

INSPECTION REPORT

BURSCOUGH PRIORY SCIENCE COLLEGE

Burscough, Lancashire

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119746

Headteacher: Roger Leighton

Lead inspector: Bill Baxendale

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th November 2004

Inspection number: 268364

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 762

School address: Trevor Road
Burscough
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Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mike Forshaw

Date of previous inspection: 19th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Burscough Priory Science College is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive school, situated in the small town of Burscough, Lancashire. It has specialist Science College status. There are 762 pupils on roll. There are about equal numbers of boys and girls and there is very little movement in or out of the school, other than at the usual times of year. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds but overall they are average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. There are very few pupils from an ethnic minority background and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special education needs is well above average: most of these have specific learning difficulties; others have emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism and physical difficulties. Overall standards of attainment on entry are just above average. The school holds a Sportsmark; it runs a Young Enterprise scheme and is an Investor in People.

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12271	Ian Thompson	Team inspector	Art and design
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Burscough Priory Science College is a **good school** with strong traditional values that bring considerable strengths. High standards have been sustained and achievement is **very good**. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2003; they improved slightly in 2004. Very good leadership by the headteacher instils the confidence to do well. Leadership and management are good, but governance is unsatisfactory. Matching the overall quality of provision with the below average cost of educating pupils, the school gives **very good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good teaching and learning, pupils' very positive attitudes and excellent attendance result in very good achievement
- Examination results are well above average
- Provision is very good in mathematics, science, art, physical education and music
- Pupils with special education needs achieve very well
- The headteacher's strong leadership promotes a very good ethos
- Support and guidance are very good
- Provision is unsatisfactory in design and technology due to staffing problems
- The governing body does not fulfil all of its statutory duties. Requirements for teaching information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 are not met and the school cannot be sure that all elements of citizenship are taught
- Curriculum arrangements restrict progress in design and technology and ICT in Years 7 to 9

The school has made **satisfactory** improvement since the previous inspection. Better monitoring has improved the quality of teaching, which has led to higher standards. Recent significant improvements to the arrangements for personal, social and health education have resulted in satisfactory provision. Accommodation has been extensively improved, especially for science, music and drama. The provision for ICT has improved significantly; however, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements for religious education are still not met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall achievement is **very good**. Examination results over time show **well above average** standards and an improving trend. The school's performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is above the national average. Standards in GCSE examinations were well above average in 2003 and were sustained in 2004. Standards in lessons are above average in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Achievement is very good in mathematics, science, art, music and physical education, and good in English, geography, history and modern languages. Pupils with special education needs achieve **very well**. Staff absence has had a negative impact on standards in resistant materials and food technology and these are now lower than expected. Achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology and ICT.

Performance compared with:	All Schools			Similar Schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11 GCSE examinations	A	B	A	A

*Key A- well above average: B-above average: C-average: D-below average E-well below average.
For Year 11 similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good overall**, as a result of **very good** provision for moral education, **good** provision for social and moral education and **satisfactory** provision for spiritual education. Relationships in the school are **very good**. Behaviour and attitudes are **very good**; exclusion rates are very low. Pupils' enthusiasm for their work, **excellent** attendance and mature attitudes promote **very good** learning and achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The school is very effective in catering for pupils' individual needs. The quality of teaching is **very good**; it promotes **very good learning** and achievement. The implementation of the national strategy for improving teaching is well established, but there are small pockets of unsatisfactory teaching in French and personal, social and health education. Assessment is **good**. Very careful checking of pupils' progress, a very effective system of extra help and the teaching of revision and examination techniques all raise standards.

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. It includes a **good** range of examination courses in which all pupils do well. Support for learning outside the school day including extra-curricular provision is **good**. Pupils' personal development is very well supported. Arrangements for teaching ICT and design and technology in Years 7 to 9 depress achievement. The teaching of ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11 does not meet legal requirements. Arrangements for teaching work-related learning and citizenship are unsatisfactory. Staffing is generally good but staff absence has a negative impact on achievement. Resources and accommodation are **satisfactory**. The school has a very effective pastoral system. **Very good** individual support and guidance promote **good** personal development and **very good** academic achievement. The school has **satisfactory** links with parents and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. Senior and middle managers also show **good** leadership and ably support him. The governance of the school is **unsatisfactory**. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and self-evaluation, and provide the school with high level of challenge, but they do not ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Financial planning, of a low budget, is **good**.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have confidence in the school. They are very satisfied with most aspects of its work. Parents receive insufficient written information about their child's progress. Pupils enjoy being at the school. They value the high quality help from teachers and other staff; they have an effective voice in the school, their opinions are respected, valued and acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in food technology and resistant materials
- Improve timetabling arrangements for design and technology and ICT in Years 7 to 9

And meet statutory requirements by

- Improving provision for work-related learning and citizenship
- Ensuring that there is sufficient time to teach religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11
- Ensuring that all pupils have access to a daily act of collective worship
- Ensuring that pupils' annual reports state clearly what pupils know, understand and can do and the progress they have made in all subjects including ICT and citizenship

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards are **well above average**. Achievement is **good** in Years 7 to 9 and **very good** in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do very well indeed in mathematics
- Well above average proportions of pupils leave with higher grade GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics and science
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well
- Standards in resistant materials and food technology are too low
- There is a weakness in ICT

Commentary

1. Taking the available data into consideration, inspectors conclude that, as they start the school, 11 year olds' attainment is just above average. They base this on inspection evidence from Year 7, school and county-used diagnostic test results that show attainment on admission to be just below average, with weaknesses in English, and the results of national tests that show above average attainment.
2. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, making good gains in basic skills that then allow them to do very well in Years 10 and 11. Work seen in the inspection suggests good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11. At the same time, staffing problems have undermined achievement in subjects such as design and technology.
3. By the time pupils take national tests for 14 year olds at the end of Year 9 they reach well above national average standards in English, mathematics and science. Over time, both boys and girls have done well, with the girls slightly in front. Both are consistently well ahead of their gender nationally, by similar amounts. On average, girls do better than boys in English, whilst the opposite is found in mathematics. They are neck and neck in science. Trends in performance have been above the national rate of improvement since the previous inspection, which is good. However, compared with the performance of schools with pupils of similar prior attainment the average point score and value added were average in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.8 (37.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.1 (37.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.8 (36.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 156 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Results in 2004 fell slightly in each of the tested subjects, compared with the year before. The fall reflected a slight fall in the attainment of the pupils at the time they started: the results are consistent with good achievement. Standards are also above average in art, modern languages, physical education and music. The school has been very close to hitting its realistic annual national test and GCSE targets since the previous inspection.
5. Good achievement through Years 7 to 9 is seen in pupils' rapidly improving literacy skills. The school's commitment to getting pupils to partake in public speaking, in which they do very well,

raises their speaking standards and confidence. Pupils develop a good vocabulary that enhances their achievement. Writing reaches particularly good standards because the pupils have many chances to write for different purposes: they rise to the challenge. Reading skills are above average. Also, the very good writing skills that develop help pupils to do well in other subjects and in examinations. For example, their good writing in French is based upon a good grounding in grammar. Reading, writing and understanding are all well above average, but they are more diffident when trying to speak spontaneously.

6. Pupils transfer their very good mathematical skills well; ability to manipulate numbers and draw graphs helps them to achieve very well in most other subjects. Pupils are good at mental arithmetic and their algebra skills are also good. In science, pupils' investigating skills are well developed, so they plan, test and record well, exploiting their competence in using English well. Achievement in science is very good by the end of Year 9; pupils' understanding of quite complex topics, such as genetics, is very good.
7. Pupils' skills in using ICT are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory throughout. By the end of Year 9 pupils do not have the expected knowledge, skills or understanding. Insufficient time and irregular arrangements to teach ICT in Years 7 to 9 are contributing to underachievement. However, the one-third of pupils who had lessons during the inspection were achieving well through use of the Internet and the school's network to retrieve and store their work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement to ICT and there is insufficient identified development of ICT skills in other subjects.
8. Analyses of results show that whilst all pupils do very well, the extra resources allocated to pupils with special educational needs pay off handsomely, as these pupils achieve best of all, making most progress over their five years in the school. Just a few pupils of below to well below average attainment fail to make the grade, a handful leaving with no qualifications, despite management's valiant attempts to prevent it happening.
9. As shown in the table below, GCSE results demonstrate very good achievement; they have been well above the national average in every year since 2000. Against schools with similar prior attainment profiles, results in 2003 were also well above average and the percentages obtaining five or more passes of any grade were in the top five per cent nationally. The value added was well above average, too. Results rose again in 2004, but national comparisons are unavailable.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (61)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.1 (39.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 149 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

10. In 2004, girls did better than boys in all subjects except physical education, but the boys were less far behind the girls than is the case nationally. Inspection shows this to be a continuing trend. Particular strengths are found in English, mathematics and science where seven-tenths of all pupils in the year obtained a higher grade, A*-C, pass. At the same time well over half of the year obtained a similar higher pass grade in French or German, or both, which is much better than the national picture. Only four pupils left without a qualification in a modern foreign language. Pupils obtained well above average results in all subjects except food and resistant materials in design and technology; these are areas for improvement identified by inspection.

11. A combination of very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11, backed by very good guidance on raising their game, leads to pupils' very good achievement. Standards of work seen are well above average in mathematics, science, German, art, physical education and music and above average in English, geography, history, and French. Although standards are below average in resistant materials and food technology, they are above average in electronics and graphics. Standards are below average in non-examination religious education and pupils underachieve, as there is insufficient time dedicated to the subject in Years 10 and 11. Standards in GCSE religious education are well above average. Consistency and gradual improvement are strong features of a school tradition that expects each pupil to do his or her best; very nearly all of them do so. It is too early for the Science College status to have had a significant impact, although pupils achieve well in science in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.
12. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve very well, in common with the rest. The very few pupils from ethnic minority groups also achieve very well, often doing better than most others in examinations.
13. The school sets pupils stiff challenges and is aiming for an increase in higher GCSE grades, but inspection evidence confirms the school's reduced target for GCSE results for 2005. A combination of lower comparative attainment and the effects of staff changes and absences are lowering standards, to an extent.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Attendance is **excellent**. Attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and exclusion rates are very low. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Moral development is **very good**, social and cultural development is **good** and spiritual development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent attendance promotes very good achievement
- Pupils have very good attitudes in lessons
- Pupils' very good attention to coursework and revision raises examination successes
- Behaviour in class and around the school is very good
- Pupils with special educational needs, including physical disabilities, play full parts in school life
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good
- Very good moral education and good social education enhance pupils' personal development
- Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture but less is done to develop their understanding of other cultural traditions

Commentary

Attendance

14. Attendance is excellent. Very few pupils take significant amounts of time off. Very regular attendance promotes very good achievement. Parents are very aware of the importance of good attendance and parental support is good. The school has very effective systems in place to verify non-attendance and truancy is very rare.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.1
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	1.1

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

15. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They feel secure, confident and very much valued. Pupils join enthusiastically in sporting and musical activities. A large number of pupils and staff attend the weekly lunchtime concerts and all enjoy the high quality musical performances. Pupils are helpful and considerate and have very good manners. Pupils behave consistently well around the school. Behaviour during a fire drill was excellent. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities such as peer counselling or helping to supervise the corridors. They take these responsibilities very seriously. Bullying and racism are rare but the school is not afraid of tackling these issues when they arise. Exclusion rates are very low.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Any other ethnic group

No of pupils on roll
758
3

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
28	0
1	0

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

16. Pupils' very good attitudes to their schoolwork promote very good achievement. Pupils concentrate well and work hard. They listen carefully and follow teachers' instructions well. They are enthusiastic about answering questions and also ask pertinent questions. Pupils are highly motivated; there is a good working atmosphere in classrooms. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils instil the confidence to do well. Pupils make a very good effort with their GCSE coursework, which is completed in good time, and good revision for examinations has a very positive impact on results.
17. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes and their behaviour is good. Relationships with their teachers, who encourage them to work hard and do their best, are very positive. In withdrawal sessions attitudes and behaviour are often excellent. These pupils mix well with others; they are fully integrated into day-to-day school life.
18. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory. The theme for the week provides opportunities for pupils to think about issues such as the importance of family and friends, but it is not applied universally. Occasional opportunities for reflection are provided through special one-off assemblies, such as the Remembrance Day, Founders Day and Harvest Thanksgiving assemblies. Some subjects, such as English, art, and music, enable pupils to appreciate and explore beauty in its different forms, for example through poetry. In religious education, pupils have good opportunities to question, explore and reflect upon life and to develop their own set of values and beliefs. However, there is no whole-school policy that defines where and how pupils' spiritual development will be promoted, and what takes place is piecemeal and uncoordinated. No assemblies could be observed because of arrangements for examinations but records and visits to form tutor periods confirm that the school does not provide a daily collective act of worship.

19. Provision for moral development is very good. Pupils are taught to recognise right from wrong and their very good behaviour reflects the success of the school's policy in this area. There are numerous awards for achievement, effort and attendance. Some subjects make a very good contribution to pupils' moral development. In religious education pupils consider the implications of different moral codes in developing their own moral standards. In physical education, pupils are expected to observe fair play rules. In science, pupils consider the ethics of selective breeding and human cloning. In lessons generally, teachers ensure that pupils know the rules regarding movement in and around the classroom and the school's code of conduct is effectively enforced.
20. Provision for social development is good. Form tutor groups are deliberately balanced so that pupils have the opportunity to mix with pupils other than those they meet in their subject classes. There are good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example as members of the year councils or corridor prefects. In lessons pupils often work in groups where they learn the importance and value of teamwork. Extra-curricular provision is very good, particularly in sport and music. The personal, social and health education programme provides opportunities for pupils to understand and debate social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. Pupils do a great deal of charity work, raising significant amounts of money for worthy causes.
21. Provision for cultural development is good. There are annual musical and dramatic productions and county-wide public speaking competitions in which the school does well. Some subjects make a valuable contribution in promoting pupils' cultural development; religious education lessons help pupils develop an appreciation of religious beliefs and values of cultures other than their own, such as Hindu culture and Jewish culture. In art, pupils study Asian and African cultures. In music pupils consider the musical traditions of other countries such as China. There are trips to museums and national sporting events, and foreign exchanges take place with schools in France and Germany. Overall, however, whilst providing many opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions the school does not actively promote an appreciation and understanding of the diversity and richness of non-European cultures.
22. Pupils' very good attitudes and good personal development have been sustained since the previous inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The school is very effective in identifying the individual needs of pupils. The quality of teaching is very good and helps promote high standards of achievement. Overall, the school provides pupils with a satisfactory curriculum; insufficient provision is made for teaching religious education and ICT, especially in Years 10 and 11. Vocational education and work-related learning are limited.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** in Years 7 to 9 and **very good** in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of subjects
- Lessons are planned very effectively
- Teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour
- Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good
- National strategies are used well to promote good learning

- Assessment is used well to support pupils' learning
- Assessment is unsatisfactory in citizenship and in ICT

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 93 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (5%)	24 (26%)	47 (51%)	15 (16%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	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.

23. The overall quality of teaching is very good with some examples of excellent teaching. Teaching is consistently good in Years 7 to 9 and this results in good achievement. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is characterised by very good knowledge of examination expectations and technique, the demand for very high standards of work and behaviour and meticulously planned lessons. The result is very good achievement on the part of the pupils. Relationships mature as pupils enter Year 11 and pupils appreciate the very good academic and personal support they receive.
24. Teachers have thorough and up-to-date knowledge of their subjects. They explain ideas in a clear way that makes sense to pupils. The good range of methods and strategies used to share subject knowledge ensures that pupils rapidly acquire new knowledge and understanding. Good use of questioning helps pupils develop ideas and increases perception. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils give pupils the confidence to speak out and there is lively debate combined with thoughtful responses. Pupils are able to articulate ideas very well and back them up with evidence. Pupils and teachers have an enthusiastic approach to drama but knowledge and understanding of drama are relatively weak and not enough advice can be offered about improvement; this depresses achievement.
25. Very carefully planned lessons ensure very good use of time and activities that are well matched to pupils' needs. There is a high level of challenge for all; the most able are stretched and high expectations promote pupils with special educational needs' very good achievement. The high quality work of support assistants ensures that pupils who might otherwise struggle are helped to produce high quality work. Occasionally, teachers talk too much in lessons, so there is little variety. In these circumstances, pupils usually continue to apply themselves well but their achievement is no more than satisfactory as a result.
26. There is an insistence on very high standards of behaviour. Teachers have very good strategies for managing behaviour; the few pupils with challenging behaviour are kept under control and do not disturb the work of others. Interesting teaching methods and a good range of strategies engage pupils well; pupils enjoy working hard and have high levels of concentration. Brisk pace combined with high expectation ensures that pupils are productive. Pupils show the ability to research and collaborate well. They often learn from one another. Pupils' learning benefits from the effective use of homework, which is used well to consolidate and extend the learning that occurs in lessons.
27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. Expectations of both behaviour and attitudes are high, the work set is well matched to pupils' needs and consequently pupils make very good progress. In withdrawal sessions with specialist teachers, teaching is very good and pupils achieve very well. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge in the teaching of basic skills and pupils make rapid strides in improving their reading and writing.

28. National strategies are used well to promote good learning. Teachers ensure that pupils understand exactly what they are to learn in each lesson. The three-part lesson is used well to support good use of time. Teachers have quickly developed their expertise and use devices such as interactive whiteboards very effectively in order to make lessons interesting. However, there are sometimes insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to directly enhance their learning.
29. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The quality of teaching has improved and this has driven up standards which are now well above average.
30. Assessment is good. The school collects and collates relevant data about pupils' attainment when they join the school. This is used effectively to group pupils in Year 7 and shared with staff so that they know the standards of the pupils being taught. Information is used effectively to set targets for pupils for the end of Year 9 and these are reviewed for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who are not achieving well enough are identified and steps taken to monitor their progress. Teachers use assessment well to support pupils' learning. Good procedures are in place to support achievement in most subjects. They are very good in science, art and modern foreign languages. As a result, pupils generally know how well they are doing in relation to national standards and what they must do to improve their work to reach higher levels. Assessment is unsatisfactory in citizenship and in ICT.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. Provision for enrichment is **good**. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad, balanced traditional curriculum promotes very good achievement and good personal development
- There is a good support for learning outside the school day
- There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs
- There is very good participation in sport and music
- The intermittent arrangements for teaching ICT and design and technology in Years 7 to 9 depress achievement
- Statutory requirements for teaching religious education, ICT and work-related learning to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not met, and the teaching of all elements of citizenship cannot be assured
- The library is underused to support learning
- Prolonged staff absence has had a detrimental effect on standards in design and technology

Commentary

31. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 7 to 9, which prepares pupils well for the next stage in learning. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to study two languages from Year 8 and all pupils study drama in Years 7 to 9. Arrangements for teaching ICT and design and technology in turn result in pupils finding it difficult to retain and build upon what they have learned several weeks previously.
32. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum provision is satisfactory, a good range of GCSE examination subjects is provided and pupils of all abilities achieve very well. Personal development is enhanced by the personal, social and health education programme and careers education. However, statutory requirements are not met in ICT and religious education. The school has adapted the modern foreign languages curriculum successfully to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils take GCSE examinations in French at the end of Year 9 and then have the option to

begin Spanish in Year 10 or to improve their grade in French. This has had a positive impact upon standards and on pupils' attitudes towards learning languages. The school has attempted to provide alternative courses for pupils for whom GCSE examinations are not always appropriate. However, local factors, including transport problems and restricted finances, have limited the development of the increased flexibility programmes including college placements and work-related learning. Statutory requirements are not met regarding the collective act of worship.

33. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds have equal access to the curriculum; the school is very inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met; provision has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils with the greatest learning difficulties receive very good support in small withdrawal groups where they significantly improve their reading, writing and other basic skills. There are limited work placements available to pupils with special educational needs. The lunchtime homework club offers very good support, particularly in the use of ICT.
34. The programme for personal, social and health education is developing well; it has improved since the previous inspection. A recently established, enthusiastic team is improving the quality of provision. Pupils report that their needs are being carefully considered, as the school works hard developing a coherent scheme of work. There is a good programme of sex and drug education. However, the time given to personal, social and health education lessons is too short and adversely affects the quality of learning. Under current arrangements, the school cannot ensure that statutory requirements for the teaching of citizenship are fully met.
35. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of learning. By the end of Year 9 they are well equipped for the demands of formal examinations. They receive appropriate advice about their GCSE choices. In Years 10 and 11 preparation for subsequent stages of education and employment is good.
36. Support for learning outside the school day is good; most subjects provide extra help at lunchtime and after school as well as revision classes for examinations. The curriculum is enriched by a good variety of extra-curricular activities, for example drama and musical productions, competitions with other schools in mathematics, English and modern foreign languages, trips abroad, and visits from outside speakers in science. There is a good range of well-attended clubs and other activities after school and in lunch times. Sports and musical activities are particularly popular. The use of visits to reinforce and extend learning is limited in art, history and religious education.
37. The match of teachers to the curriculum is broadly satisfactory. Specialists teach most subjects and there is a good mix of experienced and recently qualified staff. Recently the school has suffered through the long-term absence of experienced members of staff. This has been well managed in art and science but the absence of key members of staff and technical support in design and technology, despite the best efforts of the remaining members of staff, has had a detrimental effect on standards.
38. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but is varied in quality, combining recently refurbished teaching areas and older buildings. There have been significant improvements to English, mathematics and science accommodation since the previous inspection. Excellent accommodation for music is used very well to promote very good of teaching and learning. The new drama studio is not being used to full effect because of a lack of staff expertise. The accommodation for design and technology has improved but is not in full use because of staffing difficulties.
39. There are plans to continue improvements, but problems remain in art and design, physical education and food technology. Accommodation for art and design restricts the development of three-dimensional and large-scale work and storage is limited. Physical education and food

technology accommodation are outdated and in need of refurbishment. Display is used well in many areas to celebrate pupils' work and enliven well-worn accommodation.

40. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Resources are improving as a result of the school's specialist Science College status. The number of computers available has significantly improved and is in line with the number normally seen in a school of this size. Interactive whiteboards are now available in most areas of the school to support teaching and learning. Resources are very good in music. The library, however, is still not developed well enough as a learning resource. Only a few subjects and pupils use it regularly and the number of books borrowed by pupils is low.

Care, guidance and support

The provision of support, advice and guidance is **very good**. There are **good** arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare and health and safety. There is **very good** involvement of pupils in the school's work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good support and guidance combined with effective advice contribute well to success in GCSE examinations
- Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are very good
- Very good links with primary schools promote a smooth transition between primary and secondary education
- The taught programme of careers education is of good quality but there is insufficient independent advice for those following traditional academic routes
- Pupils are confident that their views are respected and acted upon

Commentary

41. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are satisfactory. Supervision around the school is very good and the headteacher and senior staff have a high profile. Staff know the pupils very well and problems are tackled quickly. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good; pupils report that they are very well cared for and find staff extremely approachable when they have worries or concerns. Arrangements for child protection follow local guidelines but would be improved by updating staff training. However, vulnerable pupils are very well supported. The work of the school counsellor is very much appreciated by pupils and staff because of considerable success in assisting pupils.
42. Underachievement is quickly identified in Years 7 to 9 and pupils are well supported. Pupils appreciate the exceptional level of help they receive in Years 10 and 11. Year 11 pupils find an interview with a senior member of staff on academic performance, personal development and future aspirations extremely useful and motivating. Mentoring follows this; pupils appreciate being able to influence the choice of mentor. Within the personal, social and health education programme older pupils are advised on study skills and examination techniques; this makes a good contribution to examination success.
43. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs and for bringing any concerns to the attention of the special needs co-ordinator are very good. Individual education plans to support pupils' learning are of good quality and many departments use them as the basis for setting their own subject-based targets. Support assistants are well deployed and give effective help. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties get very good personal support from the special educational needs department; teachers know them very well and are available to give advice throughout the day, particularly at lunch times and after school. .

44. Induction is well planned; there are good opportunities for pupils to visit the school while they are in Years 5 and 6. Good curriculum links encourage seamless transition. The school has very good links with primary schools and takes very good care to ensure that the background and needs of each pupil are very carefully researched and appropriate support is in place, if needed. However, pupils do not meet their form tutors before they start in Year 7.
45. In Years 9, 10 and 11, a well-qualified specialist careers teacher provides a good programme of careers education that allows pupils to clearly identify their strengths and weaknesses. Arrangements for work experience are satisfactory. The use of ICT as a research tool and to explore databases is good. Vulnerable pupils have access to good quality objective careers advice but there are fewer opportunities for higher attaining pupils to access independent advice. As a result, pupils who are seeking training or vocational pathways are very well informed, for example by a large careers library with good information about further education and employment. Those seeking to follow a traditional academic route of A-levels and education are far more vague about their aspirations and how to realise them. There are too few university prospectuses or other sources of information that would help pupils make choices for further education to complement their future career aspirations. However, a good range of colleges and other providers of post-16 opportunities attends information evenings for pupils and parents.
46. The school is very good at involving pupils in its work. Improved use of self-assessment results in pupils being able to feed back their reaction to lessons. Pupils very much appreciate the way the content of the personal, social and health education course has been developed to meet their needs. The year councils are very active and have brought about changes, including altering the school uniform. Pupils feel that their individuality is respected and developed; they know they are appreciated and valued.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents and **satisfactory** links with the local community. Links with other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reports about pupil progress are of unsatisfactory quality
- Good communication with parents by pastoral staff ensures that most problems are dealt with quickly and effectively
- There are very good links with local primary schools
- The science department has good links with local universities
- There has been limited development of college links to enhance the 14-19 curriculum

Commentary

47. The attractive and informative prospectus and the governors' report meet statutory requirements. Changes in the format of pupil reports have led to a decline in quality, as comments no longer clearly inform parents about what their children know, understand and can do and the progress they have made. Comments focus on pupils' attitudes, and targets for improvement are too vague. Reports about pupils in Years 10 and 11 are of better quality, clearly recording their strengths and weaknesses and what they can do to improve their grades in GCSE examinations. Reports do not meet statutory requirements, as there is no report on ICT and citizenship. However, there are good opportunities for parents to come into school to discuss their children's progress with either form tutors or subject staff. Pastoral staff are in constant contact with parents and this enhances the quality of support for pupils. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews. Parents are supportive of

their children's learning and help them to achieve well. The school values the active fundraising of the Friends Association.

48. There are very good curriculum links with local primary schools that start in Year 5 and continue to Year 6. There are established transition units in English and science and a new unit has been developed for mathematics. The school has run a European Day and a 'Commonwealth Games' for primary pupils. Local secondary schools with specialist status have been supportive in difficult times offering help and assistance to the design and technology department. Pupils are made well aware of the range of options for further education but there has been limited development of college links to enhance the 14-19 curriculum because of local transport difficulties and severe financial restraints. There are good links with local universities for initial teacher training but fewer links that directly benefit the pupils, including raising their aspirations. The science department uses local expertise well to support a Forensic Day for Year 8 and there are science-linked university visits for Year 9. These add interest and enjoyment for pupils and raise their aspirations and interest in continuing to study science in further and higher education.
49. There are classes for the local community in school and a local orchestra uses the premises. The physical education department has links with local sports clubs. The local community is well represented on the governing body. Use of the local and wider community as a learning resource has declined and there are fewer visits. Local employers support work experience but links have not been fully exploited to support work-related learning. Specialist Science College status is too new to have had chance to fully develop new activities in the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a very clear sense of purpose
- Teamwork is very strong
- Commitment to equality of opportunity is very successful; all pupils achieve very well
- Checking on performance and devising means of improvement are very good
- Governance is unsatisfactory because of statutory breaches
- Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good
- Financial management is good

Commentary

50. The headteacher's very good leadership, reported in the previous inspection, continues to steer a school that has a very clear sense of purpose. The prime concern that the school must give its pupils the very best chances for their next stages in education or training, and for life, is clearly successful, as all pupils and especially those with special educational needs achieve very well. The headteacher gets good support from two other senior leaders whose well-conceived, separated responsibilities for early and senior years, the curriculum and professional training, put them in good positions to evaluate provision. Common, productive attachments to subject departments also help them in this work.
51. The school's established tradition of equal opportunity that gives all pupils, as near as possible, the same chances and the same broad educational diet is rewarded by now consistently well above average standards. The school's comparative shortage of funds reduces the leadership's opportunities to experiment with provision. Trials, for example, in work-related learning have proved less successful than making sure all pupils do well in the conventional curriculum the school offers.

52. Consistency, revealed by this inspection, is a major reason for rising standards. Improvement planning is more focused than at the time of the previous inspection, outlining well ways in which teaching and learning may be refined. Very detailed analyses of performance and a rolling programme of inspection of teaching across the school have helped to define training need and to make sure that the national strategy for improving teaching and learning is firmly in place. The quest for continuing improvements has seen the introduction of fuller consultation with parents and pupils of Year 11 and successful intervention that has raised pupils' aspirations so that many who were likely to just miss reaching a higher GCSE grade now hit their target.
53. Management is good. There is a successful, increasing onus on staff to take a broader interest in the running of the school, for example through the organisation of detention routines. At the same time, middle managers and others have the chance to develop their own interests. Teamwork is very good. For example, a teaching and learning group, born out of the national literacy initiative, is a big success. It involves large proportions of the staff in a training programme, of their own devising, that helps them improve their professional classroom skills. Most subject departments are cohesive units, although recent retirements and some unforeseen extended illnesses are putting extra demands on, for example, design and technology, mathematics and science. Good procedures make sure staff new to the school settle in quickly. Performance management is fully in place and effective in helping improvement through identification of individual and common training needs. The school has received Investor in People recognition for a second, consecutive time.
54. The leadership and management of special educational needs provision in the school are very good. The progress of pupils is carefully monitored as they move through the school and regular testing ensures effective intervention takes place where necessary. There is a strong focus on pupils achieving the highest standards possible and the department is rightly proud of ensuring that all pupils, even those with the severest learning difficulties, leave school able to read. Data is used well to set pupils targets and measure achievement. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is very supportive and well informed. Statutory requirements are fully met. Support assistants are well deployed and are well monitored.
55. Governors know the school very well and hold it well to account. Their support for its campaign to win specialist college status has been very strong, seeing its value as a means of extending educational opportunities in the area very clearly. The governors have an active committee structure, through which they use the professional strengths of individual governors very well. Governors evaluate the school's performance closely and form an effective critical team that has a good partnership with the school.
56. Governance is, however, unsatisfactory, as the governors fail to carry out their legal duties in a number of important areas. The school still fails to provide a programme of religious education that meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11 and there is no daily act of collective worship, or satisfactory alternative, such as a consistently applied 'thought for the day' programme. Work-related aspects of the curriculum do not meet requirements. Although now satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, the provision of ICT, an area for improvement found in the previous inspection, still does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. Although citizenship is addressed through many subjects it cannot be guaranteed that all aspects of the required curriculum are taught.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,449,561	Balance from previous year	356,560
Total expenditure	2,291,665	Balance carried forward to the next	495,355
Expenditure per pupil	2,894		

57. The above figures include an element for standards funding, which crosses financial years, causing a discrepancy in the arithmetic. Financial management is good. Helped by a very effective bursar, governors apply the principles of getting best value in all their purchases; their stewardship of the budget is good. Points raised in a recent audit report have been addressed by the headteacher. Expenditure, for example, on pupils with special educational needs exceeds income and reaps rich rewards, as these pupils are well equipped with qualifications to continue their education post-16 as a result. A large surplus is destined to pay for the school's contributions to extra buildings associated with much needed premises improvement. Considering the comparatively low cost of educating each pupil with the well above average standards their very good achievement brings and the good quality of education, within the brief it gives itself, the school provides very good value for money.
58. The school has numerous aids to learning among which its developed ethos of expectation and achievement is prominent. Parents support the school well and pupils respond very well, too. The strength of pastoral support is part of a common commitment to do well. On the other hand there are some barriers to learning in that a few parents and pupils do not share the school's purpose in striving to provide a very good quality of education. Some worn-out areas of the school are much less conducive to quality in education than recently refurbished ones.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is **unsatisfactory**.

Commentary

59. Opportunities to learn about the world of work are limited. There is a good quality careers education programme in Years 9 to 11, which gives some insight into employability. All pupils have the opportunity to undertake work experience but placements are not always well matched to the needs and aspirations of pupils.
60. There are few vocational subjects apart from business studies where examination results are above the national average. Examination results in other practical subjects such as electronics and graphics are also above average but they are below the national average in resistant materials and food technology. Pupils have the correct attitudes for the world of work and their very good attendance and punctuality should hold them in good stead. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities to be enterprising in a wider sense are good but there are few opportunities for business enterprise and to relate a classroom situation to the world of work, the Year 9 Forensic Day being a notable exception. Opportunities on the 14-19 continuum are limited and extended work placements have had limited success.
61. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient planning for delivering of work-related learning and no clear policy for work-related learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of writing by higher attaining pupils are impressive
- Many pupils are very articulate and take a full part in sophisticated debate in lessons
- The carefully structured teaching helps most pupils to improve their literacy skills
- Effective use of ICT motivates pupils with special educational needs
- The teaching of drama is not always effective
- The subject makes valuable links with the curriculum in mathematics and citizenship
- The library does not sufficiently support literacy

Commentary

62. Standards in the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average and better than similar schools, and have been so for many years. Results were equally good in 2004. Girls outperformed boys but boys did better than those nationally. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 were also above average. Pupils' writing is particularly good with lots of work to develop narrative and writing for a range of audiences and purposes. In GCSE English, standards were above the national average in 2003, and in English literature they equalled the national average. These results improved in both subjects in 2004 when they were well above the previous year. Considering that most pupils are average on entry to the school they achieve well by Year 9 and sustain this progress into Year 11 where standards continue to be above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well also. Overall achievement is good. Oral skills are particularly good. Pupils in Year 10 show a good insight into characterisation in *Wuthering Heights* and explain the significance of words such as 'misanthropist' and 'enigma' when discussing Heathcliff's role. In demanding texts such as *Brave New World*, skilful teaching guides pupils through a sophisticated discussion of important themes like corruption and conditioning.
63. Writing is of high quality especially in literature essays but also in composing poetry, persuasive writing and personal narrative. There are examples of mature, stylish and accurate writing that engages the audience with original imagery to evoke the effects of a mighty storm "descending into a Stygian gloom." Presentation, often using ICT, is good and attracts the attention of the reader to vivid displays of work. Reading is above average. Pupils are taught how to review books, and teachers provide good structured frameworks to help pupils of all ability levels to organise their writing. The library has a wide range of fiction but books are worn and unappealing. The layout of the library is uninviting and does little to promote a love of books or reading.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is well planned with a clear structure that helps pupils to improve their reading and writing skills. There are good links between speaking and listening and reading and writing so that pupils are able to reinforce their learning of vocabulary and spelling in a coherent way. Pupils have positive attitudes to the challenges set them in most lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and extend their thinking with supplementary questions: "Can you elaborate on that idea?" For example, Year 7 pupils discuss the difference between genres and themes of their chosen

books. They arrive at interesting conclusions about the morals implicit in some of them, for example “getting your priorities right in life”. In the top sets in Year 10 teaching and learning are often very good with some excellent features. ICT is used well in teaching to motivate pupils with special educational needs. Good marking involves pupils in tracking their own progress and gives them a clear picture of how to reach their targets. Lessons are well planned and often challenge more able pupils while also offering good support for those with special educational needs. Questioning by teachers is very good and encourages pupils to think for themselves. However, the teaching of drama is rarely effective. Teachers do not have the skills or subject knowledge to move pupils on effectively by exploiting the very good accommodation or harnessing pupil enthusiasm for the subject. A minority of lessons lack pace and pupils lose interest because they are not involved enough

65. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation and assessment are thorough and the use of data is well developed so that teachers measure progress clearly, make the necessary adjustments to the curriculum and achieve their targets. There is good provision for teaching aspects of citizenship through visits and public speaking. Unusually the department sets up practical tasks for pupils involving numeracy. Imaginative use of formulae enables pupils to test the readability of newspapers and they produce bar charts and graphs to follow up their survey work. . There has been good improvement since the previous inspection with literature results showing a rise.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Most pupils come to the school with the expected standards in literacy and they make good progress in all aspects by the time that they reach Year 9. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average. Teachers promote the importance of accurate reading and writing by regular reference to keywords on display in the rooms and by providing opportunities for pupils to read aloud in class. The good practice seen in English is replicated in science when pupils read about genetics. In modern foreign languages there is a good focus on word patterns and how they are formed. This shows pupils the links between words and helps them with their spelling. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to write in history and geography. In ICT e-mails are sometimes lengthy. Pupils’ self-evaluations in art in Year 7 show a good command of vocabulary but some weaknesses in spelling. By the time pupils reach Year 11 spelling and punctuation have improved. Marking is inconsistent, however, and does not always point out ways in which pupils can improve their literacy skills.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in French and well above average in German
- The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to achieve well
- Standards of writing in French and German are well above average
- Assessment procedures are very good and used very effectively to raise standards
- There is scope to develop opportunities for pupils to use the language themselves and for real purposes in French and Spanish
- New arrangements for lower attaining pupils to commence studying Spanish in Year 10 are motivating but long-term planning is not detailed enough.

Commentary

67. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average; pupils achieve well. By Year 9 pupils’ reading and writing skills are well above average; the majority can describe events in detail in the past, present and future and give opinions, using a good range of vocabulary and structures. They

understand instructions, questions and short extracts of speech in French and German and respond promptly. They have a very good understanding of grammar and are frequently asked to identify, explain and apply patterns in the languages themselves. However, they are less secure in speaking and responding spontaneously.

68. GCSE results in 2003 were average in French and in German they were above average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was average in French and above average in German. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was above average in both languages. When compared to similar schools, GCSE results in French were better than might be expected. The proportion of pupils entered for GCSE examinations in French was far higher than the national average. This represents good achievement in relation to prior attainment, and very good achievement for lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. Results in 2004 are better than in 2003. There is an improving trend in results over the last three years.
69. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average; pupils achieve well. By Year 11, pupils' writing skills are very well developed and they display a good understanding of grammar and a good range of language in their writing. In French speaking skills are less secure since pupils rely too heavily on written notes and this hampers them in expressing their ideas and sometimes adversely affects their pronunciation. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and good relationships with their teachers and are concerned to do well. They participate enthusiastically in problem-solving activities, games and competitions but get restless and lose concentration when teachers dominate activities or their needs are not adequately taken into account in lessons, and this stops them completing tasks successfully.
70. Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory or better. There were examples of excellent practice in Years 7, 8 and 10. One poor lesson was observed. Teachers make very effective use of problem-solving activities and competition this engages and motivates pupils. Very well planned sequences of activities enable pupils to understand and apply grammatical rules. In contrast when lessons are poorly planned, objectives are unclear and pupils are hampered in their progress because teacher-led activities present little challenge. In excellent lessons pupils were completely engaged and responded enthusiastically to very high expectations. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and usually use the language being learned as the main means of communication in lessons. Pupils therefore benefit from very good role models, the language used is well matched to their experience and capabilities and pupils' listening skills are well developed. Sometimes the English version is given too readily, eliminating pupils' need to listen to the original. Pupils make the best progress when they are given the opportunity to work in pairs and small groups to practise informally. Teacher-led activities decrease opportunities for pupils to do this, slow the pace and result in pupils losing concentration.
71. Assessment is very good overall. Pupils understand the assessment criteria and are encouraged to evaluate their own work, keep a record of their progress and set their own targets. Marking is usually thorough and gives good guidance about how to improve. However, assessment data is not always used effectively to meet the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties; as a result resources for reading and writing tasks are not always appropriate.
72. Leadership and management are good. Assessment information is analysed rigorously and effective action has been taken to raise standards. Strategic planning has been effective in raising the achievement of boys and attitudes are now positive. Lower attaining pupils can achieve a grade at GCSE in French at the end of Year 9 and then have the opportunity to learn Spanish in Years 10 and 11. This successfully motivates pupils but longer-term planning for these groups is not detailed enough. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not structured or focused enough to cope with new circumstances in the department and to achieve consistency. The department is hampered in its attempts to use ICT to extend and support pupils' learning because of the difficulties in accessing equipment.

Accommodation is unsatisfactory; rooms are too small for the large groups caused by the arrangements for groups timetabled together. This restricts the range of activities that can be provided and in some lessons pupils are not able to see the board or take part in whole-class activities.

73. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have risen in French and there has been a significant improvement in GCSE results in German. Improvement in the last year has been good, examination results are improving and boys' attainment in examinations is now in line with that of boys nationally. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, as has the use of assessment. This is due to the good leadership and management of the department.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good promoting very effective learning
- GCSE examination results are well above the national average and improving
- Pupils are evaluating their understanding of topics and are more aware of National Curriculum levels than previously
- Relationships in lessons are very good and the pupils behave very well and work hard
- The use of ICT needs to be further improved, especially in Years 10 and 11

Commentary

74. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level is above the national average for all schools. When compared to similar schools the proportion is at the average but well below the average for the higher levels. Boys and girls perform equally well. The proportion of pupils reaching the required level in 2004 was higher. Standards are above average and achievement by the end of Years 9 is good. Graph work is good, and mental arithmetic and algebraic skills are well developed.
75. In GCSE examinations in 2003 results were well above average. Boys' results were better than the girls' results. In 2004 the proportions were roughly the same, but the girls' results were better than the boys' results. Around half of the pupils achieved grades A*-B. Pupils perform better in mathematics than in English or science.
76. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 were above average. GCSE coursework is of a very good quality and this is a contributory factor to the very good GCSE results. Pupils have good algebraic skills and draw accurate graphs. Calculators are used appropriately and the pupils display competent mental arithmetic skills. Standards on entry are average but by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average, therefore pupils make very good progress. In all years pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
77. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils. In the best lessons, the teachers have high expectations of the pupils, the pace is good and a variety of tasks have been prepared to challenge the pupils. Some very good starter exercises engage and enthuse the pupils, particularly those using the interactive whiteboard and the mini whiteboards. Whilst the endings of some lessons are very good, some endings do not always consolidate learning. Effective use is made of questioning, encouraging pupils to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. The setting arrangement for teaching in Years 8 and 9 promotes good achievement; however, the lack of setting in Year 7 results in the highest attaining pupils not achieving their full potential.

78. As a result of very effective teaching, most pupils acquire very good knowledge of basic skills and concepts, which enables them to work on their own to improve their understanding. Literacy skills are improved by the good displays of key words, the insistence of teachers on the correct use of mathematical language and the good oral work in lessons. Pupils have a positive attitude to mathematics, they behave very well in lessons and relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good. Pupils are confident to ask questions of their teachers and this enhances learning.
79. Leadership and management of the department are very good. New management is enthusiastic with a clear vision for future development. Programmes of work have been updated and monitoring has been extended. There is a good team of enthusiastic, committed and hard-working staff. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well to raise standards. Assessment procedures and use of data are good, pupils are tested regularly, and they are made aware of National Curriculum levels and share in their target setting. Day-to-day marking is both encouraging and informative. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve and this promotes very good learning. Appropriate and regular homework is set.
80. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Monitoring and evaluating of the work of the department are now more formal. Test and examination results have improved. Textbook resources are better. Teachers are using the interactive whiteboards imaginatively. There are insufficient planned opportunities for the pupils to use ICT to support their learning especially in Years 10 and 11.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. Pupils' numeracy skills are very good. The enthusiastic numeracy co-ordinator has shared the key features of the National Numeracy Strategy with all staff in the school. Aspects of mathematics are taught in most subjects, and prepared material on methods of calculation and other aspects of mathematics helps departments develop pupils' numeracy skills. Departments are encouraged to ensure that pupils do an extended piece of work linked to the numeracy skills relevant to their subject.
82. As a result of good co-ordination and the provision of good guidance pupils are using their mathematical knowledge and skills well in other subjects across the curriculum. Statistical analysis and graph work are competently carried out in geography and science. Basic measuring and calculations are used in art, design and technology, physical education and modern foreign languages. In ICT the pupils are able to use formulae confidently in spreadsheets. Pupils were calculating competently the readability quotient of newspapers in English.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results at the end of Years 9 and GCSE examination results are well above average
- Teaching and learning are very good, leading to very good achievement
- There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers
- Assessment and monitoring of teaching are very good
- New accommodation has been used very well to enhance learning
- Owing to a lack of equipment pupils are unable to use ICT sufficiently to help their learning

Commentary

83. National test results at the end of Year 9 are well above average. The trend over the last three years is one of gradual improvement. The achievement of boys and girls was similar. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9, with average attainers understanding topics such as genetics and variation very well. By the end of Year 9 pupils' achievement is very good. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the effective support that they receive.
84. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average compared to those in all schools and average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was well above average. The results for 2004 were similar. The overall trend in the last three years has been upwards. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average; for example, pupils have a good understanding of plant nutrition and are able to explain well the effects of acid rain and global warming. In lessons boys and girls achieve equally well although girls have achieved better examination results over the last two years. Again pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to additional support. The written work of all pupils is of a high standard with few exceptions. Pupils have very sensible attitudes and can produce clearly thought out arguments. Their investigative skills are well developed and they are all able to plan and carry out a fair test, make and record accurate observations and draw sensible conclusions. During practical work pupils handle apparatus and chemicals with care and share ideas and co-operate with each other in a mature and sensible manner.
85. Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well because of this. Lessons are well prepared and the variety of teaching styles employed maintains the interest of pupils. Teachers pay good attention to literacy, taking care to emphasise new vocabulary and allowing pupils to use a variety of writing styles and practise their oral skills through class discussions. Numeracy is developed through the drawing of graphs and use of formulae appropriate to the science curriculum. Teachers make good use of ICT in lessons but its use by pupils is limited due to a lack of suitable equipment. However, pupils often make use of the Internet for personal research, which helps to develop their independent learning skills. Homework is set and marked regularly and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Marking is thorough and contains clear guidelines for pupils on how to improve their work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ask challenging questions. Work is carefully structured to meet the needs of the less able and the gifted and talented pupils.
86. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear focus on direction and innovative ideas. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, with very good assessment and tracking of pupil progress, promotes high standards. Self-assessment has recently been introduced in Years 7 and 10 that is proving to be very successful in motivating pupils. Very good use is made of external links such as with local universities and visiting speakers. The new laboratories provide very good accommodation and the excellent displays around the department are informative and enhance learning. Resources are good but some of the larger equipment is becoming dated and will need to be replaced. Technical support is very good at present but the new Science College status means that this will be insufficient in future. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement of pupils across the school is unsatisfactory

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and as a result pupils are now achieving well within individual lessons.
- Leadership and management are good. A clear focus is now given to improving pupils' standards and achievement
- There is insufficient time in Years 7 to 9 to deliver the planned programmes of study and the rotational arrangement with design and technology results in uneven learning.
- The provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement to ICT

Commentary

87. Standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. In previous years pupils have received little or no ICT teaching and as a result pupils in Year 9 do not have the knowledge, skills and understanding that are expected at this stage of learning. Insufficient time is available to deliver the planned programmes of study and the rotation of ICT and design and technology lessons makes continuity and progression difficult; only one third of pupils have received lessons so far this year because of the way in which the curriculum is organised. In work seen standards are average with boys and girls achieving well in lessons. Pupils have the use of a computer each in lessons and pupils in Years 7 and 8 confidently and independently use the school's computer system to store and retrieve their work and to find information from the Internet. They use spreadsheets effectively to model and use presentation and word-processing software effectively. In 2003 and 2004 no pupils in the school followed an ICT examination course in Years 10 and 11, and there is no direct teaching of ICT by specialist teachers. Pupils do not receive their entitlement to ICT and few opportunities are provided for pupils to extend their skills further. Therefore achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. A small number of gifted and talented pupils follow a course in key skills and their standards are average.
88. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are very well planned to provide a series of interesting activities which support pupils' learning well. Resources from the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are being used well and ICT is used well by the teachers in class to stimulate learning. As a result pupils appear keen to learn and apply themselves well to their tasks. Pupils' work is being assessed regularly and constructively so that pupils know what they have to do to improve although feedback in lessons could be improved so that pupils know how well they are doing at each stage of learning. Pupils are achieving well in lessons because teachers make it very clear what has to be done through clear objectives. Pupils use the school's ICT resources very well outside of the school day for homework and coursework.
89. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In a very short time significant improvements have been made to improve the quality of provision in Years 7 to 9. A clear focus has been given to improving pupils' standards and achievement through very good schemes of work and clear plans for development. In addition, very good assessment procedures have been introduced to ensure a more reliable assessment of pupils' standards and achievement. Assessment procedures, however, do not yet include ICT work done by pupils in other subjects.
90. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory from a very low base. A computer network with network management and technical support has been established and the number and quality of ICT resources have significantly improved. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 still do not receive their full entitlement and subjects do not make a contribution to the assessment of pupils' standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. ICT use across the curriculum is satisfactory. Interactive whiteboards and digital projectors are used well to capture pupils' interest and get lessons off to a brisk start. Computers are used

effectively to support learning in some subjects such as English, music and careers. At present limited access to computers makes it difficult for some subjects, for example science, to use ICT fully to support learning. ICT is used well to motivate pupils with special educational needs and to enhance their learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in response to good teaching.
- Standards are above average.
- Fieldwork enhances what is learnt in the classroom.
- Pupils' positive attitudes contribute well to their learning.
- More helpful comments on pupils' work would help them improve further.

Commentary

92. Standards at the end of Year 9 are slightly above average. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 relative to their prior attainment on entry is good, as a result of good teaching. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate well their understanding of the geographical processes and the impact they have on the environment. Pupils show an empathy with people living in the Amazon Rainforest and an understanding of the various interests in that area. Pupils used maps, diagrams and, to a lesser extent, graphs well; however, their skills in using computers were limited by the number of occasions on which have they used them. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards their targets.
93. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average. The proportions of pupils gaining A*-C and A*-G are above average. The boys' results were slightly above those of the girls and they were significantly higher than the results of boys nationally. The results for 2004 are about the same. The trend over the last three years is to achieve results that are broadly similar each year.
94. Standards of pupils' work are above national expectations at the end of Year 11. Achievement relative to standards at the end of Year 9 shows good improvement. Pupils make good progress in their geographic knowledge, understanding and use of geographic skills. Pupils of all abilities had progressed well in their understanding of the problems of tourism in the National Parks. The writing and presentation skills improve significantly over time. The use of key words in lessons is having a positive effect, developing pupils' literacy and enhancing their vocabularies. Fieldwork enhances what has been learnt in the classroom and pupils learn to use their own initiative. Pupils' positive attitudes towards class and homework enhance standards. Pupils are able to discuss issues well; good oral skills and good literacy supports good achievement in geography.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good and assessment is being used well to enhance learning. Teachers plan their lessons well with appropriate learning objectives, which they sometimes share with pupils. They draw on a good range of resources to provide activities to stimulate thinking and interest and to help pupils' learning. The introduction of the interactive whiteboard brings a new dimension to teaching grabbing the pupils' interest and attention but the use of computers for research by pupils is not so well developed. Many pupils work well in lessons and benefit from the opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Marking is regular with some useful comments but further examples of helpful comments would benefit pupils.

96. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for improvement. Schemes of work are being reviewed and the use of fieldwork successfully extends what is learnt in the classroom. The development plan has clear action points and some have already been achieved. Monitoring is in place and is having some effect. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with all issues mentioned in the last report being successfully addressed.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has led to much improved examination results in 2004
- Good use of a range of activities and effective use of resources result in interesting lessons
- New leadership has led to good improvement
- There are insufficient historical visits

Commentary

97. By the end of Year 9 standards are average. Pupils' achievement relative to prior attainment is good, as some pupils come into the school with below average attainment in history and have difficulty in analysing sources and answering questions. They achieve well because they are positive about their learning and they receive good teaching. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of events over time. Pupils in all years handle source material well and there is evidence that they understand interpretation and bias. Higher attaining pupils can write well on a given topic and benefit from being given opportunities to extend their writing. Other groups make good progress in their writing. Literacy skills and the use of historical language improve significantly over time.
98. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average. Although the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C was below, those attaining A*-G were above those gained nationally. The results of the girls were slightly better than the boys'. Results in 2004 are much improved due to better quality of teaching. The trend over the last three years shows improvement particularly when 2004 is considered. Standards are average at the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement relative to standards at the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils are confident in the use of source material and this greatly helps them in their understanding of developments over time. Pupils learn well independently, in groups and in pairs and are able to write well about what they have learned.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good command of their subject. Well-planned, interesting lessons result in enthusiastic pupils and good learning. Teachers draw on a range of activities and resources and teaching styles are increasingly varied. Questioning is skilful and this together with oral assessment helps pupils to understand and reinforce their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress particularly when supported. Homework is set regularly and there is evidence of it being used in subsequent lessons to check progress. Marking is regular with some useful comments on how pupils can improve and some pupils had taken the opportunity to use such comments to improve on previous work.
100. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The arrival of a new head of department is beginning to have an impact. Leadership and management are good. There are the vision and direction to take the department forward. The schemes of work have recently been reviewed but historical visits are not being used effectively to support learning. Citizenship is built into planning and is taught well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson about Roman government pupils

proved perceptive. Accommodation is satisfactory and displays have been used well to celebrate the good work of pupils. Monitoring of teaching and learning has started and is beginning to improve the quality of teaching. The subject area has effectively dealt with all the issues from the last report.

Religious education

Overall, provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The locally agreed syllabus is not being adequately taught to the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11; consequently standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory
- GCSE teaching is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and very effective; standards are well above average and pupils are achieving very well
- There are not enough visits to places of worship or prayer in order to enhance pupils' learning
- GCSE religious education is becoming an increasingly popular option choice at the end of Year 9
- There is not enough monitoring of the teaching of non-specialist staff, some of which is dull

Commentary

101. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the main world religions, particularly Christianity and Judaism. They recognise the importance of the Holy Spirit to Christians and can interpret their beliefs in symbolic form. Knowledge and understanding of the Bible as 'Old' and 'New' Testaments, and how fundamentalist and liberal interpretations differ are above average. Knowledge and understanding of other world religions are below average and pupils are not yet recognising the common experiences, which they share with people of different faiths.
102. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average. The number of pupils entered for the full GCSE examination has been rising steadily over the past three years. Results prior to 2004 were equally good but because of the small numbers involved national comparisons are not possible.
103. Standards in Years 10 and 11 overall are below average and pupils are underachieving. Standards in the GCSE group are well above average and pupils are achieving very well. They have a very good factual knowledge of the main doctrines of Christianity. The vast majority of pupils do not take the GCSE course, however, and for these pupils standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Religious education is taught alongside personal, social and health education and citizenship. These three subjects share one lesson a week, which does not give sufficient time for pupils to cover the locally agreed syllabus in sufficient breadth or depth. Consequently pupils have only a superficial knowledge of life as a journey and do not have time to explore questions about life's meaning and purpose or reflect on what they have learnt in developing their own beliefs and values.
104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and overall. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching by specialists is good; however, weaknesses in subject knowledge of non-specialists and the mundane methods used to convey information and aid understanding restrict the overall quality of pupils' learning. GCSE teaching is very good. Teachers use methods that are very effective in helping pupils learn, and through their own enthusiasm for the subject interest and motivate pupils well. Marking is of very high quality and pupils know clearly what they have to do to improve their work. Consequently pupils in this group learn very well. Teaching of non-GCSE pupils in Years 10

and 11 is good. Tasks set are interesting and challenging and there is good evidence that the pupils are learning well. However, because the time devoted to religious education is not enough for them to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus they are not attaining the standards they are capable of and are underachieving. There are no opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning about different religions through outside visits to places of worship, including churches, cathedrals, mosques and temples.

105. The leadership and management of religious education are unsatisfactory because the statutory requirement to fully teach the locally agreed syllabus to all pupils is not being met and the weaknesses identified in the previous report have not been tackled. The GCSE course has been successfully introduced, and recruitment to the subject at the end of Year 9 is at an all-time high. Religious education is becoming a very popular and successful GCSE subject. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
106. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements to teach the locally agreed syllabus to all pupils are still not being met and standards overall in Years 10 and 11 remain below average. However, there has been an improvement in provision as GCSE courses are now offered and teaching in Years 10 and 11 has improved. However, there is not enough monitoring of the teaching of other members of the department in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to improve standards. Not enough work has been done to improve the quality of teaching of non-specialists in Years 7 to 9 where dull teaching holds back achievement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results in electronics are outstanding in 2004 and in graphics they have been above average
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in electronics and graphics
- Pupils sustain good attitudes and behaviour in difficult circumstances
- GCSE results in resistant materials and food technology have significantly declined
- Extreme staffing problems have led to declining standards

Commentary

107. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly at the level of the national expectation, boys gaining slightly better results than girls. Standards are similar to those observed during the previous inspection and constitute satisfactory achievement from the average level of attainment on entry. The best work is very imaginative and well presented showing good design. There is an emerging strength in graphics illustrated by creative designing evident in displays in the graphics studio. Pupils sustain good attitudes and behaviour in difficult circumstances; they apply themselves well and do their best. Behaviour is usually good.
108. GCSE examinations results have declined to below the national average. Within the overall picture there is considerable variation; results in resistant materials dropped from well above average to well below average during this period. In food technology, also, though results over the last two years have been consistent at below average, they constitute a drop from well above average in 2002. There has been an absence of the highest grades in both resistant materials and food technology. These results represent underachievement during the last two years that is due directly to staffing problems. By contrast, results in electronics have improved and were outstanding in 2004. This reflects pupils' work in electronics, which is well

thought out and well presented. Examination results in graphics are consistently above the national average. Electronics and graphics results reflect stable staffing and consistently good teaching. Achievement is very good in electronics, good in graphics and unsatisfactory in resistant materials and food technology. Achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

109. The quality of teaching and learning observed was good. Teaching of electronics and graphics in Years 10 and 11 is consistently good, lessons are well planned and the level of challenge is high. Clear explanations help pupils to improve their work. Individual needs are carefully considered and pupils with special educational needs are able to achieve well. However, staff absence has become a major problem that has impacted on the quality of teaching overall. Two senior members of staff have been not in attendance for protracted periods and were not present during the inspection. Staff absences have resulted in pupils in Years 10 and 11 falling behind in their work in resistant materials and the quality of teaching overall is satisfactory at best. Deficiencies in technical assistance have arisen since the previous inspection due to frequent absence. Teaching staff absences have had a major adverse effect on pupils' achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11.
110. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Day-to-day organisation of the department is effective due to the dedication and commitment of a relatively inexperienced staff who are doing a valiant job in the present situation. However, there is no clear leadership and the department cannot move forward under these circumstances. The accommodation for design and technology has improved greatly. The department is now housed in refurbished workshops, which are equipped with new furniture and resources. A new computer suite has also been provided. However, staffing problems have resulted in an unacceptable delay in fully commissioning these areas.
111. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 have remained in line with the national average but, during the same period, standards in Years 10 and 11 have declined markedly in some areas. The most significant change has been in resistant materials but standards in food technology have also fallen substantially.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good because teachers use expert knowledge to plan lessons very well
- GCSE examination results are well above average
- Assessment procedures are very good; pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- Lack of visits to galleries denies pupils the opportunity to see original works
- Cramped accommodation and lack of storage restrict the size of work that can be done and make organisation of three-dimensional work difficult
- ICT resources do not meet the department's needs for reference or creative purposes

Commentary

112. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Overall, girls' work shows more diligent research and often-greater effort given to refining and improving it. Achievement is very good in relation to pupils' widely varying standards and experience when they entered the school. Pupils are introduced to a wide variety of media and teaching processes; this leads to rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. The vocabulary of the subject is taught well and used

routinely so that pupils are able to discuss their work and ideas with confidence. All work is related to that of other artists and to the work of other cultures, enabling pupils to see their work in a wider context. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress.

113. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average and provisional results for 2004 show further improvement. Pupils did better than in most of their other subjects. Girls did better than boys, particularly in the award of the highest grades. Work seen during the inspection matches closely these assessments and results. . By Year 11, standards are well above average overall. Teachers build well on the solid foundation of earlier work so that pupils achieve very well. Girls' standards are higher overall, partly because of a more focused approach to research and wider exploration of possibilities but also because the standards of the boys beginning the GCSE course are lower.
114. Teaching is very good and promotes very good learning. The key strength is in teachers' command of their subject that they use to plan interesting and engaging lessons. Teachers provide expert demonstrations so that pupils understand what is expected of them and see what they might achieve. Lessons have a purposeful atmosphere in which little time is wasted because pupils are given interesting things to do and are challenged to do their best. Pupils respond to the good relationships that teachers establish and their expectations of effort, by bringing very good attitudes to their work. Lessons involving three-dimensional work are made difficult by the cramped accommodation. The use of the same tables for both three and two-dimensional work creates additional difficulties of maintaining a suitable working environment for both.
115. Assessment procedures are exemplary and teachers make very good use of both day-to-day and longer-term methods to promote pupils' achievement. A particularly good feature is the way that teachers and pupils review homework together so that ideas are shared and pupils know how well they are doing. Pupils respond very well when they analyse work critically as a group; comments are always positive and usually well thought out. They also learn how their own work might be improved and often choose to rework pieces to attain a higher standard. Teachers provide examples of levels and standards in language that pupils understand and to which they can relate their work. Very basic ICT equipment restricts opportunities to support learning through research, and for creative use. Lack of visits to galleries denies pupils the opportunity to be inspired by original works.
116. Very good leadership and management have developed a very successful department with a clear vision for improvement. Issues from the previous report have been analysed and tackled systematically and well. The way that teachers are managing the long-term absence of the head of department is a credit to them but also reflects well on the design of both the curriculum and the well-established management systems. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained and have improved at GCSE. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and to the school's wider aims

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and very good management are responsible for very good teaching and learning overall
- Very good teaching and learning are enhanced by excellent accommodation and the use of very good resources
- Very many pupils take advantage of the very good opportunities to develop their interests in instrumental music and singing

- Although assessment is thorough, it is not yet being used effectively to help pupils' understanding of how they can improve

Commentary

117. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with few musical skills or experiences and standards are below expectation. However, by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Very many pupils are showing good competence in keyboard work and very good practical knowledge about chords. Achievement is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are making particularly good progress and musically gifted and talented pupils are also achieving very well.
118. GCSE results in 2004 were above average compared to those in all other schools and were in line with the pattern of recent years. The department has maintained a standard of all entrants achieving a pass of grade G or higher. Higher standards in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 are a reflection of the very recent marked improvement in resources and accommodation. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. ICT is used well to enhance good compositional skills and presentation.
119. Teaching and learning are very good overall and both have a marked enthusiasm that characterises the whole department. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are uniformly excellent and they respond most positively to the teaching, which is never less than good and sometimes is excellent. This high quality teaching is the outcome of excellent subject knowledge and very good planning. It is supported by the very good use of the interactive whiteboard technology, which considerably enhances the pupils' learning. The teaching frequently challenges the pupils who respond very well to the given briefs and work very productively. Pupils organise themselves well and work co-operatively in groups. Both teaching and learning are enhanced by the excellent new accommodation and by the very good new resources for keyboard activity. Assessment is good; it is well organised and thorough in providing information about pupils' standards and progress.
120. Leadership is excellent. It has the highest aspirations for the development of the department and critical self-review plans for the highest standards. Management is very good; it is highly confident and extremely well informed. Opportunities for making music within the curriculum are very good and very many pupils pursue their interests in instrumental music and singing by having lessons with the visiting teachers who give excellent support to the department. A particular feature of this aspect is the very considerable interest and strengths in singing and music theatre skills, so excellently demonstrated in a lunchtime concert which was received with warmth and admiration by the very large audience of both pupils and staff.
121. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The very recent move into the excellent new accommodation has already made a strong impact upon the provision for the subject and has answered all the problems, identified in the previous report, relating to lack of space and noise intrusion.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE short course examination are outstanding
- Teaching and learning are very good
- The leadership and management of the department are very good; staff share a commitment to raising standards

- Very good relationships and good lesson management mean pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject
- The indoor accommodation is barely adequate

Commentary

122. By the end of Year 9 standards in physical education are above the national average. This represents very good achievement by pupils who have limited experience and skills when they enter Year 7. In games pupils demonstrate good levels of ball-handling skills and spatial awareness, and are developing the skills that will enable them to compete successfully in a wide range of sporting activities. In dance pupils compose and perform accurately and expressively and successfully communicate their intentions through movement.
123. Results in short course GCSE have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now outstanding. In the 2003 and 2004 examinations all the pupils entered gained an A*-C grade. A group of Year 11 pupils have also successfully gained the Junior Sports Leaders award, a national award for young people who wish to improve their sports organisational skills.
124. By the end of Year 11 the overall standard of attainment in the non-examination course is also better than that seen nationally. For those taking the GCSE course standards are also above average with noticeable strengths in the theoretical elements of the course. These are well linked to the practical work and result in well above average levels of knowledge and understanding. Many pupils take part in many inter-school games and competitions and gain much success. A good number have represented Lancashire in a range of sporting activities. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
125. Overall teaching and learning are very good and are major strengths of the department. Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Lessons are very well structured with a choice of tasks that promote a high level of interest and effort, and enable all pupils to make progress. There is an expectation that pupils will work hard, behave well, and achieve well, and overwhelmingly these expectations are met. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, given sensitive and skilful support, and reach levels of attainment that are commendable.
126. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the department. High quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and aids the delivery of the subject. Comprehensive records of pupils' achievement are kept, and are used to influence curricular planning. Indoor accommodation is barely adequate; it is old and worn. In 2002 the department gained Sportsmark, a national recognition of high quality provision. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, including significant improvement in examination results and an extensive improvement in the range of extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

A lesson of business studies was sampled and teaching was found to be good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Provision for personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average
- Provision for sex education is good
- The teaching of study skills makes a good contribution to GCSE examination success
- Pupils have contributed well to the development of the personal, social and health education programme and this has resulted in them enjoying and valuing personal, social and health education lessons
- The short 35-minute period makes it difficult to deliver effective lessons and slows achievement
- There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and the curriculum

Commentary

127. Standards are above average in Year 7. Pupils have good oral skills and are very willing to contribute to class discussions, their ideas are sensible and they have a good understanding of current issues. By the end of Year 9 standards are also above average. Pupils understand social and moral dilemmas and can discuss issues such as homelessness at a high level. Their good oral skills and vocabulary contribute to their progress in personal, social and health education. Achievement is satisfactory through Years 7 to 9. Standards are also above average and achievement is by the end of Year 11. Pupils report that they very much enjoy their personal, social and health education lessons and this has influenced their choices in further education with a good number planning to study A-levels with a significant social content.
128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but varies from very good to unsatisfactory. A special team of teachers with an interest in personal, social and health education has been recently established in Years 7 to 9. There is now a real sense of team spirit and a concentration on developing an appropriate scheme of work. These arrangements have the potential to improve the quality of teaching. The best lessons were well planned and organised with clear expectations of what pupils were expected to learn. A good range of activities kept pupils interested and involved. Where teaching was unsatisfactory planning and the teacher's subject knowledge was insecure and pupils were not all actively involved; therefore standards of behaviour slipped. There is often insufficient time to complete activities in the short 35-minute slot. Teachers try hard to use the national strategy for teaching pupils in Years 7 to 9 but there is insufficient time to fit in a productive three-part lesson. This factor, together with the uneven quality of teaching, depresses achievement, resulting in achievement being satisfactory where there is the potential for it to be good.
129. A new curriculum is being developed in Years 7 to 9 in order to tailor the content more closely to pupils' needs. The curriculum and teaching team in Year 10 and 11 are well established but current arrangements give little time to the delivery of health education, including sex and drug education. This affects the depth of information that can be supplied. Statutory requirements are met concerning sex and drug education. Outside speakers are used well in these areas. Sex education is of good quality overall. The teaching of study skills makes a significant contribution to examination success. Pupils learn how to revise successfully, and effectively manage their time. Pupils are able to discuss their needs with the co-ordinator and pupils appreciate the positive response to their suggestions and concerns. Pupils have contributed well to the programme and this makes them value their lessons.
130. Leadership of the recently appointed head of department is good. There is a clear direction and an agenda for improvement. Management is satisfactory but monitoring of teaching and the curriculum needs to be improved to smooth out inconsistencies in the quality of provision. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall; very recent improvement is good.

Citizenship

131. Not enough lessons or work were seen to be able to report on teaching and learning, standards or achievement. The citizenship curriculum is planned for other subjects to teach at times of their own choosing. The original plan, which was drawn up two years ago, gives clear guidance on which subjects could help to deliver the programmes of study. However, there has been no formal monitoring of when and how or if this is being done.

132. There is some valuable citizenship work being done in lessons and through wider whole-school activities; for example, the school was an active participant in Lancashire County Council's Local Democracy Week. Some good work is done in form periods and in personal, social and health education history and religious education. However, what is being done is not being monitored or co-ordinated and delivery is piecemeal and unregulated. The school cannot be sure that all elements of National Curriculum citizenship are being taught. The requirement to assess all pupils in this subject and report to parents is not being met and therefore provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its previous inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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