

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HARRYTOWN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106143

Headteacher: Mr D.J. Cunningham

Lead inspector: David Klemm

Dates of inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> January – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 268397

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 792

School address: Harrytown Lane  
Romiley  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
Postcode: SK6 3BU

Telephone number: 0161 4305277  
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body  
Name of chair of Mrs C Walsh  
governors:

Date of previous 25th January 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Harrytown Catholic High School is an 11-16 comprehensive high school with 792 pupils on roll. It is smaller than other secondary schools, with slightly more girls than boys. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The school is situated in a suburban residential area in Stockport with seven main feeder catholic primary schools although many pupils travel from across the town to attend the school. The number of pupils who leave or join the school after the start of Year 7 is below average. Over 95 per cent of the pupils are from catholic backgrounds.

The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, 11.9 per cent, and those with statements, 1.3 per cent, is below the national average. As at the last inspection, the school attracts pupils from a range of advantaged and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Overall the background of pupils is similar to that found in schools nationally. On entry to the school standards vary from year to year but are average overall.

The school's declared aim is to promote excellence for all within a strong catholic ethos of living life through the gospel tradition. For the last three years the school has received the School Achievement Award and is in the process of submitting a bid to achieve specialist status in mathematics and computing. The headteacher has been in post for just over two years.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2049	D. Klemm	Lead inspector	
9649	J. Smith	Lay inspector	
13155	J. Dixon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4355	F. Earle	Team inspector	History
21971	J. Glennon	Team inspector	Special educational needs Drama
11969	J. Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology
11044	J. Hedge	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
23926	D. Howorth	Team inspector	Geography Work-related learning
32724	G. Jepson	Team inspector	Physical education
18453	C. Lower	Team inspector	Science
12271	I. Thompson	Team inspector	Art and design
31096	J. Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**Harrytown Catholic High School is a good school with some very good features.** It ensures that all pupils benefit equally from the learning opportunities it provides. The headteacher and his senior team provide good leadership and management and are well supported by a very good governing body. Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Pupils are very well cared for. It provides good value for money.

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

- The school provides very good support for its pupils and the majority behave well and develop positive attitudes, although a small number can be disruptive.
- Results at GCSE are well above average.
- The school provides very well for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the school is unsatisfactory and pupils do not achieve as well as they should in music in Years 7 to 9.
- Links with parents are very good.
- Provision in physical education is very good and standards in mathematics are well above average across the school.
- The leadership and management of the English department are unsatisfactory and this has an impact on the quality of assessment of pupils' work and what they are taught in lessons.
- Advice to pupils on how they can improve their work is weak in some subjects.

#### **How the school has changed since the previous inspection**

Since the previous inspection in January 1999 school improvement has been **satisfactory**. In the Year 9 national tests well above average standards have been sustained except in 2003 and GCSE results are higher. Results in the national tests have improved more than in most schools nationally. At GCSE improvement has been below that in schools nationally although in 2004 there was significant improvement and all pupils achieved very well at GCSE. Teaching continues to be good overall although there is a relatively small amount of very good or excellent teaching. Issues identified at the previous inspection have been partially resolved. There has been a good improvement in the quality of reports to parents and the monitoring of pupil progress. The quality of advice to pupils on how they can achieve higher standards has improved although practice is variable across departments. Support for pupils with special educational needs has improved. The use of ICT skills continues to be a weakness. Development planning is better although there continue to be weaknesses in some subject areas.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

**Achievement is good** throughout the school. In the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 results are usually well above average. In comparison with similar schools, results in 2003 were just below average but improved in 2004. Results in GCSE examinations were well above the national average and pupils made very good progress from the end of Year 9. The best results in 2004 were in drama, food technology and mathematics. The least successful subjects were German, graphics and electronics.

Standards are above average across the school. The current Year 11 did not do as well in the Year 9 national tests as other year groups in the school. Standards in English and science are above average across the school and are well above average in mathematics. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve equally well. Standards seen in ICT lessons across the school and in music in Years 7 to 9 are below average.

**Pupils' personal qualities** including their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** are being developed **very well**. Their behaviour is generally good and, although a small number can be disruptive, the majority have very positive attitudes to their work and the values of the school. Attendance is good.

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

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education is good** and most students have very positive attitudes to their work. **Teaching is good** and pupils achieve well and reach standards which are above average. Teaching is especially strong in physical education but there are weaknesses in ICT. Pupils learn well because the majority are prepared to work and concentrate well. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all legal requirements. The introduction of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 has strengthened this provision. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory with a good range of sporting activities. Students benefit from very good pastoral care and good advice and support. Links with parents are very good and are good with other schools, colleges and the community.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are good and the work of the governing body is very good. The headteacher is very clear about what needs to be done to improve standards in the school and has set an ambitious agenda for change. He is very well supported by his governors and senior staff. Leadership and management of subjects are good overall although there are weaknesses in English, music and ICT. The sharing of very good and excellent teaching has not yet been fully established in the school.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has a high reputation with parents who speak passionately about the quality of care their children receive. They appreciate the opportunity to comment upon the school's performance through the regular use of questionnaires at parents' meetings. Pupils also value the school especially the supportive relationships they have with other pupils and staff and the good quality teaching they enjoy. The school respects their views and tries to respond to them although the new school council has had a limited impact on developing links between pupils and staff.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve provision for the teaching of ICT across the school;
- Improve the quality of the leadership and management of the English department;
- Ensure achievement is at least satisfactory in music in Years 7 to 9;
- Make effective arrangements for managing and improving the behaviour of a small number of pupils who can be disruptive;
- Improve the quality of advice to pupils in some subjects on how they can improve their work.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Standards across the school are above average and achievement is good. In English, mathematics and science they are above average. They are below average in ICT. Boys and girls achieve similar results with boys doing better than girls in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and girls doing slightly better at GCSE.

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

- GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average and all pupils achieved very well.
- Standards and achievement in ICT across the school and in music in Years 7 to 9 are not as good as they should be because of staff absence.
- Pupils make very good progress in physical education in Years 10 and 11 because teaching and coaching skills are outstanding.
- Literacy skills are well developed in most subjects across the school.
- Standards in mathematics are well above average and pupils achieve well because teachers know their subject and pupils are given specific advice on how to improve.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Achievement in English throughout the school and in science in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but could be improved.

#### **Commentary**

1. On entry to school standards vary from year to year and are stronger in English and mathematics than in science and other subjects. Overall they are around the national average. There are high attaining pupils in all years although the majority of pupils are around the national average. Although the school does have pupils with special educational needs the numbers are smaller than in most schools nationally.

#### **Key Stage 3 – Years 7 to 9**

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.8 (35.8)	N/A (33.4))
Mathematics	37.6 (37.2)	N/A (35.4)
Science	35.0 (34.7)	N/A (33.6)

*There were 157 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. National results were not available for 2004. School results for 2004 have not been verified*

2. Over the last few years results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science have been well above average except in 2003 when they were above average. In 2004 the unverified national results indicate improvement in mathematics and science although there may be a slight decline in English. In comparison with similar schools nationally Harrytown compares very favourably and apart from 2003

value added is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The trend in improvement has been above that found nationally.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	69 (60)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	48.2 (47.1)	41.4 (40.6)

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

- GCSE results were significantly better in 2004 than 2003 and were well above the national average. The school is quite rightly proud that all pupils gained at least five A\*-G grades. This group of pupils achieved extremely well and made very good progress in Years 10 and 11. In recent years the improvement in GCSE results has been below that in most schools but the 2004 results indicate very good achievement. Overall standards in the current Year 11 are above average but are well above average in mathematics, art and design and physical education. Standards in ICT are below average. This year group entered the school with weaker standards and this was reflected in their performance in the Year 9 national tests.

### Summary of achievement by subject in work seen during the inspection

Judgement	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Excellent		
Very good		Physical education
Good	Modern foreign languages, mathematics, geography, history, design and technology, art and design, drama and physical education	Modern foreign languages, mathematics, science, geography, history, design and technology, art and design, drama, music and citizenship
Satisfactory	English, science, ICT and citizenship	English
Unsatisfactory	Music	ICT
Poor		

- The table indicates that the achievement of pupils seen during the inspection was good although there are weaknesses in the teaching of ICT and music. In order to improve standards further the school needs to increase the number of good and better lessons in English across the school and in science in Years 7 to 9.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 although boys are doing better in mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11 girls do better than boys but much less so than in most schools nationally. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. In the 2004 GCSE examination they all achieved at least five passes at grades A\* to G with an average grade of E. There were very few passes at the very lowest grades. In lessons they make progress at the same rate as other pupils.
- Gifted and talented pupils achieve well in the majority of subjects. A senior manager identifies and monitors the progress of gifted and talented pupils effectively. Teachers

are given the necessary information to plan for appropriate provision and this usually takes the form of challenging pupils to achieve the highest possible levels and grades in individual subjects.

8. Literacy standards are above average and most subjects provide good support for all pupils including those who have problems with reading and writing. Registration time is used well to promote reading with stimulating materials being provided by the literacy co-ordinator. The librarian organises a good range of reading activities. Numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics and the department has produced useful materials on common approaches to teaching skills such as calculation. In food technology, numeracy is developed well and overall provision is satisfactory across the school although in some subject areas it is not yet embedded securely. ICT is used well in a small number of subjects including music, physical education and history although its use in mathematics, science, geography and English and other curriculum areas is less well developed.

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

The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, and as a result pupils develop very positive attitudes and display a growing sense of responsibility as they move up the school. Behaviour is good but there is a high number of temporary exclusions. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very positive attitudes of the majority of pupils make a significant contribution to their learning and achievement.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility.
- Pupils develop into considerate and confident young people as a result of the school's very good provision for their spiritual, moral and social development.
- A small number of pupils, especially younger pupils, sometimes misbehave in lessons.
- A small minority of pupils are responsible for the high level of exclusions.

### **Commentary**

9. Pupils bring positive attitudes to their learning and in the very best lessons seen they displayed excellent attitudes. Overall, older pupils have better attitudes to their work than younger ones. Carefully devised and imaginative reward schemes, including 'the walls of achievement', help to motivate both girls and boys very effectively. The school's ethos strongly encourages consideration for others. Relationships are very harmonious and supportive and pupils highly value the helpfulness of their teachers. There are few incidents of bullying and pupils and parents agree that the school deals with these quickly and well. The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups are integrated well in the school.
10. Most pupils are very trustworthy and the school provides many good opportunities for them to exercise responsibility, such as the prefect system, the school council, and the Year 10 sports leadership award. An outstanding example of pupils' keenness to take on responsibility is the Anti- Bullying Council. Well over a hundred pupils have joined this and the co-ordinator has devised a number of different roles, in addition to peer mentors, so that everyone can participate. This is a very well-organised, imaginative

and innovative scheme which is helping to raise awareness of bullying issues very effectively.

11. Most pupils respond very well to the school's very high expectations of good behaviour. However, a small minority of pupils sometimes misbehave and spoil lessons for others. During the inspection this happened most frequently in Year 7 classes. Movement around the school is generally calm and orderly but at changeover times in some congested areas a few incidents of inconsiderate jostling were seen, exacerbated by the apparent absence of a traffic system.
12. In common with many other schools in the local area the school has a high level of fixed-term exclusions. These follow the correct procedures and are given as a consequence of serious breaches of the school's code of discipline. In accordance with its inclusive ethos the school works hard to avoid permanently excluding pupils and there are good support strategies for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. However, the number of pupils who are repeatedly excluded indicates that in many cases this sanction is not having the desired deterrent effect. The school does not at present monitor and evaluate the incidence of exclusions sufficiently closely and in view of the high rate it should urgently pursue its plans for an inclusion unit.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	736	144	4
White – Irish	20		
White – any other White background	9		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Mixed – White and Black African	1	1	
Mixed – White and Asian	4		
Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	6		
Any other ethnic group	3		
No ethnic group recorded	3		

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded. Where there are no pupils from a specific ethnic group represented in the school these categories have been omitted from the above table.*

## Attendance

13. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good. The school has very rigorous procedures for monitoring and following up absence. Most pupils arrive punctually except when

buses are delayed by traffic congestion, but there is some dawdling between classrooms resulting in a slow start in a small number of lessons.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/04**

Authorised absence	
School data	6.7
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5
National data	1.1

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

14. The strong Catholic ethos of the school provides a very secure foundation for pupils' personal spiritual development. Each year all pupils take part in a retreat and in Year 11 pupils volunteer to be Eucharistic Ministers who lead prayer in the Oratory at lunch times. Assemblies are very well planned and provide very good opportunities for reflection on both moral and cultural issues such as the Holocaust. The well-regarded chaplain further helps to develop pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils have very good opportunities to consider ultimate questions about life and to develop their own responses to them. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social and moral development. By meeting the high expectations of their teachers pupils help to create a well-ordered and harmonious environment. Pupils are encouraged to take action to support others, as seen in their charitable response to the recent tsunami disaster. They also support a local charity for the homeless. In drama there is a strong focus on self-awareness and the Anti-Bullying Council helps to develop the social skills of the large number of pupils involved in this service. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of pupils. In art pupils make very good consideration of the work of other cultures and their work is displayed in local galleries. There is a feeling of place and heritage as pupils use the street where Lowry painted as a basis for some of their work. There are, however, not many opportunities for pupils to experience other aspects of the ethnic diversity of Britain today.
15. At the previous inspection pupils' very good attitudes and values were considered to be strengths of the school and this continues to be the case.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils achieve well by the end of the Year 11. Curriculum provision is good and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school provides very good care and welfare for pupils. Links with parents are very good and are good with the community and other schools and colleges.

#### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. The number of lessons where teaching and learning are good was higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory overall and reports to parents are very good.

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

- In most lessons pupils work hard and learn well.
- Homework is used well to enhance learning.
- Teaching and learning in ICT are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is excellent in physical education.

- In some subjects pupils are not given enough specific advice on how to improve their work.
- The teaching of literacy skills in most subjects is good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and learn effectively
- There is a small amount of very good and excellent teaching.

## Commentary

16. Teaching is good overall and is stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. During the inspection week, due to staff absence, one in seven lessons was being taught by temporary staff or non-specialist permanent teachers and this had an impact on the quality of learning observed, especially in Years 7 to 9 which were the most affected year groups. Teaching is excellent in physical education and good in most other subjects. It is satisfactory in English across the school and in science, citizenship and music in Years 7 to 9. It is unsatisfactory in ICT across the school. The quality of teaching is similar to that at the last inspection and although fewer unsatisfactory lessons were observed during this inspection the amount of very good and excellent teaching has not increased. Literacy skills are taught well in most subject areas with particular strengths in geography, physical education and art and design.
17. In the good or better lessons pupils learn well because teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge: they plan lessons which have a range of stimulating activities as in geography and the pace of learning is brisk. Learning objectives are clear and provide a clear framework for pupils to learn well. Homework is used well in many subjects to extend learning and is a particular strength in mathematics and art and design where pupil self-assessment of learning enhances their confidence in how much they are learning. In physical education teachers share their expertise and provide outstanding coaching in a variety of skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and discipline in most lessons is effective. In the majority of lessons pupils work hard and learn well.
18. Where teaching is satisfactory, as in some English and science lessons, learning would be improved if pupils were presented with more learning activities and encouraged to participate more. In some science lessons pupils are not given enough opportunities for independent work including using ICT. When encouraged to do so pupils are prepared to work both collaboratively and independently, as in drama lessons. Teaching in ICT and music has been affected by the long-term absence of staff. Most teaching in ICT is unsatisfactory because expectations are low and learning tasks are not challenging enough. Pupils behave well but are making insufficient progress. Music teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 because well-qualified staff are teaching these groups but in Years 7 to 9 teaching is just satisfactory and some pupils have gaps in their learning. The use of ICT to extend learning across the curriculum is limited.
19. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good. In lessons teachers support them well because they know which pupils are on the special needs register and have suitable strategies to meet their needs. In some lessons, particularly in geography, they are given work which is tailored to their abilities but this practice is not universal. The proportion of learning support assistants is below the national average and thus they are sometimes not in lessons where pupils would benefit from their presence. When they are in lessons, learning support assistants are effective.
20. The school has responded well to the findings of the previous report by taking steps to improve its procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress and for target setting. As a result, effective use is made of information about pupils' attainment in order to form the basis of the school's expectations of their future performance. Pupils'

progress and behaviour are reviewed with parents twice a year, and steps taken where appropriate to ensure that pupils remain on track. The quality of information provided for parents in the annual report on their children is high. There is a clear commentary on each pupil's strengths and weaknesses in each subject, and sound advice on what they have to do to raise their performance. Pupils add most constructively their own targets for improvement which they have set for themselves.

21. The quality of assessment and target-setting at subject level is variable but is satisfactory overall. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection report. Whilst there are good assessment procedures in design and technology, geography, physical education and art and very good procedures in mathematics, they are less secure in some other subjects, notably English and science, where the target-setting process is not always sufficiently related to specific aspects of the subject and does not enable pupils to understand the progress they have made and what they need to do to improve.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 113 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (3.5%)	18 (15.9%)	50 (44.2%)	37 (32.7%)	3 (2.7%)	1 (0.9%)	0

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

#### **The curriculum**

The school provides a **good** curriculum with a **satisfactory** range of opportunities for enhancement activities. Resources and accommodation are **satisfactory**.

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

- The curriculum is broad and balanced in Years 7 to 9.
- Vocational provision in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- Long-term staff absence is affecting the quality of provision in ICT and music.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Work-related learning and arrangements for citizenship are good.
- Extra-curricular provision in sport is good.
- Full access to the building is impossible for wheelchair users.

#### **Commentary**

22. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is good with opportunities for pupils to study two languages. Drama and citizenship lessons enhance the quality of this provision which is available to all pupils including those with special educational needs. In Years 10 and 11 the school offers a good range of academic courses and is now providing a variety of vocational courses including science, ICT, health and social care and business studies. These vocational courses recruit pupils from across the attainment levels and are a positive curriculum development. In the current Year 10 pupils can now choose three courses from a range of options including vocational courses. All Year 10 pupils follow courses in English, religious education, ICT, mathematics,

science and physical education. The school meets statutory requirements with regard to the National Curriculum and the daily act of collective worship.

23. The school two-week timetable has been constructed skilfully to enable the transition from a 30-period to a 25-period week and the change in the option scheme in Year 10. This has caused some problems in art and design where the time distribution of one hour restricts opportunities for sustained work in ceramics.
24. The school is working hard to develop teaching and learning across the school. The curriculum is under regular review and governors are involved well in this process. Before the end of this academic year the school is submitting a bid for specialist status in mathematics and computing.
25. There is good provision for pupils who have special educational needs. They are fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils who have particular literacy or numeracy needs receive extra tuition during registration periods and, in a very small number of cases, by being withdrawn from lessons. The small number of learning support assistants, however, limits the amount of such support although the quality is good. Pupils with social needs are well catered for in the learning support area during lunch times. There is no wheelchair access to science laboratories. Governors have discussed this issue but have reasonably ruled that at present it is impracticable to make the necessary changes to enable full access to the building. Gifted and talented pupils are supported well in their lessons and extra support is provided for them in the mathematics lunch-time club.
26. Enhancement of learning through extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There are strengths in a number of curriculum areas particularly in sport although there are fewer extra-curricular activities in the performing arts, especially music. Art and science run weekly clubs which are attended well and in modern foreign languages there are top-up lessons and an annual trip abroad in addition to a group of pupils learning Italian. In geography, fieldwork sessions and examination revision in school are having a positive impact on examination results. In drama the Shakespeare Theatre Company meets weekly and Years 10 and 11 produce a pantomime for the local primary school. There are many good opportunities for competition in sport with inter-form games and local league fixtures against other schools. The homework support club provides good encouragement and an opportunity for pupils to work independently, particularly for those pupils who find it difficult to work at home.
27. Citizenship education and the personal, social and health education programme make a good contribution to pupils' personal development although there is a need to monitor the effectiveness of this provision across all years. Form tutors provide very good pastoral, spiritual and academic support for pupils. Assemblies are uplifting spiritual experiences and sensitively examine current moral and social issues. Good quality business studies and other vocational courses allied to sensitive careers advice and guidance prepare pupils well for the world of work.
28. During the inspection almost one in seven lessons was being taught by temporary staff or being covered by other members of staff. In spite of the efforts of the senior team, the long-term absence of key staff in music and ICT is having an impact on pupils' achievement. Although the absence of the special educational needs co-ordinator has been covered well, this has placed a considerable strain on senior staff who have key roles in management and are often redeployed to cover affected areas. During the inspection week a number of other

key staff were absent. Whilst staffing is satisfactory in the majority of subjects and good in many, long-term absence is having an impact on achievement and standards in the affected departments. Ancillary staff are well qualified and experienced and are used effectively to support teaching and learning.

29. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but it is poor in drama, where space is limited. Dining hall space is extremely tight and part of the playground has to be used as a staff car park. Toilet provision is inadequate and there are few social areas for pupils to meet. The school library is a very good facility which is well used and managed. Resources for learning are satisfactory with the exception of drama where poor lighting adversely affects learning. There has been a recent and considerable improvement in the number of computers although their use in some areas of the curriculum is not as good as it should be. There has been some improvement since the last inspection.

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

The school provides very good pastoral care and guidance for pupils and has good arrangements for their welfare, health and safety. The school has satisfactory arrangements for involving pupils in the work of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils value the friendly and very supportive relationships they have with their teachers.
- A great strength of pastoral care is the way that the school seeks to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- There are effective systems in place to ensure that pupils receive very good support and guidance, particularly at points of transition.
- The school council is not yet fully effective.

### **Commentary**

30. Pupils speak very positively about the care they receive and the friendly supportive relationships they enjoy both with each other and with staff. Year heads and form tutors stay with pupils throughout their time at school and get to know them well. Retreats and social functions such as discos help to strengthen relationships. Morning registration periods are generally used purposefully and provide a good start to the day. The pastoral system is well led and clear procedures and good lines of communication underpin the very effective pastoral support provided for pupils. There are very good arrangements to ease the transition of new pupils to the school and Year 7 pupils spoke about how well the school helped them to settle.
31. A notable feature of the school's pastoral provision is the school's sensitivity to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils who are facing difficulties receive very good support from pastoral staff, a counsellor, the chaplain or external agencies. The school's commitment to supporting pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour and who are at risk of exclusion is shown by the employment of a highly skilled and committed behaviour support worker. There is an after-school study club for those who need help with homework and a significant proportion of Year 11 pupils are supported in preparation for their examinations through a mentoring scheme.
32. A strength of the good careers provision is the way that the school provides extra careers guidance for younger pupils who might benefit from this and gain in

motivation. This is in addition to the individual interviews which all Year 11 pupils receive with the Connexions advisor. Pupils receive good guidance on options in Year 9 and the school is careful to ensure that pupils consider the full range of post-16 options open to them when they leave the school. Pupils who are interested in modern apprenticeships are taken to 'Skill City' and the post-16 choices evening informs pupils about a range of different college and school routes.

33. The academic review is an effective means of monitoring pupils' academic performance against potential as well as other aspects of performance such as homework and behaviour. Good achievement is recognised and pupils who are underachieving are carefully monitored by pastoral staff. All pupils are encouraged to think about how they can improve their work through the setting of personal targets. However, the quality of advice given to pupils on how they can improve their work varies across departments
34. The school follows local procedures for child protection and all staff are aware of these. Health and safety procedures are effective: the premises are regularly inspected, appropriate risk assessments are carried out and safety concerns are given priority. Pupils receive good medical care from qualified staff when they are hurt. However, the recording of accidents does not provide sufficient detail to enable records to be properly monitored. There are a few health and safety concerns which the school is aware of: the toilets are poorly maintained and their condition does not encourage use; the lack of soap is a health concern. The dual use of the forecourt as a car park and a social space for pupils is a concern and the school is looking at ways it can solve this problem.
35. The school listens to and respects pupils' views. Where possible it tries to respond to pupils' requests; for example, in response to the request for more social spaces the hall is now open at lunchtime. The school council is relatively new and does not yet have a high profile in the school. Lines of communication between pupils and the council are not consistently effective and although the school council has had some successes it meets infrequently and many pupils see it as ineffective.

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

The school has a very good partnership with parents and a good partnership with the community and with other schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school benefits from strong parent support.
- The school keeps parents very well informed about their children's progress.
- The many good links with the community help to promote pupils' personal development.
- There are few links with local businesses.
- There is good pastoral liaison with primary schools but curriculum links are under-developed.

### **Commentary**

36. The school has a deservedly high reputation with parents and the community. At the parents' meeting held before the inspection parents spoke very positively about all

aspects of the school's work and they described the pastoral care their children receive as 'second to none'. A minority of parents, through the questionnaires, expressed concerns about incidents of bullying and poor behaviour but they recognised that the school deals with these well. The school consults parents regularly through exit polls at parents' evenings. It also holds meetings for parents about proposed changes such as changes to options and the application for specialist school status.

37. Parents give very effective support for their children's learning. Parents' evenings are very well attended and parents spoke highly of the informative meetings held at the various transition points in pupils' careers. The school provides parents with a good range of printed information including newsletters. The recently introduced academic review keeps parents well informed about their children's overall progress and parents value the way in which the school acknowledges their children's achievements and quickly informs them when there are concerns. Annual reports on progress which were criticised at the last inspection are now very good. Subject reports include the levels which pupils are working at, good comments on achievement, and a helpful section on 'ways forward'. Pupils' personal development is also well covered.
38. The very strong links between home, school and parish are central to the school's ethos. Participation in retreats helps to foster pupils' personal development well. The school makes many external links through its regular charitable giving. At Christmas staff and pupils join together to give hands-on help to a local charity for the homeless, 'The Wellspring'. The art department's strong links with the local community have stimulated much good art work such as that inspired by the local allotments. There is some use of the community by other departments but overall this is under-developed and the school has few business links.
39. The school has good links with local schools and colleges particularly the Catholic college to which most pupils transfer. The good liaison which the school has with local primary schools assists the smooth transition of new pupils to the school. However, curriculum links with primary schools which would support continuity of learning for pupils when they move between schools are under-developed.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the head teacher is **good**. Governance is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and manages the school well. He is well supported by his senior team.
- Governors provide very good support to the school and play an increasing part in shaping the school's future.
- Leadership and management of the English department are unsatisfactory.
- Long-term staff absence has adversely affected achievement in ICT and music.
- Management of the support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- All statutory requirements are met.
- Financial management is good.
- Performance management is helping to improve teaching and learning.

- There are limited opportunities for teachers to observe and share good practice.
- The school improvement plan is a good framework for future developments although the number of targets could be reduced.

## Commentary

40. The headteacher was appointed just over two years ago. He is very well supported by his governing body and senior team and has a clear commitment to maintaining the catholic values of the school and improving teaching and learning. He provides good leadership and is well aware of the strengths and areas for development in the school. As a teacher he provides a good role model for staff and he is prepared to make unpopular decisions if this in the school's interest. His senior team share his vision for the school's future and provide good support. Both pupils and parents speak positively about his purposeful leadership of the school and during the inspection he was a calm and positive presence around the school. In his first two years the senior management team was considerably under strength and this affected progress on a number of issues identified in the previous inspection. The school is now well placed to improve and there is the capacity for significant future improvement.
41. Governance is very good. Governors are very clear about what the school needs to do to improve and provide excellent support to the headteacher. They meet regularly and bring a variety of high quality expertise to their work. The work of the various committees not only sets the strategic direction of the school but is unusually self-critical in how well the school is performing. They accept that some of the issues from the last inspection have not yet been fully addressed although they have ensured that all statutory requirements are being met. They have established clear educational, social and religious priorities for the school. The very experienced chair of governors provides very strong leadership and is a weekly visitor to the school. She is very much in touch with what is happening in school. The governing body is clear that a successful application for specialist school status in mathematics and computing is the top priority for the school this year. Governors are also clear that the benefits of this should be available to all pupils in the school and to the wider community.
42. The school improvement plan is comprehensive and detailed with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. It is somewhat ambitious and would benefit from a reduction in the number of targets. The governing body is involved well with whole-school planning. Departmental planning has improved since the last inspection and is now good, although there are weaknesses in English, ICT and music.
43. Performance management is good. The system was established two years ago as a tool for improving teaching and learning. It is designed to form part of an integrated system for monitoring teaching and learning and in most subjects is working well and leading to improvements. There are regular meetings between heads of subjects and senior staff and reviews of departments have been established recently. What is missing are opportunities for staff to observe good practice and systems for spreading good practice across the school. A programme for the effective induction of all new staff is in place and continuing professional development through internal training and external support from subject consultants is of a good standard. Initial teacher training is effective and trainee teachers are supported well.
44. The school operates very well on a day-to-day basis. Senior staff work hard to maintain the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects where staff are absent although the

leadership team are having to spend too much time on supporting the work of individual teachers in small departments . The pastoral system is very well led and managed. Leadership of the mathematics, art and design and physical education departments is very good. Most subject areas are well led and managed except in ICT and music where long-term absences have affected the quality of provision and in English where there is no clear vision and the planning of teaching is weak.

45. In spite of staffing difficulties over an extended period, management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is because effective emergency arrangements have been made. There is an efficient system of transferring information about pupils between the learning support department and subject teachers. Consequently teachers have all the necessary information about pupils with special needs and feed back information to the learning support department efficiently when required. Individual education plans are of very good quality. All legal requirements regarding pupils with statements of special educational need are met.

## Financial Information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,360,324	Balance from previous year	90,751
Total expenditure	2,256,661	Balance carried forward	194,413
Expenditure per pupil	2,871		

46. The good financial accounting and management systems help the school achieve its educational priorities. The school makes some comparison of costs and seeks best value for money. The benefits of these approaches are seen across the school. Although the school's level of funding is below the average for schools nationally, its financial systems are sufficiently effective to have maintained spending on staff, premises and resources. Efficient administrative support helps ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There are no specific aids or barriers which are affecting achievement although the school would benefit from improvements in accommodation and resources.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Vocational courses and business studies are a good feature of WRL.
- Careers education and the Connexions service make a good contribution to this provision.
- Good quality work experience is provided.
- Policy and planning have yet to be firmly established and fully implemented across the school.

### Commentary

47. WRL is having a positive impact upon pupils' achievements, particularly in Year 10 because of the new curriculum. The intention was that all pupils would take a vocational subject, but this was amended following consultation with parents. Nevertheless, over a third of pupils in Year 10 opted to take one of three vocational subjects or business studies. In these subjects, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of the world of work. For example, in applied science demonstrations from fire service personnel extend learning about first aid and health and safety issues. In health and social care pupils gain confidence making effective presentations to primary school pupils on dental care. There are very good links with Manchester airport in business studies, for example, to study the impact of industrial development on the environment. Teaching and learning are good in these subjects and consequently pupils achieve well. Plans for WRL in other subjects are at an early stage.
48. Careers education and guidance are good and include individual interviews through the Connexions service. All pupils are interviewed in readiness for their progression into work, training or further education. More pupils are now taking up modern apprenticeships following attendance at 'Skill City' workshops. Pupils were very positive about this particular provision and stated that they were pleased with the support they were receiving. More extensive guidance is provided for pupils with special educational needs and the few pupils who are disaffected. Careers education is now taught in Year 10 within the programme for citizenship. As a result, pupils learn in a more coherent way about work and for work in such areas as the qualities required of a modern workforce.
49. The work experience programme in Year 10 is well planned, involves all pupils and is supervised by staff. A number of pupils find their own placements and the school offers very good support for those who need extra help. Pupils maintain a log of their work and experiences and their performance is evaluated with the employer. Pupils were very enthusiastic about these opportunities and reported that they had gained confidence from being able to take responsibility. A good development is that work experience now forms the coursework component of the newly introduced short GCSE course in citizenship.
50. The headteacher and senior managers are actively engaged in improving the provision. A policy is in place and there is a planned programme, based on the recommended framework, of what is currently provided and what is planned, like an Industry day later this year. However, planning is not as effective as it should be because there is no one with the specific responsibility for co-ordinating WRL. Consequently, WRL is not yet firmly embedded across the school. At this stage, therefore, leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although major aspects like careers, work experience and vocational subjects are effective and well managed.

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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best lessons are very well planned, lively and intellectually challenging.
- In 2004 all pupils, including low attaining pupils, were successful at GCSE in both language and literature.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum is not properly planned to ensure that all pupils have access to the full range of experiences.
- Assessment is not well co-ordinated and teachers work in different ways.
- Monitoring of teaching is not established as part of departmental practice.

##### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Unsatisfactory	
Management of the department	Unsatisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory	

##### Commentary

51. Standards are above average in English when pupils enter the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school and above average standards are maintained. Test results at the end of Year 9 have fallen back each year since 2002 although in 2003, the last year for which national comparators are available, they were still well above average. Overall test results were not as strong in 2004 although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was better than in 2003.
52. GCSE results indicate a very similar picture to that at the end of Year 9. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in English and above average in English literature; girls did not do as well in English as in other subjects. In 2004, however, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C fell despite the well above average test results gained by this year group when they were tested in Year 9. Pupils did less well in both English and English literature than they did in other subjects; in comparison to the previous year the proportion of higher grades was halved and girls did much less well. Nonetheless, overall above average standards were achieved.

53. The standard of work observed reflects pupils' achievements in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. Most listen carefully and are able to explain and discuss ideas productively in pairs and groups. Pupils generally work well together. Lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress with the use of language and in Year 10, for example, they can find and sort information about the poet Seamus Heaney and relate it to themes from his poems. By Year 11 higher attaining pupils display very good understanding of literary devices and context; they write fluently making good use of quotations to illustrate their ideas although fewer than might be expected produce work at the highest standard.
54. Overall the quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Two experienced members of the department were not in school during the inspection and temporary arrangements were made to cover their classes. There is some very strong teaching in the department. In these lessons the pace is brisk, tasks are varied and challenging and are presented enthusiastically so interest is sustained. Lessons are lively and fun. Planning is very thorough, learning objectives clear and tasks extremely well organised so pupils understand what to do and why. Tasks are broken down and sequenced well so understanding develops coherently. Pupils work hard, making very good progress.
55. Progress is satisfactory in all lessons but in some the pace is slow and tasks, although challenging, provide too little opportunity for pupils to participate actively. Pupils listen well but the lack of variety and lively presentation reduces concentration and interest. Most pupils behave well but a small number have a short concentration span requiring particular strategies by the teacher. The quality of marking is variable. The best is detailed, gives pupils targets for improvement, and is supportive in tone. Relationships are generally good and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make progress at a similar rate to others; where there is additional support progress is better. Access to computers for whole-class use is difficult.
56. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The department lacks a clear vision and shared sense of direction focused on improving teaching and learning to improve standards. The planning of teaching in all years is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that pupils experience a common curriculum nor does the level of planning provide adequate support for teachers. There is little consistency in approaches to assessment. Some individual practice is very good but for the department as a whole too little account is taken of the importance of assessment for tracking progress. There is no common programme of assessment linked to teaching programmes. Pupils are not always clear about the level at which they are working or about what is needed to improve. Although teachers discuss their work frequently this is informal and does not enable systematic development and sharing of the best practice leading to professional development. There is no regular and ongoing system for observing teaching and learning. Departmental documentation is haphazard and poorly organised and takes little account of recent developments. Taken together, these important aspects of leadership and management inhibit teachers' enthusiasm and effort although some teaching is of a high standard.
57. The department has maintained a high level of success with double entry at GCSE since the last inspection. Planning for introducing the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is now underway. Standards in national tests and examinations have fallen back. The profile of teaching is not as strong. There has been little improvement in planning, the tracking of progress and monitoring of work, all identified as weak areas in the last report.

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

58. Standards of literacy are above average and enable pupils to make good progress in their work. Pupils' writing is generally good and covers a range of styles and formats. Listening

skills are also good but there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to speak in business studies, design and technology and some English lessons. Most curriculum areas take the development of pupils' literacy skills seriously. In geography there is a very good focus on literacy in teachers' planning and pupils' own evaluation helps to improve their use of structure and language in examination answers. In physical education lower attaining pupils following the GCSE course use writing frames and there is very good emphasis on the meaning and spelling of specialist vocabulary. Poetry is used well in art as a stimulus for pupils' work. In these subjects pupils have regular and frequent opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills as part of their assessment. In modern languages there is opportunity to reinforce knowledge of grammatical terminology. Writing frames are used well in science and design and technology to promote effective writing and key words are emphasised in a number of subjects. There is some good display to emphasise literacy in religious education and English. Registration time is used effectively as an opportunity for quiet reading, especially for younger pupils; aspects of literacy are covered well by form teachers using materials supplied by the literacy co-ordinator. The library is very pleasant and well organised and is used by pupils to read at lunch time. The English department encourages younger pupils' personal reading through a regular library lesson. The librarian, in conjunction with the English department, organises a good range of activities to promote reading.

## Modern foreign languages

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils have good understanding of language.
- Pupils' attitudes to languages learning are very good.
- Leadership of languages is good.
- Lack of resources prevents adequate use of ICT to support learning.
- Advice to pupils on how they can improve their written work is not detailed enough.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

## Commentary

59. Examination results in French in 2004 were well above the national average and showed an improvement on the previous year. Pupils did better in French relative to the other subjects they took than is the case in most schools, and the performance of boys – especially those achieving the highest grades A\* and A – was well above average. In German the performance of pupils was well below average in terms of A\* to C grades, although the attainment of most pupils entered for the examination was close to what the school expected.

60. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with national averages in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, with abler pupils reaching above average standards, especially in the upper school, where language knowledge in particular was well above average. Achievement is good throughout the school: most pupils achieve at least satisfactory levels, and some achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. The achievement of average and lower attaining pupils is generally good, but that of gifted and talented pupils is variable; in some cases their attainment is above average but their achievement is no more than satisfactory. Where the teacher places extra challenge on these pupils they achieve well. There was some under-achievement in one group in Year 9, where pupils learning French as a second language under-achieved because of their poor attitudes. Most pupils have very good attitudes to languages learning. They concentrate well and try hard, and this contributes significantly to their achievement.
61. Teaching is mainly good; pupils respond well to high expectations, lessons are well planned and there are good strategies for group work. In some cases, teachers do not spend enough time practising the spoken language with pupils, and this is reflected in pupils' confidence in speaking. This is particularly the case with older pupils in German, where speaking has been recognised by the school as an area which needs to be developed. Nonetheless, opportunities for speaking are planned in lessons, and here pupils work well in pairs and groups. Writing in exercise books across the range of attainment is mainly of a good standard. Teachers' marking of written work, whilst being supportive and encouraging, does not sufficiently inform pupils how to improve or give targets for their future development. Inadequate resources and access to computers means that pupils cannot make sufficient use of ICT to support their learning in languages.
62. Leadership of the department is good. Planning is good and the teachers work well together as a team. The department analyses its performance well and uses this data to plan for the future.
63. Management is satisfactory. There is insufficient formal monitoring of the department's work and sharing expertise through lesson observations. The modern languages department has sustained the standards achieved and the quality of teaching noted in the previous inspection. Boys' attainment has improved markedly. The use of computers remains an area for development. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good leadership of the department resulting in a very clear vision for improvement.
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics, which support pupils' achievement well.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to consolidate or extend pupils' learning.
- The pupils benefit from good regular assessment and the resulting information is used well to monitor their progress.

- Higher attaining pupils in some lessons are insufficiently challenged to achieve their potential.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

### Commentary

64. Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average and continued the upward trend in these results. The GCSE results in 2004 were also well above the national average and were slightly higher than those in 2003. Overall, girls and boys achieve broadly similar results at the end of Years 9 and 11.
65. By the end of Year 9, pupils' algebraic skills are well above average and they achieve well, having entered the school with above average standards. Higher attaining pupils can use algebraic and graphical methods very effectively to solve simultaneous equations; however, lower attainers struggle to expand brackets in expressions correctly. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils have well above average numerical and algebraic skills. They can graph linear inequalities with two and three boundaries and identify the appropriate shaded regions. The lower attainers have below average shape, space and measures skills. Whilst they can calculate the circumference of a circle, they struggle to correct the answer to one decimal place due to their weaker numerical skills. Overall, by the end of Year 11 there is good achievement for a group of pupils who entered the school with just above average standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
66. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics, which, combined with their good rapport with pupils and the pupils' good attitudes, results in effective learning. However, apart from the aim of the lesson, teachers rarely relay to the pupils the content and progress to be made in the lesson. Consequently in the weaker lessons pupils are often unaware of the teachers' expectations and as a result the pace of learning drops as the lesson progresses. Teachers use good starter activities, to get pupils working in lessons, but the endings of lessons do not always sufficiently recapitulate what has been learnt or set the scene for the next lesson. In the top sets the most able are well challenged; however, the higher attaining pupils in other classes are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their potential. Opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively are not a feature of most lessons; however, in one Year 11 lesson on inequalities, this was very effectively used as pupils marked constructively each other's work, giving targets on how to improve. Helpful, constructive marking by teachers does take place. In the better lessons pupil self-assessment of learning is used very well to let them know how well they are doing. Homework is provided regularly and assists well in the raising of achievement.
67. There is very good leadership of the department with a clear vision for improvement. Teachers work well in a team where roles are effectively delegated. Schemes of work are in place, although they are not sufficiently developed to support teaching fully.

Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work does take place and assists well in the raising of standards. However, ICT is not used sufficiently as a teaching aid or by pupils to develop their understanding of mathematics. The pupils are assessed well through regular testing, the outcomes of which pupils record and use to set targets to assist them to improve. Good monitoring of the pupils' performance takes place, informing target setting and identifying underachieving pupils. This good departmental self-review is the framework for a good development plan aimed at improving standards further. Teachers give very freely of their time at breaks, providing drop-in support sessions to further support pupils in their work. However, links with the community are embryonic and do not sufficiently enhance the curriculum.

68. There has been good improvement since the last inspection due to the very good leadership of the department which has focused upon improving teaching and learning. Teaching is good with some excellent and very good practice being observed.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

69. Standards of mathematics across the curriculum are above average. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill in all subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory. The mathematics department has carried out an audit of provision in subjects and consequently helpful booklets on common mathematical approaches, such as calculations, have been produced. In some subjects, such as food technology, numeracy is clearly identified and developed in lessons, for example measuring the rate of bacterial growth in decaying food. However, this is not the case in the majority of subjects where numeracy is not sufficiently embedded to develop further pupils' numerical skills across the curriculum.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good and there is a commitment to improving standards and making science enjoyable
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and pupils achieve well in lessons.
- Teachers treat pupils with respect and relationships are good.
- Pupils are given few opportunities to develop independent research skills.
- Pupils are not given sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils are not given opportunities to use ICT to support their learning in experimental science.
- Some departmental policies and guidelines are not in place.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good

Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory	

## Commentary

70. The results for Year 9 in 2004 were above national standards and were similar to those of the previous year. Over the last three years results have declined. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with above average results in science, make satisfactory progress and generally obtain the levels expected of them in Year 9. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were above average and boys did better than girls. The results were slightly better than the previous year and pupils made satisfactory progress, obtaining the grades expected of them based upon their performance in Year 9. The standards seen during the inspection were above average in all years.
71. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 with pupils obtaining the levels expected of them based upon their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Pupils' achievement over time in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and pupils obtain the grades expected of them based upon their test results in Year 9. The good achievement seen in Year 10 and 11 lessons has resulted from a greater focus on the applications of science, the employment of a variety of stimulating activities and a more effective use of time. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils and no difference was seen between the achievement of boys and girls. Talented and gifted pupils achieve as well as other pupils although opportunities are sometimes missed to extend them further. In a Year 8 mixed ability class on magnetism in which three gifted and talented pupils were identified the lack of opportunity to go beyond the whole class experiment restricted their levels of attainment to above average rather than well above average.
72. Teaching overall is satisfactory. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good overall in Years 10 and 11. Teachers treat pupils with respect and establish good relationships with them. Pupils generally behave well, with only a minority disrupting learning. When teaching is good, science is made relevant to the real world and activities are varied and well timed. To reinforce reality, in a Year 10 lesson, fire officers were used to demonstrate the resuscitation process. Less effective teaching often lacks variety and pace. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory although few opportunities are given for pupils to develop independent research skills. Pupils are given few opportunities to find out things for themselves. They are not given opportunities to use ICT to support their experimental work in the form of data logging.
73. Leadership of the department is good because the head of department has a clear vision for raising standards and making science an enjoyable subject for all. There is innovative leadership of the curriculum, particularly in Year 10 with the introduction of applied science. The management of the department is satisfactory. Good systems for self-evaluation and for monitoring long-term pupil progress are in place. However, target setting for pupils is not fully developed and pupils do not always know what to do to improve. Some policies and departmental guidelines are not in place to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the department. Accommodation is satisfactory for pupils but storage and preparation space are inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national averages in both Year 9 and 11.
- Unsatisfactory planning and teaching have resulted in pupils underachieving.
- The small amount of good teaching is beginning to raise standards.
- The modification of schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 makes it difficult for pupils to reach the higher levels.
- Poor leadership of the subject has contributed to the lack of improvement in teaching and assessment.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Poor	
Management of the department	Poor	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory	

### Commentary

74. Teacher assessments at end of Year 9 in 2004 were average. These assessments were not reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection which were below average. Pupils gain basic skills and knowledge but are not challenged to extend their work. They perform simple tasks with little opportunity to model situations, make predications or search databases. Pupils enter the school below average and maintain these standards. Their achievement is satisfactory.
75. The small group entered for GCSE in 2004 achieved well below average results. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to extend their skills but do not fully use more advanced features of software. There is limited evidence of pupils understanding or using validation routines, interactive presentations or conditional formulae in spreadsheets. Only the more able pupils include searches and reports in databases or navigation tools in presentations. As a result the standards of work are overall below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
76. The quality of teaching and learning overall is unsatisfactory, but there is a small amount of good and better teaching. Teachers do not always set detailed objectives or explain tasks so pupils fully understand what they have to do. They do not provide sufficient direction to allow pupils to gain skills through realistic activities. In the few good lessons, teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks that stretch all pupils. A group of Year 8 pupils evaluated successfully their own and others' good progress in adding successfully hyperlinks to web pages. In examination classes, pupils are given assessment sheets and guidance about syllabus requirements, but

expectations are low and pupils are not required to complete all tasks. As a result, pupils underachieve.

77. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make similar progress. There are no differentiated resources to stretch sufficiently the higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils, so they underachieve more than other pupils. There is inconsistent use of target setting and assessment procedures. In well-taught lessons in Years 7 to 9 pupils are given topic sheets and assessment criteria, but these do not relate to National Curriculum levels so pupils do not know what to do to improve. Marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils how to reach higher levels and grades. Homework is not set regularly, but when it is, it helps pupils to extend their learning. There are limited opportunities to develop literary and numeracy skills.
78. There is a school vision for the development of ICT, but at departmental level there is poor direction. There is no effective strategy to improve the below average standards. The management of the department is disorganised. The National Strategy for ICT has been implemented. However, the schemes of work have been modified in such a way that pupils do not experience the full range of ICT activities at a sufficiently high level. In Year 11 not all pupils follow an ICT course. The curriculum time allocation is better in Year 10 with all pupils having the opportunity to do either a half or full award GCSE. Those pupils who study ICT as an option can achieve a vocational dual award. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have little experience in modelling, control and measurement.
79. There has been recent good improvement in accommodation and resources with a pupil to computer ratio now better than national expectations. However, standards have not improved and no strategies have been introduced to improve the overall quality of teaching and assessment procedures.

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

80. The use of ICT in many subjects is unsatisfactory, although some satisfactory use supports learning. In music, pupils use ICT for composing and recording and in physical education and history pupils enhance their coursework with word processing and desk-top publishing. In food technology the use of ICT enables pupils to more fully understand various topics in the subject, although in other aspects of technology facilities are dated and there is insufficient design software. The use of ICT in mathematics, science and English is unsatisfactory and does not support learning. This is also the case in geography and modern foreign languages. There are not yet sufficient interactive whiteboards or teacher laptops to support teaching although there have been recent improvements in the quality and quantity of computers.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A variety of teaching methods are used very effectively to improve pupils' learning in stimulating lessons.
- The use of assessment to underpin learning is good, but pupils are not aware of their target levels and grades.
- The use of computers for both learning and teaching is not fully developed.
- Strategic planning has a focus on improving standards; however, it is narrow and short term.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

81. Provision in geography has improved significantly since the previous inspection. All pupils are enabled to learn and achieve well in stimulating lessons. Teaching is frequently vigorous and effectively planned. Through group work and independent learning, using a wide variety of resources which are carefully matched to their needs, pupils make good progress. Consequently, standards and results have improved from their previously average levels and are close to well above average.
82. Given the average attainment in geography on entry to the school, standards in Year 9 represent good progress over time. Higher attainers demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of the structure of employment in detailed, well-written explanations. They produce evaluative fieldwork reports of high quality using a variety of graphs to illustrate their data on the impact of tourism on the environment. Lower attaining pupils produce less detailed written work, some of which is incomplete, and their maps and diagrams lack titles and annotation. Learning and achievement are promoted through a variety of assessment techniques that enable pupils to identify what they need to do to further improve their work. Homework is used effectively to extend and reinforce learning in lessons and teachers produce very clear guidelines for structuring the writing of reports and enquiries. Learning is least effective on the very few occasions when pupils have to listen for too long to teachers' explanations and when projected images are unclear to those seated at the back of the classroom.
83. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils made excellent progress in response to stimulating, lively and consistently challenging teaching that used a wide variety of resources to increase their understanding of coastal landforms. There was a very good focus on the use of technical language so that pupils were able to reach well above average standards when answering an examination question. Higher attaining pupils gain almost full marks in coursework on urban studies in which they analyse and interpret data accurately using statistical techniques. Lower attainers reach average standards in work on ecosystems; they draw climate graphs accurately but do not interpret them

well and their explanations of deforestation are too shallow. Nevertheless, they achieve well in relation to their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the help of learning support assistants and the use of different worksheets tailored to their needs.

84. In 2004, GCSE results improved and were above average. All pupils on the course were entered and all passed. Boys did much better than boys nationally and there was no significant difference between the results of girls and boys in the school. Overall, pupils gained higher grades in geography than in their other subjects.
85. Computers are underused in geography to support and enrich pupils' learning because of limited access to resources. Accommodation, though adequate, does not have facilities for the use of modern technology in teaching.
86. The programme of learning provides a very good basis for lesson planning. The development plan has a focus on raising standards and it is effective because it is reviewed frequently. However, it does not contain subject targets and there is no reference to increasing the use of computers for learning and teaching. The procedures for assessment, whilst good, have yet to fully involve and inform pupils of their targets.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at GCSE have risen since the last inspection.
- Good leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching and learning.
- Assessment targets do not give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve.
- Some lessons lack variety of pace and activity.
- The positive attitude of most pupils contributes to the effectiveness of their learning.

## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

## Commentary

87. Standards overall are above average. Standards in Year 9 assessments are above average and at GCSE in the last examination were average. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results overall, although girls performed better at the highest grades, where they matched the national average, and in the modern world course boys' results were better than girls'. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Most pupils' good subject knowledge enables them to use sources well. They are weaker at the independent selection and evaluation of sources and in explaining why there are differing interpretations of the past. Girls' written work is more detailed and better presented than boys'. Higher attaining pupils write well and with confidence. Standards overall in the current Year 11 are average, with a number of students who started the course with below average attainment, and with a significant minority of pupils now attaining above average standards. Most have good subject knowledge and can write a clear narrative of historical events, using a variety of sources. They are weaker in analysing sources and supporting their judgements with sound reasons. Girls' written work is generally of a higher standard than boys' but boys are more confident in answering questions in class. Higher attaining pupils write well with a good grasp of historical style.
88. When pupils enter the school their attainment in history is average. They make good progress at each stage and achievement overall is good. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because of good support by teachers, adapted learning materials and a range of textbooks appropriate to their needs. Higher attaining pupils are engaged by the subject and their interest and commitment are evident in the quality of their written work. Their achievement is good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
89. Teaching is good in most lessons and in all lessons at least satisfactory. Teachers plan effective lessons which advance pupils' knowledge and skills. Good group management keeps pupils on task and innovative methods, such as the use of ICT, develop well study skills and co-operative learning. Where teaching is satisfactory the pace of learning is sometimes slow, opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills are not always taken and the range of activities is limited.
90. Learning in most lessons is good. Pupils are interested and work with concentration. They are engaged and take pride in their work, many using word-processing skills to write essays. Where learning is only satisfactory pupils are too passive and few raise questions or respond at length to teachers' questions.
91. Work is marked regularly but targets set for improvement do not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how they may improve, especially in developing higher level analytical skills.

92. Leadership is good. The response to the last inspection was positive and clear targets for improvement were identified. Management is good. There has been improvement in the quality of teaching, curriculum choice for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and revision support for these pupils.
93. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE standards have risen from below average, resources have been improved and there is greater use of ICT to enhance learning.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average and GCSE results in food technology are high.
- Specialist teachers have a very good command of their subject.
- Pupils work with commitment and attitudes are good.
- Technician time is insufficient which places additional pressure on teachers to maintain equipment and prepare materials.
- Some of the ICT facilities are dated and there is a lack of appropriate design software.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

94. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils develop their knowledge and skills and by the end of Year 9 standards are average. Pupils know how to respond to a design brief and they work accurately. Higher attainers produce innovative design work. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to make gains achieving GCSE results that are above the national average. GCSE results in food technology for 2004 were high. Resistant materials results were also well above the national average for the number of higher grades. In textiles and electronics results were below and well below average. Pupils in food technology have a very good understanding of the design process and high level skills in making. They show very good awareness of the importance of presentation.
95. Overall achievement is good. Pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well, including those identified with special educational needs. Teachers provide good additional support, although no learning support assistants were observed during the inspection. The achievement of able and talented pupils matches that of others. They are not identified for their talent in design and technology and this may limit their future achievement. Further extension work is required to fully support the development of higher attainers. The department is aware of this need and is working to improve provision.

96. The quality of teaching is good. It is characterised by attention to detail in lesson plans and clear learning objectives. Expectations are made plain to pupils who respond well. Classrooms are well organised and pupils effectively managed. Assessment is good in lessons and helps pupils to achieve at a good rate. Less effective lessons do not meet the needs of higher attainers. Introductions are dominated by the teacher and do not adequately involve the pupils which results in pupil inattention. In some lessons plenary sessions lack focus and insufficient time is given to establishing the quality of learning. Learning is good, pupils are responsible and relationships are good. Pupils persevere at aiming to solve problems without immediate reference to the teacher. Learning is least effective when pupils are not challenged and deadlines are not clear. In these lessons pupils are allowed to work at their own pace and learning is slow. Assessment is good, linked to National Curriculum levels and applied to all aspects of projects. Pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, know how well they are doing and how to improve. There are inconsistencies in marking, particularly in Years 7 to 9, where the quality of comments varies amongst the different areas of the subject. Marking is good in food technology but is weaker in other areas.
97. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a very clear vision and high aspirations. The effective team of specialists work mainly to their strengths. However, there is a lack of corporate identity and sharing of good practice, particularly of the very good teaching in food technology. There is good development planning. The current level of technician time is insufficient to ensure that the preparation needs of teachers are served or that equipment is always in a serviceable state. Lack of design software and the under-utilisation of computer-aided manufacturing equipment restricts the quality and range of activities and products for pupils.
98. Despite staffing difficulties, much has been maintained and improved since the previous inspection. There have been improvements in the use of assessment and the time allocation for the subject. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- The curriculum promotes good achievement by giving pupils of all levels of capability creative opportunities to find things that interest them and to succeed.
- Self-assessment in Years 10 and 11 helps to raise standards.
- Teachers make very good use of the local community and environment as inspiration and as a resource for creative work.
- The way that teachers focus on making sure that pupils understand materials and methods promotes good achievement.
- References throughout all years to established artists and art of other cultures help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Time distribution in one-hour periods makes three-dimensional work difficult, particularly large-scale pieces and ceramics in general.

## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership:	Very good	
Management of the department:	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection:	Good	

## Commentary

99. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were well above average. Although girls did better than boys overall, boys did much better than boys nationally.
100. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are introduced to a good range of media. The way that the curriculum is organised to focus on materials and methods of using them means that pupils make rapid gains in skills and knowledge. They develop confidence in using media to express their ideas creatively. Pupils' understanding is developed well – partly because work draws on their own experience and their community, for example the Stockport market project, and partly through constant references by teachers to the work of established artists and the art of other cultures. In Years 10 and 11, teachers build on this good foundation so that pupils' work in Year 11 shows highly creative expressive development. Pupils are aware of themselves as artists and most are able to discuss articulately their work and plans for development. The process of developing work to raise standards is greatly helped by the involvement of pupils in critically assessing their own work, and that of others, because they come to understand clearly what is expected of them and see what is needed to improve. The annotations required by these assessments contribute well to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
101. Teaching and learning are good with a number of strong features. Teachers have very good command of their subject which they use to plan interesting projects that capture pupils' interest. Using literature and music to stimulate imaginative responses from pupils contributes much to their wider understanding. Good relationships, challenging tasks matched well to pupils' capabilities and clearly established standards of behaviour contribute to a purposeful working atmosphere. Little time is wasted on classroom management and time is used well. Nevertheless, the distribution of teaching time in one-hour lessons makes provision of three-dimensional work – a strength of the department – difficult and places restrictions on the size and type of work that can be attempted. Ceramic and plaster work are particularly affected because of the time needed to prepare materials and to clear up after use. Teachers provide effective demonstrations and support to enable pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, to succeed. Homework is used well to extend learning.
102. Leadership is very good, providing a clear vision for development. The department is well managed. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the range of experience it provides, teachers' support for learning and their challenging expectations to which the great majority of pupils respond well.

103. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are higher, achievement is better and teaching is consistently good.

## Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the department is responsible for its growing popularity.
- GCSE results are above the national average and are among the best in the school.
- Pupils learn well because teachers have very high expectations of them.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and personal development and to citizenship.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation limits what can be taught and affects standards adversely.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory	

## Commentary

104. By the end of Year 9 pupils improvise character and story lines effectively. They concentrate very well and are beginning to think in character, as is apparent when they are 'hot seated'. They have good verbal skills and use facial expressions, movement and gesture sufficiently well to mime a story so that their audience readily understands. Pupils' writing shows they understand characterisation and form some empathy with characters in their own productions. As only a limited amount of time is allocated to drama in Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well to reach this standard.

105. In the GCSE examination in 2004, pupils achieved results that were above the national average, an improvement on the previous year. In 2004 most pupils performed better in drama than they did in their other subjects. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 matches the 2004 results. Pupils work well in groups and are very aware of the need for teamwork. They respond well to teachers' demands for them to develop their own ideas. Some pupils show a high level of skill with some particularly expressive use of voice. Their written work shows good understanding of how to develop a role. They are perceptive in their observation of their own and others' performance. Their skills improve noticeably during the GCSE course.

106. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons very thoroughly. They have very high expectations both of pupils' behaviour and of their standards of work. Pupils respond well, particularly to the emphasis that is put on them to work independently. These high expectations ensure that gifted and talented pupils work to their full potential. Pupils who have special educational needs benefit from the good individual attention they receive although teachers do not make full use of learning support assistants when they are present.
107. One of the main keys to pupils' good progress is that they are constantly expected to assess their own performance and that of others. They listen well to constructive criticism and thus know what they need to do to improve. In addition, homework is planned well to ensure that pupils reflect on what they have learned and prepare for forthcoming work. The homework booklets designed for Years 7 to 9 are particularly effective. However, teachers' comments on written work do not sufficiently show pupils how to do better.
108. The head of department has a very clear understanding of the aims of the department and the subject's contribution to pupils' personal development. These are well reflected in the schemes of work, which give due prominence to the resolution of social and moral issues and to pupils' roles as citizens. However, not enough attention is paid to their place in a multicultural society. There is a successful drive to improve the status of the subject in the school. This is reflected in the increasing numbers of both boys and girls who are opting to follow the GCSE course and the good numbers involved in the after-school Shakespeare Theatre Company. Departmental documentation and record-keeping are very thorough. The good standards of the previous report have been maintained but time allocation needs further thought and the accommodation has deteriorated. The studio is in a poor state of repair and too small for some classes and the lack of adequate lighting limits the curriculum.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some well -structured teaching which clearly addresses examination requirements and ensures achievement for Year 11 pupils is good.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are underachieving significantly.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- An improved curriculum is providing a broader range of musical experiences, especially for younger pupils, but lessons do not always challenge all pupils.
- Issues from the previous inspection have not been addressed.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Below average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Unsatisfactory	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Good

Quality of curriculum leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management of the department	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

## Commentary

109. In the last year, prolonged periods of staff absences caused significant disruption to pupils' learning. This has been a key factor in affecting standards at the end of Year 9 which are below average and lower than those reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' musical ability is below average on entry to the school and their achievement during Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. This is so for all groups, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Three quarters of pupils who were entered for the GCSE examination in 2004 attained A\*-C grades. However, there were too few entries to make statistical comparison with national data. The standard of work seen during the inspection of both boys and girls in Year 11 is average and their achievement is good. They can analyse, identify and discuss musical features accurately. However, their compositions lack development of melodic ideas and more complex harmonies.
110. Teaching and learning during the inspection were satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good for those in Years 10 and 11. Some very good teaching was observed in Year 11. The very best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, clearly linked music activities and a precise focus in order to develop and link musical skills and knowledge. This means that during practical work, pupils use this knowledge and understand how to improve their work. Pupils are now learning how to use the good range of computers and this technology is helping them compose more complex pieces of music. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work and listen carefully together and have positive attitudes to learning. However, because of frequent staff absences, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have significant gaps in their understanding of music and their attitudes are only satisfactory. The immature attitude of some pupils in Year 7 means that they do not arrive in class ready to learn. Because of the previously narrow range of music teaching, all pupils have had little experience in using classroom instruments and playing in ensembles. Lesson planning for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is still a weakness. Despite some revisions, work is not always matched to their individual needs; sometimes it is too easy for more competent pupils and they become bored during lessons. Questioning in lessons is ineffective and pupils are not involved in evaluating their work. This means that these pupils are not contributing to their learning.
111. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because of the long-term absence of the head of department. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are lower, the quality of teaching has not improved and because of changes in staff and significant recent staff absences, improvement on other issues has been insufficient. The senior management team are working hard to provide very good structured support for the department in order to address the urgent outstanding issues in provision for music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding teaching and coaching skills of staff produce a very good pace of learning.
- The very good leadership and management promote a high level of commitment from teachers.
- The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are a significant aid to learning.
- Teachers have high expectations and this leads to very good attitudes and behaviour from pupils.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of learning	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

112. Standards on entry at Year 7 are average overall for both boys and girls although a small number of pupils are below average. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average representing good achievement, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils at all levels of ability continue to make progress in Years 10 and 11 so that by the end of Year 11 standards for boys and girls are well above average in National Curriculum physical education which is taken by all pupils. For example, in a Year 11 girls basketball lesson pupils displayed a high level of skill in dribbling, shooting and passing and learned quickly the principles of zone defence. For those pupils taking GCSE examinations in physical education the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades has remained above the national average over the past three years. Achievement overall is very good for boys and girls. Important factors in the success of the pupils are their very good attitudes and behaviour which enable them to gain maximum benefit from the excellent coaching skills of teachers.
113. Teaching and learning are excellent. The outstanding coaching skills, incorporating very good assessment techniques, enable teachers to provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils at different levels of ability. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs are able to maintain progress at the same pace as their peers. Pupils are routinely given opportunities to assess their own work and that of others and as a result they are very aware of their levels of performance and what they must do to improve. The very high expectations of pupils in both performance and behaviour promote very good attitudes towards learning and encourage pupils to improve. Teachers work very well as a team and share their expertise, providing a powerful body of support for pupils. This encourages the very good relationships between teachers and pupils and generates the joy and enthusiasm present in most lessons.

114. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear understanding and direction from leadership which provide the stimulus and commitment to improvement. Respect for each other's views and very good relationships amongst teachers encourage the sharing of knowledge and expertise and are an excellent model for pupils. Planning is extensive and constructive and promotes the consistent structure to lessons. This is a significant aid to the very good achievement of the pupils. Performance management is established and professional development is related well to the needs of the pupils. There are very good curriculum initiatives to suit the needs of the pupils although-extra curricular activities to challenge the particularly talented pupils could be developed further to enhance work done in lessons. The accommodation difficulties presented by the often-waterlogged playing fields and the lack of a designated room for theory work are managed well although this problem does restrict the very good presentation skills of teachers and the pace of learning.
115. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching is now excellent and self-assessment opportunities are routine in lessons.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

**Business studies** and **health and social care** were sampled during the course of the inspection.

116. Attainment in **business studies** is above average. Pupils enter the course with no prior knowledge and make very good progress. GCSE results for 2004 were well above the national average. Boys achieved results well above those of boys nationally and were marginally better than girls in the school. The subject is well taught by enthusiastic staff who have a very good command of their subject. Pupils display positive attitudes and work productively. Achievement is very good. During the inspection Year 11 pupils were considering the implications of the expansion of Manchester Airport. They had a good understanding of the environmental issues and were able to construct arguments both for and against the expansion. Year 10 pupils demonstrated a good level of understanding of the recruitment and selection process. They were able to prepare job descriptions and job specifications having used the Internet to research various job vacancies posted by companies seeking employees.
117. Attainment in **health and social care** is just below average although achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils are able to talk about their work with understanding. Most are clearly interested in the course and can explain confidently what they are learning about. Study and presentation skills are being developed well. The course is making a good contribution to the school's programme for work-related learning.

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

### **Personal, social and health education**

There is a good, well-planned programme of personal, social and health education within the school, linked to the citizenship curriculum. Teachers address many topics, especially during tutor time, but the programme is not monitored sufficiently to ensure a consistent approach. The quality of this work varies and is dependent on the interest and expertise of the individual teacher in the topic. Relevant issues of health, relationships and dangers of substance abuse are covered well; however, there is a lack of external speakers to enhance the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate the units of work and are positive about their work in personal, social and health education.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership is providing support and challenge for the development of this subject but assessment arrangements lack rigour.
- Pupils are showing a responsible attitude towards their GCSE examination course.
- Pupils have good opportunities for participation in school and community life and for taking responsible action.
- Some subjects do not plan lessons which directly contribute to citizenship.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards pupils reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Not applicable	

## Commentary

118. In 2004, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were in line with those found nationally. The work seen during the inspection confirms this. Pupils study a range of topics which are also linked to the requirements of the personal, social and health education programme. All pupils in Year 10 follow the GCSE examination short course. Pupils are able to discuss their research and as a result extend their understanding of how government works in a democracy and within the European Union. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. This is because pupils work hard and the ethos of the school promotes an awareness of current affairs linked to citizenship issues. Pupils enjoy debate and write up their work conscientiously. This enables them to build up their subject knowledge. Pupils are encouraged to become involved in citizenship activities outside lessons, through organising charitable, social and community events.
119. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Strengths include the way teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages and engages pupils in their own learning through debate and research. This means that pupils learn to think for themselves and express opinions to their peers, especially in lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons the level of challenge demanded of pupils is not good enough. Learning does not have a clear focus and pupils are not clear why and what they are expected to learn. The Internet is used considerably but not always supplemented sufficiently by teachers in order to give a balanced view of pupils' findings. However, where learning is good, teachers develop points well through role-play and well-targeted questioning.
120. The citizenship co-ordinator provides good leadership and has been instrumental in developing and promoting citizenship. Very effective displays and posters celebrating good citizenship are prominent in some classrooms and more are beginning to be seen around the school. This allows pupils to realise that citizenship is not confined to lessons. Management is satisfactory and there is an awareness of the need to develop more rigorous assessment to give pupils a clear idea of their progress. The current system is not good enough. Despite a departmental audit of citizenship, the contribution of individual departments varies. There is no monitoring of each subject's contribution and as a result the very good practice found in drama lessons is not replicated in many other subjects.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2
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 (grade1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*