each other's work. Assessment of their performance does not inform pupils of what level they are working at in each activity and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils are not set meaningful targets to improve their performance in specific sports.
106. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils enjoy physical education and always display very positive attitudes in lessons. They co-operate very well with staff, and work very well in pairs and small groups. Achievement in inter-school and district sports competitions is very high. Significantly high numbers of boys and girls are involved in sport on a regular basis after school.

107. The department is very well led and managed. The experienced subject leader maximises the strengths of specialist staff and the facilities at his disposal. The school has achieved the Sportsmark and FA Chartermark awards, reflecting the good progress made since the last inspection. All teachers are committed to providing an extensive programme of after-school sport. Good indoor facilities are used well to teach a broad curriculum. However, there is an emphasis on some games and the time allocated to gymnastics and dance is low, leading to some imbalance in the curriculum. The current curriculum time in Years 10 to 11 does not meet the expected target of two hours per week for participation recommended in the PESSCL National Strategy. The all-weather pitch and netball courts are poor playing surfaces and the playing fields are frequently waterlogged, adversely affecting team games. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with the successful implementation of the GCSE course.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high and pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and participate in lessons very well.
- Teachers provide a very good range of interesting activities in lessons.
- There are insufficient links with the world of business embedded in the schemes of work.

### **Commentary**

108. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and consistent with the similarly high results in recent GCSE examinations. Both boys and girls achieve very well from entry to the course in Year 10. Neither of the teachers is a business education specialist, although their business experience is extensive, and these standards are a reflection of their very good organisation of learning and the self-motivation of the pupils. The pupils have a very positive approach to learning and participate extremely well in classroom activities.

109. Standards of work are well above average and in some cases very high due to the challenging expectations of teachers. Pupils relate new learning to prior knowledge very well to develop their analytical and evaluative skills. The capacity of the highest attainers to apply a range of business studies concepts and ideas to their work is very impressive. The quality of work done independently out of lessons is also very good, ranging from good to excellent. The project work done in Year 11 shows a very good range of research skills. The work is appropriately assessed using the assessment objectives laid down in the examination board's marking criteria. There is good feedback in terms of assessment levels, marks and comments, that allows pupils to develop the correct skills.

110. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are expertly planned to ensure that the objectives are achieved through a very good range of appropriate activities. This enhances the learning of the pupils, allowing them to expand on and gain a greater level of understanding. Where relevant, pupils are able to make very good use of the Internet to advance their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are included in all aspects of the work and are very well supported by both teachers and fellow pupils to ensure that they make good progress. This is particularly evident in the high quality of marking and assessment of work, which gives pupils very clear direction on how to improve.

111. Leadership and management are very good, based on very good teamwork and the consistent use of procedures. However, there are insufficient links with the world of business embedded in the schemes of work. The subject is integrated well within the technology department and benefits from this arrangement. There is a clear process of performance management whilst the monitoring of pupils is done on a regular basis to give them effective support and

encouragement. The department has a good record of improvement in the period since the last inspection.

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

112. The focus for the inspection was citizenship. Personal, social and health education is provided through a well-organised programme of study for each year group. A broad range of topics is covered relevant to the pupils' current and future needs. Sex and relationships, health and drugs education are considered within the school's Catholic values and are supported by appropriate community services. The careers and guidance elements meet pupils' entitlement and progressively develop their skills for the world of work. Teaching was mainly good in the lessons sampled, and sometimes very good. In Year 7, for example, pupils generated thoughtful views on the qualities they expect from a friend. In Year 9, pupils engaged in lively discussion in a follow-up session to their Drugs Awareness day. They listened carefully to each other and were confident that their views are respected. Pupils work hard, their behaviour is excellent and they make good progress. Pupils both enjoy and respect the work they do. Self-assessment is used well to help pupils to reflect on how well they are doing, and both teachers' and pupils' comments inform reports to parents.
113. Good arrangements are in place to monitor provision. Strong leadership and highly effective management ensure that form tutors feel confident to teach the scheme of work. This has a significant impact on the consistency and very good quality of the provision. Personal, social and health education is central to pupils' overall personal development and makes a major contribution to the school's ethos and standards.

### **Citizenship**

Provision for citizenship is **good**.

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

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- A well-structured programme for citizenship has been effectively implemented in accordance with national guidance.
- Teaching overall is good and lessons are informative.
- Leadership and management are very good and ensure support and guidance where they are most needed.
- Excellent use is made of ICT to support effective self-evaluation by pupils.

### **Commentary**

114. Standards in Year 9 are at the level expected for this age. Work in pupils' progress files shows a clear knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. Assessed work in Year 9 on civil rights indicates that pupils have an appropriate awareness of the impact of protest in the struggle for human rights. Teachers' comments show that pupils are able to use information well in reports and presentations. Achievement is good as pupils began studying this course with limited prior knowledge.
115. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Pupils talk knowledgeably about a range of issues including the law, government and electoral systems. They enjoy their work in citizenship and the opportunities that arise in lessons to discuss topical issues such as fair trade and the influence of the media. Pupils gave confident responses in the lessons sampled in Years 10 and 11, based on the use of a good range of information. They express an informed view and are becoming adept at posing questions and participating in debate. Overall, their achievement is good.

116. Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 have a good structure and are paced well to make very good use of the relatively short lesson time. Varied and interesting activities lead to good opportunities for pupils to think about issues and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding. Very good support by the co-ordinator ensures that form tutors are well prepared and informed. This leads to a consistent approach that contributes effectively to the good provision in citizenship. Pupils listen attentively and are keen to participate. In a lesson in Year 10 on children's rights, for example, pupils were able to extend their learning from material and survival needs to generating ideas for home, school and community. They required only limited prompts from their teacher and enjoyed a very positive experience. In Year 11, pupils used good summarising skills to explore the use of shock tactics as a preventative measure in drug abuse.
117. The programme for citizenship is well organised and includes very good opportunities for all students to engage in activities related to citizenship in action. These often include working with representatives from the local community. Notable examples include a waste paper recycling initiative and the consideration of town planning during a citizenship events day in Year 8. The school council is a particularly active body that includes all pupils in having a say in shaping their community. The challenge to design a website for healthy eating has brought a very good response from the most capable pupils. Citizenship makes a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development and raises their awareness of moral, social and cultural dimensions in the way societies work. There are many excellent examples of self-assessment using ICT that helps pupils record and reflect on their progress. However, the school recognises that identifying levels of attainment is an area for further development in assessment.
118. The school has effectively implemented National Curriculum requirements for citizenship. The very good leadership and management of the subject leader have led to well-organised provision and clear planning for further improvement.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### **Grade**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance	1
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).*