

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Droylsden, Manchester

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106275

Headteacher: Mr C W Penter

Lead inspector: Ms J McKenna

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th October 2004

Inspection number: 268384

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	923
School address:	Fairfield Avenue Droylsden Manchester
Postcode:	M43 6AB
Telephone number:	0161 370 1488
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Lingard

Date of previous inspection: 11 January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Fairfield High School was founded in 1796 and is an average sized 11-16 secondary school for girls in Droylsden in Manchester. It was a Beacon school until August 2004 and it gained specialist science status in September 2004. Over 93 percent of pupils are white. There are small numbers of pupils in a range of other ethnic groups. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language with very few at early stages of English acquisition. A very small number of pupils are refugees, asylum seekers or are in public care. The proportion of students with special educational needs and the proportion with statements are below the national average. Most students with special educational needs have dyslexia or moderate learning difficulties. The socio-economic circumstances of the population immediately surrounding the school, from which it draws most of its pupils, are more deprived than nationally. The profile of the actual pupils attending the school is more positive; the proportion entitled to free school meals, for example, is average. The school is popular and over-subscribed and the pupil population is very stable. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average, and is higher in English than in mathematics and science.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2485	J McKenna	Lead inspector	
9843	S Drake	Lay inspector	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics
19056	G Leech	Team inspector	English
27984	A Whitehall	Team inspector	Science
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
31008	P Rourke	Team inspector	Geography Vocational subjects Special educational needs
30794	G Murray	Team inspector	Citizenship History
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
11975	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music
30198	R Chick	Team inspector	Physical education Work related learning
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Fairfield High school is an **effective** school providing a good education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, pupils attend very regularly and there is a positive ethos. The standards pupils attain are above average and all groups of pupils achieve well. Leadership and management are good, although some aspects of practice are not consistent enough. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is particularly good in history, and in religious education, food and graphics in Years 10 and 11, but it is only satisfactory in resistant materials, and in English and geography in Years 10 and 11.
- The headteacher has created and sustained a good climate for learning which expects and promotes high academic standards, good achievement and very good behaviour.
- Teaching is very good or excellent in a relatively high proportion of lessons.
- Care for pupils is very good; pastoral arrangements are thorough and cater very well for the needs of individuals.
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school do not promote consistency and improvement effectively enough.
- Some aspects of assessment are not well developed, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Deficiencies in accommodation for physical education and music place limitations on the curriculum offered to pupils.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **satisfactory**. The school has maintained the high standards evident then and pupils continue to make good progress. Teaching has improved. Of the two main issues identified as requiring improvement, provision for ICT has been successfully tackled and, although facilities for physical education are not yet adequate, the school has secured funding for a new sports hall which is due to be built soon. A considerable number of minor weaknesses were also identified. Some these have been addressed well, such as provision for spiritual development and a reduction in the amount of litter, but others, such as aspects of assessment and monitoring and evaluation, have not yet improved sufficiently.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils of all backgrounds and ability **achieve well** throughout the school. The standards attained by pupils by the end of Years 9 and 11 are **above average** overall. Results in national tests and examinations in almost all subjects are also above average, and in some subjects are high. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE in 2003 was above average. Overall GCSE results, however, were well above average as a high proportion gained grades at A*-G. Achievement is particularly good in history for pupils of all ages, and in religious education, food and graphics for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In English and geography, although pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, it is only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and it is only satisfactory in resistant materials across the school.

Performance compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003

Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	-	A	A	A
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*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’ personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and learning, and they behave very well. Punctuality is good and attendance levels are very high.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. There is a relatively high proportion of very good and excellent teaching, but a small amount is unsatisfactory. Almost all teachers have good subject knowledge and use a good range of tasks and activities that engage pupils and enable them to learn well. Pupils respond well to teachers’ high expectations and work hard. There are shortcomings in a small proportion of lessons which limit pupils’ learning. Assessment is satisfactory. There is some good practice, but the quality is not consistent.

The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory and opportunities for enrichment are good. Staffing and resources are good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but has some weaknesses. The school provides very good quality care for pupils and offers them good support and guidance. It takes their views into account well. The school’s partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community are all satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**, including that of the headteacher and of other key staff. The governance is good.

PARENTS’ AND PUPILS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school. Pupils are pleased to be at the school and value the opportunities provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and ensure that the outcomes are used to promote improvement, consistency and the sharing of good practice.
- Improve arrangements for assessment, especially in Years 7 to 9, and ensure that the information gained is used to promote improvement in pupils’ achievement.
- Take action to ensure that pupils’ achievement in resistant materials throughout the school and in English and geography in Years 10 and 11 improves.
- Improve accommodation for physical education and music.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Rectify the omissions in the governors’ annual report to parents and the prospectus.
- Fully comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils of all backgrounds and ability achieve well throughout the school. The standards attained by pupils in Years 9 and 11 are **above average** overall. Results in national tests and examinations in almost all subjects are also above average, and in some subjects, are high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in the large majority of subjects.
- Pupils achieve well during their time at Fairfield High School. Pupils' very regular attendance and positive attitudes towards their work and the good quality of teaching contribute significantly to their good achievement.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in history and in religious education, food and graphics in Years 10 and 11.
- Achievement is only satisfactory in resistant materials, and in English and geography in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented all achieve well.

Commentary

- 1 The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are above average overall. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. These results were well above the average for similar schools in English, but were below average in mathematics and well below average in science. In 2004, results were slightly lower in all three subjects, in part due to the prior attainment of the particular group of pupils and in English also because of the impact of some staffing difficulties. There have been recent developments in teaching and the curriculum within the mathematics and science departments and standards in Year 9 seen during the inspection were above average in all three subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.2 (38.4)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.1 (36.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.5 (34.0)	33.6 (33.3)

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

- 2 The teachers' assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 2003 in other subjects indicate that standards were average in music and physical education, below average in modern foreign languages and art and above average in all other subjects. In 2004, results varied from the previous year in most subjects with some increasing, some decreasing and no consistent pattern evident. In fact the teachers' assessment judgments in some of the subjects are not accurate. For example, they were too

generous in art, design technology and ICT. During the inspection, standards seen were above average in the large majority of subjects. The exceptions were modern foreign languages and physical education where standards were average. In physical education a significant number of pupils enter the school with below average standards and in modern foreign languages, standards have improved from below average due to changes in the way writing is taught. It was not possible to judge standards in citizenship due to lack of evidence.

- 3 In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining 5+A*-C grades at GCSE was above the national average. Pupils' average points score was well above average due to the well above average proportion gaining A*-G grades. These results are well above those from similar schools. In 2004 results improved on almost all measures.

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	62 (57)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.4 (39.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 188 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 4 The GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average or higher in each subject, with the sole exception of German where results were below average. Results were average in resistant materials, French, geography, and physical education, above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and well above average in art, history, food, graphics and business and religious education. In 2004, results in most subjects improved. They were lower in only English language, art and religious education. In English the decline was due in part to the staffing difficulties, and in art and religious education the results nevertheless compared well with the expectations for the pupils involved. Standards seen in Year 11 during the inspection were well above average in mathematics, history, religious education, food and graphics. They were above average in all other subjects except for geography and core physical education and in the few vocational courses on offer, where they were average. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in citizenship.
- 5 Pupils achieve well during their time at Fairfield. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve very well in history and achieve well in all other subjects although achievement in resistant materials is less good than in other areas of the design technology curriculum. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve very well in history, religious education, food and graphics. Their achievement is satisfactory in English, geography and resistant materials. They achieve well in all other subjects. The good quality of teaching and the fact that pupils attend very regularly and have positive attitudes towards their work all contribute to their good achievement. Where achievement is better or worse than good, this is usually a reflection of the quality of teaching in those particular subjects.
- 6 Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well due to the good support they receive from their class teachers and the good support from learning support assistants where it is provided. In 2003 all pupils with SEN attained at least one GCSE pass.

Standards were similar in 2004 when a reduced timetable helped some pupils with SEN in Year 11 to gain five or more passes. The school identifies 10 percent of its pupils as gifted and talented. These pupils achieve well overall and in some subjects in particular, such as in art, business studies, food and history, where they attain a high proportion of grades A* and A. The proportion of A* and A grades gained in drama, English language, English literature, geography and German were lower. In 2004 the proportions gaining the highest grades increased slightly. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well.

- 7 Up until 2003, the latest year for which there is national comparative data, the trend of improvement at the end of Year 9 was above the national trend, although the results in 2004 declined. In Years 10 and 11 the trend was below the national trend but the results in 2004 were higher. The school's targets are appropriately challenging; some, but not all, were met in 2004.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and learning, and they behave very well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Punctuality is good and attendance levels are very high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school operates as a very orderly community, with a business-like atmosphere.
- Pupils like learning and are prepared to work hard.
- Relationships are very good and pupils co-operate well.
- Pupils' very regular attendance means that they do not have gaps in their learning.

Commentary

- 8 Pupils, parents and staff are all very aware of the school's long history and work hard to uphold its tradition as a serious educational establishment. Starting at the top, all staff have high expectations of behaviour and attitude, which pupils live up to very well. Despite the difficulties of narrow corridors and stairways, movement around the building is very sensible and reasonably swift because pupils understand how communities work most effectively to the benefit of all. In lessons, assemblies, the dining room and at break times, pupils behave very well. They are helpful and pleasant to meet, carry out their responsibilities diligently and can be trusted to behave in a mature manner. The number of exclusions is relatively low. The school sticks to its clear guidelines about what is unacceptable but staff work very hard to help those few pupils who find it difficult to comply to develop self discipline. In lessons and around school, the great majority of staff intervene at an early stage, usually in a positive manner, at the first hint of misbehaviour. Pupils, including the small number with behavioural difficulties, respond very well to such reminders.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census

No of pupils on roll

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
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White – British	856	39	1
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	11		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	5		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4		
Chinese	8		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	5		

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

- 9 Pupils understand that they are at school to learn, and the great majority of them enjoy doing so. They wear their uniform smartly, arrive at lessons with the right equipment, settle quickly, take care with the presentation of their work and are prepared to ask sensible questions when they do not understand something. They are generally eager to volunteer answers and opinions, sustain their concentration well and complete their homework studiously. There is very little unfinished work in their books and large numbers of pupils take part in extra activities at the end of the school day. In a small minority of lessons, pupils become distracted, talk over each other and the teacher and, in some instances, dictate to the teacher how she or he should run the lesson, leading to an unsatisfactory working environment. These incidents are rare but occur across the range of year groups within the school and in several subjects.
- 10 In addition to being business-like, the school's atmosphere is friendly and harmonious because the quality of relationships is very good. Pupils of different ages, ethnicity and ability are tolerant of each other, co-operate well and generally enjoy each other's company. Pupils also relate well with staff; they appreciate that staff work hard on their behalf and lessons usually progress in a good humoured manner. Staff treat pupils with respect and pupils generally return the compliment. There is very little bullying or other forms of harassment and the great majority of pupils consider that, when any is brought to staff's notice, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- 11 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. The school recognises the impact these aspects have on pupils' achievements, attitudes and personal development and have taken active steps to develop provision in these areas. For example, a school chaplain was appointed after the last inspection to promote spiritual development, and more recently, a Life Skills course has been introduced which covers many relevant topics. Although some good additional contributions are made by specific departments, not all yet

regard it as their responsibility to contribute to these aspects. The school recognises that co-ordination of overall provision requires development.

- 12 Spiritual development has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is especially good in religious education and history, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues such as life after death and the Holocaust. The extra-curricular 'Eternity Group' run by the school chaplain provides those with a particular interest to pursue thought-provoking issues and questions. Assemblies are relevant and worthwhile, and some are particularly well delivered, capturing pupils' interest well. The attention given to the 'Thought for the Day' and related opportunities for reflection in form periods is inconsistent and as a result the statutory requirement to deliver a daily act of collective worship is not met. The school promotes good morality and social awareness in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance, both generally and within lessons. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the school council and the prefect system and they actively engage with such opportunities, as they do with the numerous fund raising appeals for a wide range of charities. The very good relationships help to ensure successful social situations, and enable the pupils to cope well with the lack of social space available for them. Cultural awareness is promoted in a wide variety of ways, and includes visits abroad and a twinning project with schools in South Africa. An appreciation of the diverse nature of society is promoted in music and art. The Life Skills course makes a good contribution to pupils' awareness of relevant issues such as that of asylum seekers, through which pupils are encouraged to understand the issues involved in a sensitive and positive manner.
- 13 School staff work extremely hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly and punctually. On a daily basis, they monitor absence and take prompt action to determine the reason and hasten the absentees' return. The systems are simple and highly effective. In the first five weeks of the current academic year, despite a number of pupils being taken on holiday, the school's average attendance is well above the national annual figures and over half the pupils have attended for 100 per cent of the possible time. This, combined with the good punctuality of the great majority of pupils, makes a very good contribution to the academic standards that they achieve.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	0.0
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The breadth of curricular opportunities is **satisfactory** and opportunities for enrichment are **good**. Staffing and resources are **good** but, although accommodation is **satisfactory** overall, there are some significant weaknesses. The school provides **very good** quality care for pupils and offers them **good** support and guidance. It takes their views into account **well**. The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community are all **satisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall. In over two out of five lessons they are very good or excellent, but in a small number they are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are particularly good in history and religious education where pupils are strongly encouraged to develop and express their own views, and in food and graphics.
- Almost all teachers have good subject knowledge and use a good range of tasks and activities that engage pupils and enable them to learn well.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and work hard.
- There are shortcomings in a small proportion of lessons which limit pupils' learning.
- There is some good practice in assessment but the quality is not consistent, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

14 The quality of teaching and learning in the school are good. Teaching in over two out of five lessons, a relatively high proportion, is very good with some excellent. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and it is strength of the school, making a significant contribution to the good achievement of pupils. Teaching and learning are very good in history, ICT, religious education, food and graphics and are good, overall, in all other subjects. However, in most subjects the quality is not consistent and can vary from unsatisfactory to excellent. The satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching is spread across a range of subjects.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 132 Lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 (6%)	50 (38%)	48 (36%)	21 (16%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

15 With the exception of the Life Skills course, teachers are specialists in the subjects they teach and have good subject knowledge. This enables them to give very clear explanations, and to draw on background knowledge and examples that bring the subject to life and for the pupils which captures their interest well. Planning and preparation is thorough and in most lessons a good range of well explained tasks and activities enables pupils to build on prior learning and develop their understanding well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils respond positively to these expectations and they work hard. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and teachers help to create a positive climate for learning and pupils feel confident to express their views and ask questions. A positive feature of some lessons, such as history and religious education, is the extent to which pupils are encouraged to develop their personal views and to be able to express them with confidence. In many practical lessons, such as food and graphics, the teaching of theory is very well integrated into practical aspects and pupils learn to plan and work with a good degree of independence. Most of the time pupils work with maturity whether working alone or with others. Pupils respond well to the practical approaches and

broader range of teaching styles evident in some of the vocational courses and WRL activities.

- 16 In a small proportion of lessons teaching is not of this standard, and there is a lack of clarity, variety and pace so that pupils' interest is not engaged which limits their learning. However, even in these lessons, such as when the work involves copying out of textbooks, pupils often work diligently nevertheless. On the rare occasions when there are weaknesses in classroom management, pupils lose concentration, chatter and do not respond well to their teachers and therefore do not learn what they should. There are shortcomings in some of the weaker lessons. Work is not always modified enough to take account of the needs of different groups within the class. The endings of lessons are sometimes too hurried so that pupils' learning is not consolidated enough. In some subjects ICT is not used enough to support learning. Some good homework is set which helps to progress pupils' learning, but the provision of it is not consistent.
- 17 Pupils with SEN and those who speak English as an additional language are taught by subject specialists and experience the same good teaching as other pupils. The needs of SEN pupils are identified well. Teachers provide them with good individual support. Learning support assistants work well with pupils to whom they are assigned but they often do not help others in the class who could benefit. Tasks and resources are sometimes modified to help pupils with SEN learn but this is not done as extensively or as effectively as necessary. Where work in lessons is challenging generally it places appropriate demands on gifted and talented pupils, but sometimes the demands are no greater than on those of their peers.
- 18 Assessment arrangements overall are satisfactory. There are some strengths. The school records and analyses internal and external assessment data in Years 10 and 11 thoroughly. There is a good system in place for analysing GCSE results. Heads of department are expected to analyse value-added for the teachers in their departments and to adjust department and curricular planning as a result. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 and setting targets for them are good and pupils in these year groups are mentored. Although there is some good practice in Years 7 to 9, in general, it is not as strong as with the older pupils. Departmental practice varies. Almost all have systems for regular assessment of pupils in place. Procedures are very good in history and geography, and have developed well recently in some other subjects such as modern foreign languages and ICT. However, although satisfactory overall, there is some inconsistency both across departments and within some, and there are aspects of practice that are not well developed. In particular, there is not enough use made of the outcomes of assessment to promote improvements in practice. The quality of marking and on-going feedback to pupils varies in quality and teachers' assessments made at the end of Year 9 are not accurate in some subjects. In citizenship and WRL (work related learning), systems for assessing pupils are not fully in place.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is **satisfactory** and opportunities for enrichment are **good**. Staffing and resources are **good** and accommodation is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improved and developing provision of vocational and alternative courses promotes equality and inclusion.
- Provision in history and religious education is very good.
- There is a new, well planned Life Skills course, which incorporates personal, social and health education, citizenship and aspects of work related learning, although it is in the very early stages of implementation.
- There are good levels of enrichment and support outside the school day.
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation for physical education and music, and for pupils' socialising and moving around the school.

Commentary

- 19 In Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum meets pupils' needs. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as business technology, drama and Life Skills. The Life Skills course covers personal, health and social education and citizenship and includes a range of relevant topics that complement other subjects. The personal, social and health education provision includes the required coverage of sex education and education on the mis-use of drugs, as well as attention to a good range of related issues such as relationships and keeping healthy. Pupils' work in drama makes a positive impact on their personal and social development. The use of ICT to help pupils learn is planned for well in some subjects but not all.
- 20 In Years 10 and 11, improvements have been made to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils. The introduction of some vocational and applied GCSE courses alongside the traditional academic provision has increased breadth. These courses help to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion. There is no subject in which provision is unsatisfactory and in most subjects it good. It is very good in religious education and history but is only satisfactory in English, music, citizenship and WRL. In citizenship, the school is in the process of changing the way it covers the curriculum, and although there is good planning in place which indicates that statutory requirements should be met, it does not actually start to be taught until later in the year.
- 21 The school has invested a great deal of energy and resources in planning a new Life Skills course for pupils in all years groups, which started to be implemented from the start of the current academic year. The amount of curriculum time is generous but the course is designed to cover the requirements of personal, health and social education, citizenship, careers education and guidance and work related activities. It is also to be used for visiting speakers, periodic themes and to absorb any initiatives that do not relate solely to specific subjects. The course is well planned but its delivery is in the embryonic stage and it is too soon to assess its impact. The school has yet to decide on what arrangements will be put in place to assess pupils' progress in the component parts of the course and to evaluate the overall impact of provision.
- 22 The school makes satisfactory provision for WRL. Although not statutory in Years 7 to 9, some WRL is included in the curriculum for pupils in these year groups, which is positive. All pupils take a very well planned and organised business technology course and the statutory careers education is to be taught within the Life Skills course. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' understanding of the world of work is further enhanced through an increased range of activity. Careers education is well planned. As part of the Life Skills course all pupils will be taking a GCSE short course in Preparation for Working Life and this is likely to enhance and develop their knowledge and understanding of the real

world of work. Further experience of real work situations is gained through the work experience programme, and for a small proportion, through travel and tourism course placements and leisure and tourism visits. There is coverage of WRL in some subjects, but not all. The coordination of the full range of WRL activity has started, although it is in its early stages, and the school recognises that WRL is an area for development. As yet there is no policy in place to guide practice, but the good work that exists provides a positive basis for future development.

- 23 Pupils with SEN have access to the full curriculum. There is a small amount of additional provision to develop their literacy skills, including some good individual tuition, but little additional provision to develop their numeracy. Some subjects provide work at an appropriate level of difficulty through teaching in ability related sets. In other subjects work is modified to help pupils' learning. However, work is sometimes insufficiently well modified to ensure that pupils with SEN always learn as well as they could. There are too few learning support assistants to provide the ideal amount of support required for pupils with SEN. However, they use their non-contact time to good effect in the preparation of work for their pupils. The school has made a good beginning in providing for the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Ten percent of pupils have been identified as gifted and talented and all staff are aware of who they are. Some enrichment activities have taken place in a few subjects but extension activities to ensure that these pupils achieve to their maximum in all lessons are not yet in place.
- 24 There are just a very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Good provision is made for them, both from staff within the school who have had training in meetings their needs, and from external staff, such as from the LEA and translators. Specific arrangements are made to cater for individual pupils' requirements.
- 25 The school provides a good range of opportunities to enrich the curriculum and teachers give a generous level of support outside the normal school day. Pupils' participation in activities is satisfactory overall, good in the arts and very good in sport.
- 26 The school is successful in recruiting and retaining well qualified teachers. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good overall. The match of support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. Technical support for ICT has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Support in class for pupils with SEN is limited. Staff are well supported and the induction programme and continuing professional development of staff are good.
- 27 Accommodation for most subjects is in suites of rooms and is at least satisfactory for the majority of departments. Although many rooms are small, staff make every effort to make the best use of them. The refurbished laboratories in the new science wing are of a good standard. However, accommodation for music and physical education is unsatisfactory as it was in both subjects at the time of the previous inspection. There are insufficient practice rooms and space for practical work in music, and interior facilities for physical education are poor. The school has put a great deal of effort into securing funding for a new sports hall. This has been successful recently and construction is due to start very soon. The general structure of the building with its narrow corridors and stairways restricts movement about the school and limits access for people with physical disabilities, and there are insufficient areas for the pupils to meet socially. The

fact that the building is listed restricts the adaptations that can be made. The school works hard, however, to make best use of the available accommodation.

- 28 Resources for learning are good overall. In particular, resources for ICT have improved since the previous inspection. There are used well in some subjects, such as history and geography, but access to them is restricted in some other subjects such as English, mathematics and art. There are interactive whiteboards in many areas and their use is increasingly effective. Book provision in the library is limited, but the conversion of an adjacent classroom and its incorporation into the facilities has improved the space and resource for supporting pupils' studies.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **very good** quality care for pupils and offers them **good** support and guidance. It takes their views into account **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral arrangements are comprehensive, thorough and adaptable according to individual need.
- The arrangements to help Year 7 pupils settle are very good.
- The work of the inclusion unit is very effective.
- The monitoring and mentoring procedures help older pupils to know what they should focus on in order to improve, but arrangements are not as good for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

- 29 Parents are, rightly, very positive about the very good care that the school takes of their daughters. Pupils, too, appreciate the friendliness and helpfulness of staff, particularly their availability out of lesson hours for those who have a problem or are finding work difficult. The school welcomes pupils' views and takes good account of them. Over the past year the support arrangements have been streamlined so that the expectations of pupils and staff members are very clear, as are the lines of communication about pastoral matters. Pupils' pastoral care is seen as a whole-school responsibility with the 'Causes for Concern' system highlighting on a termly basis whether each pupil is performing as well as she should be. While there are clearly graded steps leading to different types of support, the arrangements are sufficiently flexible to allow more immediate intervention should the need arise. One means of support is provided by the inclusion unit which, despite its current low level of staffing, gives very good guidance to pupils, helping them to develop strategies to manage their own behaviour. This input, given to groups and individuals, supports pupils very well and means that there is very little disruption in lessons or around school. The high level of care extends to the policies and procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety, both of which are very good. Other required policies, such as for promoting racial harmony, are in place and provide good guidance for staff.
- 30 The school enhances the usual arrangements to ease pupils' transition from their primary schools by very good use of its older pupils to provide extra support. In the summer of Year 6 pupils spend a day at Fairfield, each shadowing a Year 7 girl so that they get a real feel for high school life as well as making new acquaintances. Year 11 prefects are allocated to each Year 7 form group to help and befriend younger pupils in

whatever way they can, along with peer mentors. These are older pupils who have been trained as counsellors and offer support both in form periods and at lunchtimes to those who are feeling in need of a confidence boost. All Year 7 pupils spoken with were very positive about the arrangements and have settled swiftly at their secondary school, which helps them to achieve well.

- 31 In addition to the 'Causes for Concern' system, which mainly relates to individuals' attitudes and behaviour, subject teachers use assessment information to encourage pupils to think about what may be holding them back and what action they should take, provide extra support to those who are struggling and, increasingly, praise for those who are doing well. As of this term, pupils in both Years 10 and 11 will also benefit from formal, structured interviews at twice yearly Review Days. The school partly credits the high success rate in the GCSE examinations in 2004, to such mentoring which was provided for the Year 11 pupils. All the statistical information about pupils is accessible by all the relevant staff so that they have a comprehensive picture of each individual which helps them adjust the support on offer accordingly. The system of monitoring and target setting is not so strong in Years 7 to 9 and the school recognises the need to develop it further for these year groups.
- 32 A comprehensive range of methods is used to identify pupils with SEN and to track their progress. Appropriate individual education plans are in place for all pupils for whom they are required and the needs of pupils are well known to the SEN coordinator and to their subject teachers. There is no specific co-ordinator for the very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Instead the SEN coordinator has oversight of provision for them. Their individual situations and associated needs are well known and catered for.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The schools partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community are all **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the school's provision and supportive of their daughters' education.
- Some communication with parents is of good quality but the school could provide more information about what pupils are learning and how well they are progressing.
- The links with other schools help to spread good practice.
- Community partnership is strengthening rapidly.

Commentary

- 33 The school has been held in high esteem for many years and parents are eager to secure a place there for their daughters. They consider that it delivers exactly what it promises and they support it well by ensuring that their daughters attend very regularly, work hard during the day and complete the work given to do at home. They attend school events and parent consultation evenings in large numbers and are, mostly, very co-operative if the school voices concerns about their daughter. Those parents who have raised concerns themselves praise the speed and effective manner with which the school dealt with them. However, there is no parents association and when the school

has mounted sessions designed to help parents help their daughters with their work, there has been a poor response.

- 34 While the responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive overall, the weakest area emerged as that of communication. Pupils' 'Fairfax' planners are used very well by staff and parents to provide individual information, and the termly newsletters give a lively account of school life. However, neither the prospectus nor the governors' annual report include all the statutorily required information. There is not a particularly close relationship with parents of pupils with SEN and although parents are invited to the annual reviews of pupils with statements of SEN, attendance is low.
- 35 Although pupils' annual reports include the National Curriculum levels at which they are working, teachers' comments are very generalised, depending on a subtle choice of adjective to distinguish between the relative strengths of each individual. Not all subjects provide targets for improvement and many of those that do phrase them more as vague suggestions than clear guidance.
- 36 Through its work when a Beacon school, Fairfield has provided good support, which is much appreciated, to the staff of schools in difficult circumstances. Pupils conduct a French Roadshow in all the school's feeder primaries and there is increasing contact with them since the introduction of the junior sports leader award. The school regularly accepts teacher training students from Manchester University. With the school's new status as a science college, its links with the wider community are set to increase greatly. One member of the department has responsibility for developing links with primary schools and there are also burgeoning links with industry. There is a part-time researcher in residence from Manchester University within the science department. Such initiatives are at an early stage of development but are designed to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff are **good**. The governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has created and sustained a good climate for learning which expects and promotes high academic standards, good achievement and very good behaviour.
- The headteacher and senior staff have devised a good range of well-considered school policies and developed systems for their implementation.
- There is good commitment to and support for staff development through a well-constructed programme of performance management and review.
- Governors have good knowledge and understanding of the school and a commitment to its development.
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not consistent. Procedures do not sufficiently secure improvement, consistency of approach and the sharing of good practice.
- Some statutory requirements are not met.

Commentary

- 37 The leadership of the headteacher is good. He has clear vision, informed by good professional knowledge, which is shared by his senior colleagues. His expectations are high and he has succeeded in maintaining high standards within a positive climate for learning. He is committed to the delegation of responsibility to empower staff and he and his senior team work well together to implement the shared vision and provide consistent leadership. Inconsistencies found by the inspection, however, indicate that the present system lacks some necessary rigour.
- 38 Management is good. Strategic planning is very thorough, with clear objectives and good awareness of the factors affecting the school and its development. There are well-established arrangements for the implementation of policies and the monitoring of their effectiveness but they are not consistently applied. There are inconsistencies indicative of an insufficiently rigorous approach to monitoring, evaluating and taking appropriate and timely action.
- 39 Leadership and management in subject areas are variable, though generally good and in some subjects very good. Arrangements are in place which ensure that departments function efficiently and have clear plans for improving practice. Some good new appointments have been made at middle management level which are having a positive impact after a relatively short time. There are, however, variations in aspects of departmental practice. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic, ranging from well-established to just beginning. The practice of assessment, equally, varies between subjects in its quality and use, though the school is assiduous in recording and analysing internal and external assessments. The monitoring of some other aspects of work, such as whether the daily act of collective worship is being delivered in form time, is not ensuring consistency. There are not enough regular and routine opportunities for professional discourse and action to promote and share the good, sometimes very good, practice within the school. There are arrangements in place for the overall co-ordination of work related learning activities but they are at an early stage of development.
- 40 Since the beginning of this term the post of SEN coordinator has become full time and leadership and management of the provision are now satisfactory although the quality of the provision for pupils with SEN is not directly monitored by the coordinator. The requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with SEN are met. The nominated governor takes an active interest in the department. The recently appointed coordinator for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage of implementing the school's comprehensive policy and has not yet monitored provision.
- 41 The performance management process is well established. The professional development of staff is well managed, carefully balancing school and individual needs to make the best use of the funding available. A good range of in-house training is supplemented by external agencies. There is good support for newly qualified and recently appointed teachers. The link with Manchester University School of Education is strong and there are three associate tutors on the school staff.
- 42 The governance of the school is good. There is a good range of experience and expertise in the governing body. The committee structure enables close focus on aspects of the school to inform decisions in full governors' meetings. Governors are committed to the school and have a good general understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, reinforced by links with curriculum areas. There is a shared perception of

the responsibility to enable all pupils to achieve their potential, and a willingness to challenge when appropriate. Not all statutory requirements are met, however. There are omissions in the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus, and the school is not fully compliant with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

- 43 Financial leadership and management are good. There is oversight by a governors' committee with some finance experience. Strategic management is good. Thorough planning carefully identifies school priorities which are supported by appropriate use of funding. Day to day finances are managed well by an experienced business manager. Governors are regularly updated on the progress of the budget and the principles of best value are properly applied to inform their decisions. There is a large carry forward of unspent funds but it is clearly identified for planned expenditure on the sports hall. Given the below average unit costs and the good outcomes in terms of attainment, achievement and ethos the school is providing good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,072,910	Balance from previous year	63,060
Total expenditure	2,959,149	Balance carried forward to the next	176,821
Expenditure per pupil	3,148		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the national tests for Year 9 in 2003 were well above average and pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in GCSE in 2003 were only a little above the national average and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is only satisfactory.
- Teachers are specialists with good subject knowledge and understanding and good relationships in the classroom encourage pupils to work well.
- Curriculum planning and teaching does not take enough account of meeting pupils' different needs, especially higher attaining pupils.
- Teaching and learning are not adequately monitored.
- The use of ICT by all pupils is not planned for.

Commentary

- 44 Results in the national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average and had improved steadily since 2001. Results were lower in 2004, due in part to some recent staffing difficulties. Current standards are above average. Pupils listen very attentively. Pair and group talk is lively and they contribute willingly to class discussion. Many are enthusiastic to read aloud. The small number of lower attaining pupils make limited contributions to oral work, their responses being brief and simple. Reading skills are good. A good range and variety of increasingly extended pieces of writing is successfully undertaken. Most pupils write with great care, using increasingly vivid language. Few have limited vocabulary or difficulty with grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- 45 GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average in both English and English literature. In 2004, the English results were lower, again, in part due to the staffing difficulties, though results in English literature improved a little. Current standards are above average. Pupils listen very well and contribute actively to class discussion. They respond perceptively to their reading and produce a good volume of extended writing. Writing is carefully planned and revised. Lower attaining pupils need teacher support to express themselves well with a good range of vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and at length.
- 46 By the end of Year 9 achievement is good. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are above average and pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. The good achievement is not sustained in Years 10 and 11, however, but is only satisfactory mainly because the higher attainers could do better. There is setting to meet the needs

of lower attaining pupils in years 10 and 11 and teachers provide frameworks to assist the completion of coursework tasks. Higher ability pupils are not taught in sets but in mixed higher ability groups. There is little evidence of extension work to challenge the highest attainers, however, and the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades at GCSE is significantly lower than the national proportion. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as their classmates, as do the small number of ethnic minority pupils.

- 47 Teaching and learning are good overall, though they varied widely in the inspection from very good to a small amount that was unsatisfactory. Teachers are subject specialists with a good range of experience. Good relationships in the classroom encourage pupils to work well. Lessons are well planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE. Pupils' work is regularly marked and their efforts praised, though there is some inconsistency in the amount of guidance given to pupils on points for improvement. In the most successful lessons pupils are stimulated and work at a good pace, with a range of strategies and additional support materials to meet individual needs. In some lessons, however, especially in Years 10 and 11, the range of ability is not sufficiently recognised and, in particular, the highest attainers are not sufficiently challenged. The provision of extra support by support assistants in the classroom is limited.
- 48 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The task of management has been made more difficult by recent staffing difficulties, which have had an effect upon standards. Good records are kept of the work of the department and of results in tests and examinations, which are appropriately analysed. Regular meetings offer the opportunity for the sharing of ideas. The scheme of work covers rational curriculum requirements for pupils in years 7 to 9 but is not sufficiently detailed, and the scheme of work for pupils in years 10 and 11 is only the published GCSE syllabus. Neither schemes identify support materials or specify tasks to meet the range of pupils' needs, particularly to challenge the highest attaining pupils. The use of ICT by all pupils is not planned for. Teaching and learning are not rigorously monitored.
- 49 Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The issues in the previous report have been satisfactorily dealt with and good standards have been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 50 Standards of literacy across the curriculum are above average. Pupils enter the school with above average literacy skills and make good progress in their use of literacy in other subjects. For the past two years a team of staff has been overseeing the incorporation of the national strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 9 into general teaching practice. There is, however, no current school literacy policy, nor an identified school literacy coordinator. Practice in subjects to develop pupils' literacy skills is generally good. Opportunities for development are identified in schemes of work. Pupils are attentive listeners and are mostly articulate and confident speakers, taking good advantage of opportunities in pair, group and class talk. Many read aloud capably. There is a general emphasis on the development of key subject vocabulary. Pupils are given a wide range of writing tasks for different purposes and the practice of drafting and revising is widespread. In a number of subjects the range of tasks is unusually challenging. There is good extended writing in GCSE PE, imaginative writing in history, geography and religious education, and a wide range of writing tasks in science.

Modern Foreign Languages

French and German are the languages offered at the school. All pupils study at least one foreign language until the age of 16. All pupils study both French and German on an equal basis in Year 7. Staff teach both languages to the same classes. At the end of Year 7 the majority choose one language to continue through to GCSE. A small number of higher attaining pupils study two languages.

French

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in French are rising and pupils are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, although there is a small amount of inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- Learning is not always effectively reviewed and consolidated at the end of lessons.
- Assessment is sharply focused.
- The department is well led and managed.

Commentary

- 51 In 2003 teacher assessment judgements at the end of Year 9 in modern foreign languages, which incorporates judgments on French, were below average. In 2004 they declined further as a result of more rigorous assessment but also a year group whose prior attainment on entry to the school was lower.
- 52 Standards of work seen in French in Year 9 during the inspection were average overall. The rising standards are due to recent improvements in the way writing is taught. At this early stage in the school year, pupils have not yet fully developed the higher-level skills of referring to past and future events and giving opinions. Higher attaining pupils speak with confidence and are starting to write more complex sentences. Lower attaining pupils are more hesitant in oral work, and their pronunciation is not secure.
- 53 In 2003 standards in French at GCSE were below average. In 2004 there was a significant improvement in results from 2003. This was because the new head of department analysed the 2003 results in detail and as a result improved the way writing is taught. Current standards of work in French in Year 11 are above average. Higher attaining pupils can speak and write at length with a good degree of accuracy. They understand some of the more complex aspects of French grammar and the correct order of pronouns. Their writing is not as yet fully fluent and coherent. They can understand challenging listening texts and note main points and details.

German

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in German have risen significantly recently and pupils achieve well in the subject.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Teachers have a good command of the language but sometimes they concentrate on single words too much and not enough on the structure of sentences.
- Assessment is good and a strength of the department.
- There are good systems for promoting further improvement in the subject.

Commentary

- 54 In 2003 teacher assessment judgements made at the end of Year 9 in modern foreign languages, which incorporates judgments on German, were below average. In 2004 they were lower than in 2003. As with French, this was because of as a result of more rigorous assessment and a year group whose prior attainment on entry to the school was lower. Standards of work seen in German in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were average, the rise due to the recent improvements in the teaching of writing already referred to. Pupils are beginning to get to grips with the complexities of German grammar. Higher attaining pupils can use subordinate clauses and invert verbs confidently. They understand how separable verbs work. Lower attaining pupils have occasional difficulties with accurate word order.
- 55 Standards in German at GCSE in 2003 were well below average. They improved significantly in 2004 as a result of action taken by the new head of department to improve the teaching of writing. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were above average, as the improvements in the teaching in writing have had more impact. Higher attaining pupils understand the intricacies of German grammar and can produce extended complex writing. Lower attaining pupils' grasp of verb forms is not always secure.

French and German

- 56 Pupils achieve well in both languages across the school. The improvements in teaching writing have accelerated the rate of progress that pupils make. Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is good, teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly, and pupils themselves have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with SEN and pupils whose first language is not English achieve as well as other pupils.
- 57 Teaching and learning in both **French** and **German** are good overall. There is a little inconsistency, with some that is very good teaching but a small amount that is unsatisfactory. In both French and German, teachers have good command of their languages and use them effectively for routine purposes as well as practice. In the better lessons pupils were quickly focused by engaging starter activities, clear objectives were shared with pupils, there was variety of activity and lessons proceeded at pace. However, teachers did not always review learning effectively at the end of the lesson. On occasions in German lessons, the emphasis was more on learning items of vocabulary rather than the sentence structures which link them together. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, material was not well matched to the needs of the pupils, there was a lack of variety, pace was slow and there were weaknesses in classroom management. Assessment is good and has become a strength of the department. Teachers assess pupils' work well, giving them clear guidance on how to improve it further. They have a good knowledge of National Curriculum and public examination

requirements and relate their comments to these criteria so that pupils have clear targets for improvement.

- 58 Leadership and management are both good. The subject leader is a recent appointment and has responsibility for both languages. She has achieved much in a relatively short time. She has a clear vision for the subject and is creating an effective team. Results have improved, and there is a rigorous plan in place for monitoring the quality of teaching. Documentation is thorough and supports teaching well.
- 59 Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have fluctuated since then and but the good attention that has been paid recently to the criticisms raised in the last inspection report means that the current trend is now upwards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the head of department provides the subject with clear educational direction and creates a shared positive ethos amongst the team of mathematics teachers.
- Standards are rising because of new schemes of work and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is mutual respect and very good relationships between teachers and pupils and this results in a harmonious and productive atmosphere in lessons.
- Day-to-day assessment is inconsistent and is not rigorously used to track short term pupils' progress.
- Monitoring of departmental practice is not ensuring consistency of provision and the routinely sharing of many examples of good practice.

Commentary

- 60 In 2003, overall results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average compared to the national picture, although some higher attaining pupils under-achieved. Because pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school was lower than that of the previous year, results in 2004 were slightly lower than in 2003. Current standards of work in year 9 are above the national average and are rising. This is because improved schemes of work and a wider and more effective range of teaching and learning strategies has resulted in pupils being more actively involved with their learning. All pupils study common topics at levels appropriate to their needs. The standard of work of highest attaining pupils now matches their potential. The standard of work of some lower attaining pupils is impeded because of limitations in their capacity to retain knowledge and skills.
- 61 The 2003 GCSE results were above the national average. A higher proportion than nationally achieved the highest grades A* or A. Results in 2004 improved with a much higher proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades than in 2003. Standards of work in the current Year 11 are well above the national average. Results already obtained in GCSE modules and coursework show that a significantly higher proportion of pupils are poised

to obtain the highest GCSE grade and other evidence indicates a further rise in the number of pupils on track to obtain A*-C grades. Almost all pupils are producing standards of work that are consistent with their ability although some lower attaining pupils continue to have difficulty with the recall of knowledge and skills. There are no specific areas of weakness in different aspects of the subject except that the work of some average and lower attaining pupils is sometimes impaired by a lack of fluency in arithmetic skills.

- 62 Pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school is above the national average although lower than in English and science, particularly in terms of the number attaining the higher National Curriculum levels. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress and achieve well, reflecting the quality of improved schemes of work and teaching strategies. They continue to make good progress in individual lessons and over time so that the cumulative effect results in well above average standards in Years 10 and 11. Sustained good achievement, greater than that usually observed, is across the ability range and there are no discernible differences between all pupils and those from minority ethnic groups or those with SEN.
- 63 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is at least good in three-quarters of lessons. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work and this is reflected in the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result lessons are conducted in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Learning with understanding is fostered in most lessons because teachers fully involve pupils in the application of their prior learning to the investigation of new ideas. In less successful but nevertheless satisfactory lessons interaction is with a limited number of pupils and opportunities are missed to isolate points of misunderstanding and introduce a higher level of challenge. Thorough preparation and planning, which include the promotion of correct vocabulary, are characteristics of lessons so that work is well matched to individual needs. The combination of all these factors enables pupils to have a positive attitude to the subject and sustain good levels of interest and concentration. Although there are problems of access to facilities, when given the opportunity, pupils competently make good use of ICT to support their work in mathematics. The quality of the marking of pupils' work varies and there is a lack of consistency in routine grading and recording. This limits the use of assessment for tracking pupils' progress and the speed with which instances of under-achievement are identified.
- 64 The leadership of the department, by example and infectious enthusiasm, is very good. There is vibrancy, a very clear sense of direction and high expectation. The relatively new team of teachers share a commitment to raising standards. Management is good. Appropriately challenging targets, plans and procedures are in place but monitoring arrangements are not yet sufficiently rigorous. Consequently, there is some lack of consistency in provision and an over reliance on informality in the sharing of the many examples of good practice. Except for monitoring arrangements, improvement since the previous inspection is good, particularly in relation to the rising of standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 65 Pupils' competence in mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum is well above average by the age of 16 and numeracy skills are promoted in almost all areas. The

contribution that mathematical skills can make across the whole curriculum is included in the schemes of work of most subjects and their promotion is included in the school's newly developing Life Skills programme. There are no instances of weaknesses in mathematics impeding progress in other subjects and in some subjects mathematical competency significantly contributes to attainment. For example, mathematical skills make a very good contribution to standards in science and very good graphical skills are effectively used in business education.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are clearly focussed on raising standards.
- Lessons are planned and structured well, offer appropriate challenge, although the endings of lessons are sometimes hurried.
- The use of assessment data does not identify underachievement or curricular weakness strongly enough.
- Practical skills are developed steadily and as a result pupils undertake practical work confidently.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

Commentary

66 Standards at the end of Year 9 in the national tests in 2003 were above the national average and were rising in line with the national trend of improvement. The results in 2004 were lower, but this is accounted for by the lower prior attainment of the pupils concerned. Current standards of pupils in Year 9 are above average. The revised schemes of work are detailed and contribute to the improved effectiveness of the teaching. Pupils have above average levels of factual knowledge across all areas of science and are developing good understanding. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 understand ideas such as genetic inheritance and, although lower attaining pupils have a limited knowledge, for example, of the properties of metals, they make careful observations of the reaction between metals and acids.

67 Results for double award science in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average and the results in 2004 are higher still, continuing a rising trend. The results in 2004 for biology and chemistry were very high. Results in applied science were low, partly as a result of the teachers' lack of familiarity with the new course and partly due to the low prior attainment of the candidates. Standards in science in Year 11 seen during the inspection, when all courses are taken in to account, are above average and are rising. Pupils continue to acquire accurate knowledge across all areas of science and their understanding develops well. For example, pupils with all levels of prior attainment understand complex scientific ideas such as atomic theory and higher attaining pupils show a full understanding of the structure of the atom. Even lower attaining pupils understand particle theory and can explain how the rate of a reaction is affected by temperature. Pupils carry out satisfactory investigations but prediction and evaluation is comparatively weak.

- 68 Pupils enter the school with above average standards and show steady improvement. Their achievement across all year groups is good. Pupils with SEN, high attaining pupils and pupils from all ethnic groups make good progress. Pupils have had limited practical experience before entering school but practical skills are developed well. ICT is used effectively to consolidate and research newly formed ideas.
- 69 The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and they are very good or excellent in around half of lessons. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, structure their lessons well and put forward challenging ideas at a brisk pace. As a result, scientific ideas are presented in an interesting manner so as to promote effective understanding. The better lessons had material that challenged pupils of all levels of attainment well. The pupils respond with interest and undertake practical work confidently. Teachers and pupils show mutual respect and the pupils readily ask questions that results in a lively dialogue between teacher and pupil. Learning objectives are not always stressed strongly and the endings of lessons are sometimes too hurried to fully consolidate pupils' learning. ICT is used well to consolidate and expand on ideas near the end of a unit of work and to promote research skills. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and end of unit test results are recorded effectively but the data is not fully analysed to identify underachievement or curricular weaknesses.
- 70 Leadership and management are very good and are having a significant impact on the rising standards. There is a clear vision directed to raising standards. Staff are well motivated and form a very effective team and the quality of teaching is regularly monitored. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is broad, offering the separate sciences, double award and applied science, and meets the needs of all pupils well. There are now detailed schemes of work in place for each year enabling teachers to formulate effective lesson plans although possible cross-curricular links are not well developed. There are strong links with primary schools with a science teacher working full time in those sending most pupils to Fairfield. More effective links with the community are planned and a programme of visiting speakers has been scheduled. These initiatives are part of the programme resulting from the acquisition of Science College Status, granted in September 2004. The accommodation, in refurbished laboratories and a small ICT, suite is good. Resources, except those for data logging, are also good and are managed effectively.
- 71 There has been significant improvement since the last inspection with rising standards, a wider curriculum and the awarding of Science College Status.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and plan work to suit the needs of different groups very effectively results in them learning very well in lessons.
- Pupils are confident to work independently; they research work thoroughly and write extensively and accurately to record their findings.
- There is some inaccuracy in assessment of pupils in Years 7 – 9.
- The co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is not fully in place.

Commentary

- 72 Teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed standards to be considerably above average. The assessments in 2004 were similar. These were, in fact, rather generous. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection are above average by the end of Year 9. Pupils are competent and confident users of computers. They have good understanding of the use of computers for their own studies and for wider use outside school, such as for databases and spreadsheets that are often linked to the world of work. The most able pupils are well above average and have a mature approach to problem solving and working independently. The ability of younger pupils to use software for presentations is less well developed than other aspects of the subject.
- 73 Most pupils followed a half course in GCSE until recently. Although there are no national comparators for this course, all pupils gained pass grades in 2003. Pupils now follow either a full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 or a Key Skills course and work seen in both courses is above average. Pupils complete coursework in depth and work is very well organised. Pupils have a very good sense of time and project management and they keep to deadlines. The most able pupils are quick to grasp new and complex work linked to the management of small businesses. They research work thoroughly and write extensively and accurately to record their findings. Lower attaining pupils do not include enough detail when designing web pages. All pupils are competent to select and use appropriate applications for tasks. The courses help pupils to improve their ability to use ICT appropriately in other subjects they study.
- 74 Achievement is good for pupils of all ages in relation to their earlier learning and there is evidence of faster progress being made more recently. Teachers monitor progress closely and provide work that stretches pupils of all abilities. They provide very good support for pupils with SEN so that they make good progress towards targets to improve their writing. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also achieve well.
- 75 The quality of teaching is very good and making a significant contribution to the faster rate of achievement now being made by pupils. Occasionally it is excellent and it is never less than good. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and plan work to suit the needs of different groups very effectively. They have high levels of expertise and their enthusiasm for the subject is communicated to pupils. This results in very good learning in lessons. Teachers explain new work exceptionally well so that pupils are confident to work independently when they are given practical tasks. Pupils' work is assessed well although there is some inaccuracy in judgements in Years 7 to 9.
- 76 Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has made a very good start to improving provision and has well-considered, sustainable plans for future development. Staff, including the network manager and technician, work very well as a team to provide effectively for pupils.
- 77 There has been good improvement to the curriculum, staffing and resources since the previous inspection. Standards are significantly higher now.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78 Pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, but their competence when they do use it is above average. In science for example, pupils' use of computers helps to improve the standard of their research and recording and analysis of information. In design technology pupils use ICT for computer assisted design and manufacturing and for research well. The use of ICT for GCSE revision in history contributes to the high standards in the subject. In many subjects it is used to improve the standard of presentation of work, especially for examination coursework. In some subjects, such as art, music and English ICT is not yet used sufficiently to aid pupils' learning. In some cases this is due to a lack of planning by teachers, but in others is compounded by problems such as access to the equipment. However, the extent to which ICT is used to promote pupils' learning across the curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and teachers express appreciation of the support they now receive to develop ICT in their subjects. There is growing use of interactive whiteboards by teachers and these are used very effectively to present new work, such as in geography where they are also used very well to engage pupils' interest. Pupils' access to computers for personal study and completing homework is increased by the after school club, which helps them improve their work. Greater co-ordination of cross-curricular use of ICT is planned by the new head of department but has not yet been implemented.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much teaching in Years 7 to 9 is lively, stimulating and challenging so it engages pupils' interest, and results in them achieving well.
- Teaching is less good in Years 10 and 11, relying too heavily on textbooks, and as a result pupils' achievement is only satisfactory.
- Tasks are not always modified sufficiently well for pupils with SEN and gifted and talented pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment of pupils' work is very good and contributes to the high standards.
- Pupils make very effective use of ICT for research and presentation of their work.
- Leadership is very good but teaching and learning are not sufficiently rigorously monitored.

Commentary

79 Standards in the 2003 national teacher assessments in Year 9 were above average and results in 2004 were similar. Current standards in Year 9 are also above average. Pupils have, and use well, a wide range of geographical skills including the use of ICT for research and presentation. Most pupils can explain geographical features as well as describe them. The standards of some pupils are lower because they have few opportunities for independent work.

80 In 2003 GCSE results were a little below the national average and those at the highest levels, A*A, were low in relation to the national average. Results in 2004 were higher. Current standards in Year 11 are average. Pupils have good skills of observation and

analysis and good understanding of places. However, many do not show these well in their written work.

- 81 Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. In some lessons it is very good. Pupils with SEN generally achieve as well as other pupils because teachers offer good individual support and in some cases modify tasks and materials for them. Gifted and talented pupils generally achieve well, particularly when tasks make real demands upon them. Achievement in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory. A class with a large proportion of pupils of lower prior attainment achieved well as a result of work which was made appropriate for all. In other lessons materials are not modified in a way that helps such pupils to learn well enough.
- 82 Teaching and learning are good overall, although in lessons seen ranged from unsatisfactory to excellent. It is better in Years 7 to 9, where much is very good, than in Years 10 to 11 where overall it is satisfactory. Much teaching is lively, stimulating and challenging so it engages pupils' interest well. Imaginative strategies are used and good use is made of new technology. As a result pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and learn well both collaboratively and individually. Pupils are expected to listen attentively and their learning is frequently tested. Less good teaching is overly reliant on text books. Pupils do not respond with interest although they are assiduous in attending to written tasks, even though they mainly involve copying material. However, almost all pupils are very well behaved, are self motivated and keen to do well, so their achievement, while sometimes not as good as it should be, is nevertheless satisfactory. The needs of pupils with SEN and gifted and talented pupils in all year groups are met in many lessons, but tasks are not always modified sufficiently well for them, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- 83 The head of department has a clear vision for the development of geography and leadership is very good. Management is good, with clear planning for development and some secure systems in place, but the practice of the department is not monitored rigorously enough. Assessment of pupils' work is very good. Very effective use is made of ICT by pupils and by some teachers to explain work and engage pupils' interest. Accommodation is good. Three of the four teaching specialist rooms are adjacent to each other with a small adjoining ICT suite.
- 84 Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is overall much better and assessment has much improved. However, standards in GCSE have declined and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is still not secure.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching fully involves all pupils and results in very good learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils are encouraged and enabled to think for themselves.
- There is a strong emphasis on literacy.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Assessment is very good.

Commentary

- 85 Teachers' assessments in 2003 showed standards at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and the 2004 assessments were higher than in 2003. . Inspection evidence confirms that by Year 9 standards are above average. Pupils are developing good historical skills. They are able to distinguish clearly between primary and secondary evidence and understand the importance of chronology well. They have a good understanding of the fact that representations of history can be biased and portray stereotypes.
- 86 GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average. In 2004 the results were even higher because of an increased concentration on the teaching of examination techniques. Inspection evidence confirms these high standards. Pupils have good research skills and are able to select, analyse and prioritise evidence well. They can make connections between historical and current events. Lower attaining pupils also attain relatively high standards. A small proportion of pupils take the certificate of achievement successfully, and with guidance, for example, could make connections between the contemporary dilemma of 'Freedom Fighter or Terrorist' in order better to understand the action of the Suffragettes.
- 87 Achievement is very good overall across all year groups. Minority ethnic pupils make very good progress because they are fully involved in all lessons. Pupils with SEN also achieve very well because teachers are aware of their needs and provide modified materials and individual help. Pupils are able to deal with historical debate and controversy. Occasionally gifted and talented pupils do not achieve as well as they might because not enough demands are made of them. A strong emphasis on literacy is a strength of the department and contributes to very good achievement.
- 88 Teaching and learning are very good in all year groups. Teaching is distinguished by its clarity and innovative approach to standard topics. In Year 8, a seemingly simple exercise involving the decoration of 'tipis' which engaged pupils' interests well was in fact inculcating a very good understanding of Native American culture. Instructions are precise and learning constantly reinforced so that good study habits are established from Year 7. Learning is facilitated because history is made relevant. Pupils acquire good transferable skills. For example they learn to distinguish between fact and opinion and are very aware of the dangers of propaganda. Classes are well organised and well managed so that pupils feel secure and learning is rarely interrupted. Teachers involve all pupils so that a lesson becomes a joint enterprise. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and the respect given to their opinion develops both their academic and social confidence. Very occasionally, teaching is too directive and limits pupils' contributions to the lesson, and restricts the learning of gifted and talented pupils in particular. ICT is used very effectively to promote learning, for example, GCSE revision CD's, and to share good practice with other schools.
- 89 Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the department and he is supported by a strong teaching team. Meticulous assessment procedures are fully used for the benefit of pupils. For example the analysis of data collected has resulted in the development of new teaching methods. The department plays a strong role in whole school issues, for example, the citizenship program, and gives support to a partner school. Improvement since the last inspection

is very good. The history department is forward looking, progressive and receptive to change, committed to improving pupils' achievement and to ensuring their enjoyment of the subject.

Religious Education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching stimulates in pupils a desire to learn.
- Very good leadership and management create a very positive ethos for learning.
- Pupils have a positive attitude and are keen to participate in lessons.
- Assessment is good and shows pupils how they can improve.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- The range of extension activities is limited.
- The endings of lessons are not always effective.

Commentary

- 90 The standard attained by most Year 9 pupils is above average and that of higher-attaining pupils is well above average. This is because they have a good knowledge of religious belief and can relate this to questions of personal morality and questions of meaning. They know that belief influences behaviour and can describe how ritual and symbol express religious ideas. They are confident in expressing their own views, though less secure in challenging those of others.
- 91 All pupils are entered for the GCSE short course. The standard attained is well above average and has been for the past four years. In the past two years over one fifth of those entered have gained a pass at the highest grade. Though the pass rate at A*-C at the last examination was below that of recent years, pupils performed well when compared to expectations and there was no under-achievement. All pupils entered gained a pass in the range A*-G. These are very commendable results given the relatively short time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11. These results are due to very good teaching which stimulates a high level of commitment and very positive response from pupils. The standard attained by most Year 11 pupils is well above average because they have very good knowledge of the moral teaching of the religions studied and write well, using a good vocabulary to explain their understanding and personal views. They are less effective in posing critical questions to challenge the faith positions they study.
- 92 The achievement of most pupils by Year 9 is good. The very positive ethos created in lessons encourages them to work hard and consequently they make good progress. The individual attention given to pupils with special education needs enables these pupils to make progress in lessons and their achievement is good. The achievement of most Year 11 pupils is very good. Very well-planned lessons enable them to build upon work done in previous years. This is particularly effective for pupils with SEN and means that their achievement is very good. The achievement of pupils of minority ethnic heritage matches their peers.
- 93 The quality of teaching is very good and on occasions excellent. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons which pupils evidently enjoy, in which

they work hard and from which they gain intellectual and personal development. Imaginative use of art-work in a Year 8 lesson helped pupils to compare traditional and contemporary images of Christ and explore the importance of religious symbols. Very good teaching about miracles in a Year 10 lesson stimulated much discussion in which pupils expressed their views in a mature and informed way. The use of literature to explore religious ideas also contributes to pupils' literacy. Time allocated to lessons is relatively low. This means that in some lessons conclusions are hurried and extension activities limited. Assessment is good and clearly indicates how pupils can improve.

- 94 Statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is very well planned, enables pupils to gain a good understanding of a variety of religious traditions and contributes very effectively to their spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- 95 Leadership is very good and there is a very evident professional optimism which characterises the work of the department. Management is very good and focused on raising attainment further. Teaching is monitored and targets set for improving teaching and learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in assessment, the response of pupils and the quality of teaching. This is a very good department making a distinctive contribution to the development of pupils and the ethos of the school.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Their design and drawing skills are good.
- Pupils' work is good in food and graphics but there are weaknesses in pupil's understanding of resistant materials.
- The quality of teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice, although it is less consistently so in resistant materials, because theoretical and practical work are not linked closely enough.
- Leadership of the department is good.
- Assessment and its use are not consistent across the department.

Commentary

- 96 Teacher assessment judgements made at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were considerably above the national average, and judgements made in 2004 were similar. These judgements are not fully accurate and are on the generous side. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection are above average overall by Year 9. Pupils have good knowledge of the design process and use it consistently in all materials areas to make good quality products. Standards are lower in resistant materials. Pupils do not have sufficient understanding of different materials and have too few opportunities to make choices about their work in this area. In food studies and graphics, standards are good because the quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. In consequence, pupils are able to make informed decisions when planning their work

because they understand the function of ingredients and the scientific principles associated with food preparation. They develop good drawing skills that enable them to communicate ideas effectively.

- 97 Standards of attainment are above average by Year 11 and overall, GCSE results have been consistently above average in recent years. Standards are well above average in food studies and graphics because pupils continue to benefit from very good teaching. Standards are lower in resistant materials, although still above the national average. Pupils organise and present their work very well. In graphic products, pupils understand the principles of good design and use them effectively to plan their work. They use colour and sketching effectively to communicate the development of ideas. Pupils are confident and ambitious when they plan work in food studies because their knowledge of materials and the needs and wants of consumers is very good. In resistant materials, writing is often superficial because pupils have insufficient knowledge of materials and opportunities are missed to link work to environmental issues.
- 98 Pupils achieve well overall in Years 7 to 9 in relation to earlier attainment and their assessed abilities, although achievement in resistant materials is less good than in areas of the curriculum. They make particularly good progress in Year 7 with learning to use a wide range of tools and materials. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good overall. Pupils achieve very well in food studies and graphic products but achievement in resistant materials is only satisfactory overall because teaching of the subject is variable. While occasionally progress is very good as in a lesson when pupils learned principles of evaluating their work effectively, in other lessons, pupils do not make enough progress. Pupils with special needs make similar progress to others because teachers use their good knowledge of them to plan work that is appropriately challenging and provide them with good support.
- 99 The quality of teaching is good overall. Sometimes it is outstanding, especially in food and graphics. In the best lessons the teaching of theory is very well integrated into practical lessons and pupils learn to plan their work with a good degree of independence. Teachers plan their lessons to appropriately challenge all groups of pupils. Teaching is most variable in resistant materials, where, while some is very good, some is only satisfactory and there is a small amount that is unsatisfactory. In unsatisfactory lessons there is too much emphasis on practical work and not enough on other aspects. Pupils are competent in using ICT in lessons, for example for computer assisted design and manufacturing. The assessment of pupils' work, and the use that teachers make of the outcomes, is not consistent across the department. Not enough reference is made to National curriculum levels when planning work for pupils and assessment judgements in Years 7 to 9 are not always accurate.
- 100 Leadership and management of the department are good. Staff share a commitment to raising standards. The technician is a very well integrated member of the team. There has been good improvement to accommodation and to standards in food studies and graphics. However action to improve the quality of provision and to raise standards in resistant materials to the level attained in other areas is not yet being effective enough.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were inspected in full and drama was sampled.

Drama is established in the curriculum as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and as a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. It was sampled by seeing one lesson in Year 9 and one in Year 11. Standards in Year 9 were below national expectations although representing good achievement by pupils of low prior attainment. Pupils contributed freely to preliminary discussion, though contributions were brief. They worked cooperatively in groups to devise improvised presentations of different genres of TV shows. They were able to improvise dialogue without inhibition, though were reluctant performers making little use of space, movement and gesture. Standards of performance in Year 11 were above average, though the written requirements of the GCSE examination have regularly pulled attainment down to below the national average. Pupils worked well in groups to devise and present improvisations on a school theme. They improvised dialogue with confidence and were able to convey character through movement, gesture and tone. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen were good. Lessons were well planned, informed by good subject knowledge and understanding, and pitched appropriately to meet the pupils' needs. Annual productions and a drama club make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and to the life of the school.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achieve well because of their positive response to challenging, engaging teaching.
- The GCSE examination results in 2003 were high.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Pupils' basic skills of drawing, investigation and experimentation are not good enough to allow full independent learning.
- The assessment of GCSE pupils' work is very good but procedures for the assessment of pupils at the end of Year 9 are inaccurate.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to create artwork.

Commentary

- 101 Teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average. They were much higher in 2004 but were in fact generous and failed to recognise that pupils do not use ICT to create artwork. The standards attained by pupils in Year 9 on the inspection are average. Pupils' drawing skills are average. They carry out observational drawing satisfactorily but they find it difficult to record information about light or form in their drawings. Their practical skills and levels of creativity are good when producing imaginative work such as collage and sculptures. Investigative and experimental skills are less well developed than other aspects, with an over-emphasis on finished products rather than the designing and developmental stages of their work. They use computers for research but not to create practical work.
- 102 The 2003 GCSE results were well above average and a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Almost a third of the pupils gained the highest A* or A grades. The 2004 results were slightly less good, with several pupils just missing a C grade by a few marks, but they were above expectations for the pupils involved. The work by Year 11 during the inspection is above average. Pupils work successfully with a wide range of materials, including for three dimensional work and their presentational skills are

good. They increasingly use subject specific vocabulary. They continue working well from observation and show the influence of European and multi-cultural art in their own work, including Japanese origami and Buddhism. They have informed views of the work of artists and of specific pieces of art. However, pupils are sometimes not reflective enough about their work in progress. Comments on their work are often descriptive, with only higher attaining pupils making sufficiently analytical and evaluative responses. Work in sketchbooks shows good designing skills, but pupils do not use them to develop ideas through drawing or to experiment with materials and composition.

- 103 Pupils have below average standards in art when they enter the school and their achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers know their pupils well ensuring those who have SEN and those who are more able progress equally well.
- 104 Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Lessons are well planned with challenging activities, and these allow pupils to acquire good practical skills and to develop their understanding of art. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' industry and behaviour and they provide good guidance and feedback, encouraging very good relationships. Teachers develop pupils' confidence, such as when encouraging them to discuss famous paintings. Lesson endings do not always allow pupils to reflect on their own work. Teachers do not ensure that pupils use a sketchbook adequately for experimentation and investigation, and this results in all but the highest attaining pupils relying too much on their teachers for guidance, limiting the quality of their independent learning. Homework reinforces the work pupils do in class well.
- 105 Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is very good and pupils agree targets and deadlines which help to give them a realistic view of their progress. Inaccuracies in assessment judgements in Years 7 to 9 reduce its effectiveness. There is not enough use of ICT and curriculum enrichment, for example through visits to galleries, is limited.
- 106 Rising standards make it clear that the department is well led and managed. The head of department has vision and ambition and is working hard to raise standards although teaching is not formally monitored. There is insufficient delegation of responsibility to take full advantage of individual teacher's particular skills. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of achievement have risen, the assessment of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 and the accommodation have improved. The use of ICT remains unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in Year 9 and in Year 11 is above average.
- Pupils' listening skills are very good but composing skills are less well developed.
- Achievement from year to year is good.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and pupils learn well although gifted and talented pupils are not always challenged enough.
- There is not enough use of ICT.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits practical work.

Commentary

- 107 At the time of the inspection, the department was undergoing a period of uncertainty. The head of department had recently started a period of long-term absence. Other specialist music staff, including a number of supply teachers, undertook day-to-day teaching and organisation.
- 108 In 2003, teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national figures. In 2004 they were higher. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 9 were above average. Pupils perform confidently, understand basic composing techniques well, and can analyse the structures of simple compositions. Their listening skills are very good, and because they have a good technical and descriptive vocabulary, they are able to comment perceptively on music they hear, and to evaluate their own compositions and those of their peers. They sing well. Because most have limited keyboard fluency they cannot experiment with ideas nor extend and develop their compositions.
- 109 GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average, and in 2004 all pupils gained A-C passes. Only a small number of pupils study music in Years 10 and 11 and the standards seen during the inspection were above average. Pupils perform confidently both individually and in ensemble. Because they remember information well, they enjoy the challenge of analysing music they hear. Their approach to composing is methodical, and most are able to follow guidelines to create logical, well structured pieces. However, because few take part in musical activities out of school, pupils lack the experience to explore a range of different styles of music, either in composing or performing.
- 110 Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in music, except in the case of a relatively low proportion which has instrumental tuition. Achievement by Year 9 is good. Pupils develop perceptive listening skills, retain and apply knowledge well, and perform confidently. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils build on the experience of earlier years, and develop good habits of scholarship and tenacity. Pupils with SEN make good progress because they are well supported by the class teacher. Pupils who are gifted and talented make similar progress, but are not always provided with an appropriately high challenge.
- 111 Pupils' work indicates that teaching has been good in the past. During the inspection, although not as strong as previously due to the fact that some teaching is currently by short term supply teachers, teaching continues to be good overall with many very good features. The best teaching is systematic, dynamic, and has a clear sense of progression so that pupils learn to relate knowledge they already have to new situations. Critical listening is particularly well taught; pupils learn to concentrate on specific aspects, and to describe these in appropriate terms in accordance with the department's implementation of the literacy policy. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of music from other countries such as India, Africa and Bali because they learn to identify its essential elements both by listening to examples, and by composing in similar styles. In response to enthusiastic and committed teaching, pupils are encouraged by their success and respond positively. However, there is not enough recognition of the impact of music on pupils' spiritual development. ICT is not used sufficiently, and other weaknesses occur when planning is not rigorous, when the

different needs of pupils are not fully catered for, or when activities are not sufficiently varied.

- 112 There are regular concerts which include vocal groups, instrumental ensembles and examples of on-going work in class. The quality of these performances, which are well supported by visiting teachers who rehearse the instrumental players, enhances the school's reputation. Pupils' experience is enriched by visits to professional theatre, and performers from different cultures visit the school.
- 113 Leadership is satisfactory. Pupils are provided with a broad ranging curriculum, and the detailed assessment system recently put in place has been effective in raising standards in Years 7 to 9 because pupils know precisely how they can improve their levels of attainment. Management is not satisfactory, largely because of inadequate departmental documentation and, in particular, schemes of work not being detailed enough to ensure continuity of practice. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, as at the previous inspection, with limited practice rooms and space for practical work. ICT, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, remains so, partly due to faults in equipment, but is on the point of significant improvement. Good standards have been maintained, and improvement is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with challenging tasks appropriate to pupils' needs and very good encouragement for pupils, and this promotes good achievement.
- The good climate for learning promotes good attitudes in pupils.
- Leadership and management are strong. A highly committed team works hard to maintain high standards.
- Poor accommodation is hindering the development of an otherwise balanced curriculum, although the building of a new sports hall is planned.
- Pupils' ability to assess their performance and set themselves targets for improvement is limited by the lack of awareness of national curriculum levels.

Commentary

- 114 Teacher assessment of Year 9 pupils in 2003 indicated that standards in physical education are in line with national expectations. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards are average. By the age of 14, most pupils are applying skills with accuracy, precision and control whilst developing technical and tactical awareness. However not all pupils show consistency of skill application across all activities.
- 115 The accurate application of skills and developing knowledge and understanding of sport is seen in the standards of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11. Curriculum time is below

half the national recommendation and this limits the depth of development and understanding of skills for some pupils, and there are limitations posed by the poor accommodation, but nevertheless standards in statutory physical education lessons are broadly in line with the national average due to good teaching. In GCSE lessons, standards are much higher. In 2003, GCSE results were marginally below national expectations, but in 2004, 74 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade, a big improvement. The department is raising standards through guided learning and revision activities. Practical skills are of a high standard, as seen in their very well developed volleyball skills, for example. Theoretical work is also of a high standard with their written work being detailed and accurate.

- 116 Throughout years 7 to 11, the vast majority of pupils, including those with SEN and from minority ethnic groups achieve well and develop an understanding of how different exercises can contribute to their fitness and health.
- 117 The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. It ranged from satisfactory to very good teaching in lessons observed. The department has established a good climate for learning despite poor accommodation. Use is made of off-site provision, which, as well as building good links with the local community, promotes good progress and success for the vast majority of pupils. High expectations and very good encouragement and engagement of pupils underpin all teaching and learning. Teachers assess learning well and set challenging tasks appropriate to the vast majority of pupils' needs which means they learn well. Only when management and control are less than good and groups are doubled up due to inclement weather, do a few pupils lose concentration and chatter. Teachers and pupils have good and mutually respectful relationships. This results in lessons highly productive lessons which pupils enjoyed and fully participate in. The vast majority of pupils display good attitudes towards physical education.
- 118 Assessment procedures are sound. However, pupils have a limited knowledge of national curriculum levels and this restricts the extent to which they can evaluate their performance, set themselves targets and support each other's physical development.
- 119 Despite poor accommodation, the curriculum meets statutory requirements albeit lacking in breadth. A very good programme of additional activities greatly enhances pupils' opportunities for participation in sport. A significant number gain local, regional and national representative honours. Staff give very generously of their time to support the activities.
- 120 Leadership and management are strong good. Teachers, who form a committed team, have high aspirations for the pupils. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained. The department has demonstrated the capacity and vision to raise standards, and this is likely to be greatly enhanced when the new sports hall is built.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The leisure and tourism course was inspected in full. A lesson in each of business technology, vocational geography and travel and tourism were sampled.

A business technology course is taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9, and a GCSE business studies course is offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11. One lesson of the business technology with Year 9 pupils was sampled. Teaching was highly effective. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and had planned and organised the lesson very thoroughly. Appropriate and interesting tasks

enabled pupils to build systematically on prior learning and they made very good progress in their understanding of how to carry out a 'break-even' analysis. Numeracy skills were used particularly well when pupils drew graphs to show break-even points and explain related terms and concepts. Standards in the lesson were well above average and pupils' achievement was very good. The new course in GCSE vocational geography has just been introduced into Year 10. In the one lesson seen standards were average. Teaching was good and engaged pupils' interest. Pupils were attentive and tried hard so their learning was good. They are achieving well. Standards in the one lesson seen in Year 10 GCSE travel and tourism were below average. Most pupils in the group have SEN. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour were only just satisfactory and the necessary management of this by the teacher and a teaching assistant took time from teaching. Teaching and learning and pupils' achievement were satisfactory.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good so pupils achieve well.
- Pupils make very effective use of ICT for research and for presentation of their work.
- Pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation are not as well developed as their skills of description.
- Related work experience and visits have enriched the course.
- Teaching groups are small so teachers can meet pupils' individual needs well.

Commentary

- 121 The course will be examined externally for the first time in 2005. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are a little below average. Pupils have good ICT skills that they use well to research information and to present their work well. They understand basic principles of how companies respond to customer needs but many find it difficult to apply these principles to a specific context. Pupils can describe case studies of tourist areas and attractions in some detail and present their accounts clearly. However, they are less able to evaluate, assess or analyse the quality or effectiveness of the provision in the areas they are studying.
- 122 Pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils studying the subject have lower prior attainment or have SEN. They all make good progress although some pupils with SEN depend on much individual support and encouragement from their teacher.
- 123 Teaching is good. Teachers have ensured that they have good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of this new course. They have produced much material themselves as few helpful published materials are available. Extensive use is made of ICT to engage pupils and to present stimulating source materials. Tasks are carefully presented in a form that makes pupils think about their responses. Most pupils take a pride in their work, are interested, attentive and work hard so they learn well. However, some pupils jump to conclusions too quickly rather than reflecting on their answers, so their learning suffers. Teachers manage well the more challenging behaviour of some pupils and pleasantly but firmly keep pupils working.
- 124 The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a realistic view of the opportunities of the course and has shared the development of resources with his colleagues. Teachers have prepared themselves well and taken advantage of training. The course has been generously resourced by the school. Teaching groups are small so teachers are able to respond well to pupils' individual needs and to provide very good supervision on visits. Although the programme of visits and links with local employers are not yet fully developed they have been adequately developed so far. They have enriched the course and have helped generate enthusiasm amongst pupils. A small computer suite in

the department encourages the development of and use of a high level of computer skills by pupils.

125 This course was not offered at the time of the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education is taught to all pupils through the Life Skills course. This includes the required coverage of sex education and education on the mis-use of drugs, as well as attention to a good range of related issues such as relationships and keeping healthy. The Life Skills course also includes careers education and guidance, work related learning and citizenship. All areas are planned for well.

Four lessons of personal, social and health education were observed. The quality of teaching ranged from good to unsatisfactory. In some lessons, relevant and interesting activities were delivered in a lively manner by teachers so that pupils' interest was engaged and they made good progress in the learning. Where teaching was less effective, activities were not well planned to meet pupils' needs or interests and as a result they failed to see their relevance and learning was limited.

Citizenship

126 Citizenship has been taught since 2002 but the school is in the process of changing the way it does so. Until this year, citizenship was included in all departmental schemes of work and pupils had evidence forms to complete as topics were covered. From September 2004, citizenship is being incorporated in the new Life Skills course which has a programme of discrete lessons for pupils in all year groups. These are due to come on stream during the current academic year. At the time of the inspection, the citizenship modules were only being taught to Year 8 pupils. The modules for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not being taught yet but are planned to begin in December. There was not enough current evidence, therefore, to make an overall judgement on the effectiveness of provision for citizenship. Detailed planning is meticulous, however, and indicates that full coverage of the citizenship curriculum is likely if the plans are implemented in full.

127 There was not enough evidence available at the time of the inspection to make a judgement about the standards attained by pupils, or their achievement. The little that was seen, however, indicates that pupils have covered the rights and responsibilities of living in a community and are able to apply the principles to the school community, for example. They have knowledge of financial matters and are developing an understanding of the financial problems they may face in the future. They have studied and understand the role of the police force.

128 Citizenship is taught by a range of staff. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching and learning because during the inspection only one lesson dealing with bias in news reports with Year 8 pupils could be observed. Teaching and learning in this lesson were very good. Teaching was clear and direct which enabled pupils to make very good progress in identifying bias and propaganda. With careful guidance they make very good contributions to class discussion.

- 129 Specific citizenship lessons and projects continue to be taught through departments and supplement the discreet programme. The history department organises a Holocaust Day and also teaches a citizenship module dealing with the 'Clean Clothes Campaign'. Year 7 geographers studying an earthquake in India consider whether there is a moral duty to help and what would constitute effective aid. Year 11 pupils consider the European Union farming policy – what are the problems, how can they be tackled and by whom? The school provides many opportunities for pupils to become involved in citizenship issues from becoming a prefect, to joining the school council or to becoming a member of the eco group.
- 130 A team of staff is responsible for the development of citizenship, and their well-organised approach has resulted in planning likely to ensure that statutory requirements for the subject will be met. The subject is well resourced but teaching is not yet monitored. Teacher assessment judgements on pupils' standards in citizenship were made and reported to parents at the end of Year 9 last year, but the assessment system is not yet fully developed or secure enough.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
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	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
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	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).