

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Chorley

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119803

Headteacher: Mrs W White

Lead inspector: Mr T Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th January 2005

Inspection number: 268399

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	837
School address:	Burgh Lane Chorley Lancashire
Postcode:	PR7 3NT
Telephone number:	01257 262093
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Malcolm Holt
Date of previous inspection:	15 th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is an 11-16 catholic comprehensive school with 837 pupils. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls, though there are variations between years and significantly more boys than girls in Year 7. Almost all pupils are all from catholic family backgrounds and almost entirely from white British backgrounds. There are small numbers of pupils from other white, Caribbean, Asian and mixed white/black Caribbean, and mixed white/Asian backgrounds. None are in the early stages of English language acquisition and none have English as a second language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and the proportion with statements of special educational needs is average overall. Identified needs are dyslexia, moderate learning difficulty, social emotional and behavioural difficulty, hearing impairment and autism. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. Overall, attainment is above average on entry to the school.

The school became a specialist science and sports college in July 2004. It is working towards the Healthy Schools Award, has the Investors in People award, Charter Mark and Sportsmark and is a hub school for the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10013	T Wheatley	Lead inspector	
19720	D Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
2893	J Manning	Team inspector	English, drama
2919	P Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	M Foulds	Team inspector	Science
30901	S Schofield	Team inspector	Art
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology, business studies
32774	B Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
12118	A Paver	Team inspector	Geography
19026	J Cosgrove	Team inspector	History
2626	M Thompson	Team inspector	
1340	D Wigley	Team inspector	Citizenship, music
22042	J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
10275	J Cosgrove	Team inspector	Religious education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with many strengths and some areas for improvement. Pupils achieve well overall, some achieve very well and a small proportion of the highest attainers achieve only satisfactorily in some subjects. Teaching is good and the school is well led and managed, with a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in most subjects and very well in music.
- Occasionally, a few of the highest attaining pupils do not achieve well enough, for example in English, French and physical education.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are very good.
- The school is well led with a clear view of further improvements to be made.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The school's system to track pupils' progress is good, but its use is inconsistent.
- Teaching and learning are good, and frequently very good, but occasionally provide too few opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

The school has made good improvements since it was last inspected in March 1999. Improvement in the teaching of cross-curricular ICT has been good. The quality of financial management has improved and is now linked effectively to school development planning. The teaching of science in Years 10 and 11 is good and improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology has improved. All health and safety issues have been addressed. Overall, standards have risen and teaching and learning have improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E = lowest five per cent*

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' achievement is good. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2004, results were well above the national average and similar to the results of 2003. Pupils achieved well. Results in English were average in 2004 and lower than in previous years due to staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. Results in mathematics and science were well above average. Compared with pupils with similar prior attainment in other schools results were above average. Standards seen are above average by Year 9 and pupils achieve well overall; achievement in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages is satisfactory and is very good in music.

Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were above the national average and well above average compared with pupils of similar prior attainment in other schools. While the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades fell from 2003, the percentages obtaining five or more A*-G grades and at least one GCSE pass increased. The school did not meet its targets for five or more A*-C grades for 2004 but exceeded them for the percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass. Standards seen are above average by Year 11 and the great majority of pupils achieve well.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, as do the small number of pupils from different minority ethnic groups. A small number of higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they ought to in English in Years 10 and 11 and in French and physical education throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good overall and results in very good attitudes and behaviour around the school and in lessons. Attendance and punctuality are consistently good and contribute to the good achievement made by most pupils.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teaching is particularly good in music, history, mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and ICT in Years 10 and 11. Literacy is taught well and contributes to pupils' achievement in other subjects. Teaching occasionally does not challenge the highest attainers enough because insufficient opportunities are provided for independent study. The curriculum is satisfactory. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, aided by very good classroom support. Assessment is good overall though not used consistently. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Support for pupils' personal development is very good, and is good for their academic development. Pupils' views are actively sought and listened to. The good links with the community and with other schools support and enhance pupils' learning and personal development well. Good communication helps keep parents involved in school life and their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed headteacher provides good leadership. She is providing a clear direction for further improvement and is supported well by senior staff and middle managers. Leadership and management of subject areas are generally good, though only satisfactory in design and technology as a whole. The school is managed well and governance is good, providing good support for the headteacher. The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses and is taking effective action to improve. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school and are happy with the experiences they and their children have. Pupils enjoy being at the school and appreciate its strengths. They know their views are important and they show pride in and loyalty towards their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Ensure that teachers' expectations of the highest attainers are high enough and that they provide work that challenges pupils consistently, particularly in English, French and physical education.
- Ensure that the assessment information acquired from school's good system to track pupils' progress is used consistently and reflects the identified good practice.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils, especially the highest attainers, to engage in independent learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** and pupils achieve **well**. Pupils with special educational needs achieve **well** and the very small numbers of pupils from ethnic minorities also achieve well. Small numbers of higher attaining pupils **underachieve**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is improving noticeably in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils achieve very well in music.
- Small numbers of higher attaining pupils sometimes underachieve in English, French and physical education.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is above average overall and although there have been some fluctuations over recent years, particularly in pupils' literacy skills, it has remained at this level.
2. In the end of Year 9 national tests taken in 2004 the unvalidated results were well above the national average overall and similar to the results of 2003. Results in English were average, lower than in 2003 because of staffing difficulties that have been partially resolved. In mathematics and science results were well above average – an improvement in mathematics and sustained good results in science. Compared with schools where pupils' prior attainment was similar, results were above average overall. Pupils have achieved well overall since entering the school. The overall trend in results is above that seen nationally.
3. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, the results were above average overall and well above average compared with other schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE was above the national average and lower than in 2003. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-G grades was above average and better than the previous year. The percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass was above average and better than the previous year. The school did not meet its targets for five or more A*-C grades, but exceeded them for the percentage of pupils obtaining one or more GCSE passes. The trend in GCSE results is in line with the trend nationally.
4. As a specialist science and sports college, results in science and physical education are well above average. In both subjects results have improved in recent years and are among the highest in the school.
5. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are above average by Year 9. They are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Standards are well above average in geography and music. They are above average in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education and are average in modern foreign languages. Overall, pupils achieve well. Achievement is satisfactory in English and mathematics and good in science. It is good in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history and physical education. Achievement is very good in music and satisfactory in ICT and modern foreign languages. However, while achievement is good overall, there are instances of underachievement by a few pupils in French and physical education, largely because pupils' specific needs have not been fully identified and catered for.

6. By Year 11 standards are above average overall. In English and mathematics standards are above average and in science they are well above average. In geography, history and music standards are well above average and they are above average in art and design, design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages. Standards are average in citizenship and in physical education overall, though those pupils on the GCSE physical education course attain above average standards. Achievement is good overall. It is satisfactory in English and mathematics and good in science. It is good in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history and physical education. It is very good in music. A small number of pupils underachieve in English, French and physical education, mainly because work is not sufficiently challenging.
7. Standards of literacy are above average overall and there are many opportunities in most subjects to develop literacy skills, though these are not organised in a coherent whole-school manner. Pupils speak and write with confidence and their acquired literacy skills help them to learn well in other subjects. Standards of numeracy are average. In most subjects pupils have opportunities to practise mathematical skills though, as with literacy, not in an organised whole-school way. In music pupils depend heavily on mathematical skills as a result of the significant use of ICT to support teaching and learning in the subject. Pupils' ICT skills are broadly average and are used in most departments though difficulty of access to computers in geography and art and design has limited pupils' progress a little.
8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The majority of these pupils tend to perform below the level of other pupils in their year group with regard to basic skills and in particular speaking, listening, reading and writing. A significant proportion of the pupils with special educational needs have specific or moderate learning difficulties and their difficulties affect the progress they make in other subjects. However, support from teaching assistants and teachers is very effective and all pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, make good progress towards their targets.
9. The small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic families achieve well.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (36.4)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	n/a (36.9)	n/a (35.4)
Science	n/a (36.0)	n/a (33.6)

There were 176 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	62 (69)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (94)	89(88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.3 (38.3)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 160 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** and pupils' overall personal development is **very good**. This results in pupils having **very good** attitudes to school and to their learning. Behaviour around school and in lessons is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are both **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school communicates its values, beliefs and high expectations of attitudes and behaviour to pupils very clearly.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and tackle the lessons and activities prepared for them with interest and enthusiasm.
- Relationships are very good creating a happy and productive atmosphere in which pupils learn well and are confident and relaxed.
- Pupils have a very well developed social conscience and responsibility towards helping others
- Attendance is consistently good.

Commentary

10. There is no written policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but all aspects are embedded in the school's values and evident in the daily life of teachers and pupils, making provision overall very good. Most subject areas make a good contribution and encourage values and behaviour based on equality, honesty, trust and fairness.
11. Pupils' spiritual development is good. The Catholic faith is an important aspect of pupils' spiritual growth and there are many occasions for pupils and staff to pray and reflect together. The school day always starts with tutors and pupils praying together. Some tutors develop this into thinking about the day ahead and about other people's lives and feelings and pupils respond to this well, showing sensitivity and compassion. Each year group is offered the chance to go on retreat or special days when they can reflect and concentrate on their spirituality. The school deliberately encourages a clear sense of identity and personal dignity which enables pupils to value themselves and others. This contributes positively to their ability to learn and to their good achievement.
12. Pupils' moral development is very good. All pupils acknowledge and understand the moral code on which their school life is based. Assemblies, tutor time, and high expectations from staff reinforce the values of right and wrong and respect for others. As a result, pupils behave very well around school. They are polite, friendly, interested in people and appreciative of their teachers. There have been no permanent exclusions. Fixed term exclusions are low and used appropriately to deal with behaviour not tolerated or accepted within school.
13. Pupils' social development is also very good. Pupils quickly fit into the school community because the school's expectations are clear, consistent and supportive. Relationships throughout the school are very good and help to improve pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Indeed, a strength of the school is the way in which pupils from all backgrounds live and work together happily and comfortably. As a result, pupils' attitudes to school and to their learning are very good. Pupils enjoy being at school and are loyal towards and proud of it. They arrive at lessons with a desire to learn and enthusiastically join in with the activities prepared for them. Once again their positive attitudes towards learning often direct the pace of lessons and help them achieve well.
14. Pupils' cultural development is good. In many subjects, pupils gain an awareness and understanding of other people's lives and traditions from around the world. For example, in art and design pupils study the designs of Aboriginal, Japanese and Egyptian art. In history, pupils gain a good insight into how societies have unfolded and the different values upon which they are based. In science, pupils consider the history of science and the role of female scientists.

In music, pupils take part in jazz workshops and work with visiting musicians and the choir has had exchange visits with a choir in Hungary. In modern foreign languages pupils have opportunities to take part in a range of extra-curricular cultural activities. The school recognises its ethnic mix is minimal and has a growing friendship with a school in a nearby town where many pupils are of Asian heritage to provide pupils with the opportunity to meet and discuss their different and similar experiences.

15. Pupils have a genuine compassion and sympathy for the misfortunes and suffering of other people and most pupils take part in the vast range of events and activities to raise money for and help local, national and international charities. Pupils also respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility around school. Prefects, year council representatives, bus prefects, Year 11 mentors and so on make a valuable and practical contribution to the daily life of school which is greatly appreciated by teachers. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem improve greatly through being given such responsibilities and they gain a real sense of belonging to and taking pride in their own community. On leaving school, most pupils are confident, well-rounded people ready for the next stage of their life.
16. Attendance at the school is good, being consistently higher than the national average. Punctuality is also good and lessons begin promptly. This is as a result of the school's high expectations and active approach towards monitoring and promoting good attendance, supported well by parents. Such good attendance contributes directly to the good achievement pupils make.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.5
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

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	822	25	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is **satisfactory**. The quality of support, advice and guidance for pupils is **good**. The school's procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**. The school has **good** links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **good** and pupils learn **well**. The quality of assessment is **good**, though there is some inconsistency.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and leads to effective learning.
- Teaching and learning are very good in history and music throughout the school, in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and in ICT in Years 10 and 11, and frequently contribute to very good achievement.
- In a very small minority of lessons the highest attainers are not sufficiently challenged, resulting in under-achievement.
- Occasionally lessons are too teacher dominated and limit pupils' opportunities to learn and develop.
- Assessment is good overall and sometimes excellent, but is too varied in quality between departments.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good or better in four out of five lessons and is very good or excellent in three out of ten lessons. There is much more very good or excellent teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 to 11. Better schemes of work incorporating more varied teaching and learning styles in English in Years 7 to 9, changes in setting arrangements in mathematics and overly-directive examination teaching in geography in Years 10 to 11 contribute to the difference. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects throughout the school. In business education, which is taught only in Years 10 and 11, it is satisfactory, and in history and music throughout the school and ICT in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. During the inspection two unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In a Year 7 English lesson and a Year 9 science lesson, planning was unsatisfactory and lacked challenge, and the pace was slow leading to unsatisfactory learning and limited opportunities for pupils to think and discover for themselves. There is more good and very good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching than at the time of the last inspection, representing good improvement. Issues raised at the previous inspection relating to the quality of teaching in science, ICT and design and technology have been successfully addressed.
18. Most teachers have a high level of expertise in the subjects they teach and successfully convey their interest and enthusiasm to pupils. Lessons are well planned and have explicit learning objectives so that pupils are able to measure their progress. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Lessons include a variety of activities and learning styles, and pupils respond by working hard and with concentration. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils work productively, at a high level. Time and resources are used well and relationships with pupils are very good; they behave well and enjoy their learning. Homework is well organised and extends and reinforces learning.
19. Music lessons are very good because of teachers' first class knowledge of music methodology, work which is very well matched to pupils' needs and a refusal to accept less than their best from all pupils, whatever their ability. In a small number of lessons in English, physical education and geography, the work is insufficiently challenging for the highest

attaining pupils, who underachieve. In a Year 10 geography lesson this occurred in a mixed ability class where the highest attaining pupils occasionally waited for others to catch up.

20. In the best lessons in ICT and history pupils are encouraged to learn through discovery and to create their own ideas. Lessons are a very good blend of imparting knowledge and stimulating pupils to find out for themselves. Good provision is made for developing ideas through discussion and debate. A very good example of this is a Year 8 history lesson on the failure of the Spanish Armada where pupils worked in groups to interpret and evaluate source material and discuss their judgements with each other. Pupils achieved very well as a result of skilful questioning by the teacher which enabled them to develop their conceptual understanding and well-chosen materials of a suitable level for all pupils in the group. By contrast, in a number of subjects including business education, English, science, and ICT in Years 7 to 9 lessons are occasionally dominated by teachers, leaving little opportunity for pupils to develop a sense of enquiry and curtailing opportunities to develop independent learning skills.
21. Teaching of literacy is good and of numeracy is satisfactory. However, neither area works in an organised cross-curricular way to ensure consistency or agreed approaches. The teaching of ICT skills is good and sometimes very good. Most teachers make good use of resources including the widespread use of interactive whiteboards. Teaching is well supported by the technician who provides expertise to improve pupils' access to a wide range of programs and gives confidence to teachers.
22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and sometimes very good. The very effective support provided by teaching assistants and the flexible setting arrangements in most subjects have been an important factor in the good progress made by pupils. Pupils' needs are well known by teaching staff and a wide range of teaching activities and resources is used. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good and meet statutory requirements. Individual education plans are extensively and effectively used by staff to set subject-specific targets and all staff have a very clear knowledge of all pupils special educational needs and respond very well in lessons to these needs; the achievement of pupils is consequently good. Effective support for those pupils whose basic literacy skills are below the national average is provided through some withdrawal from lessons. Many pupils are involved in a very structured programme of support, often using ICT to good effect. A paired reading scheme where Year 10 pupils support these pupils has been very successful.
23. Assessment is good overall, but is very varied. It is excellent in science and music, and makes a significant contribution to raising standards. It is very good in mathematics and history, good in ICT, art, citizenship and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in English, business studies, geography, and physical education. The whole-school system for tracking pupil progress and identifying and remedying underachievement is very good and has raised expectations and influenced planning in a number of subjects. However, use of assessment information in a number of subjects such as physical education and geography is still in the early stages. The quality of target setting and marking is similarly varied with most subjects setting sensible targets and providing good guidance for improvement through marking, whilst in others targets are trite and marking is not informative. In modern foreign languages pupils assess each other's work well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	31 (29%)	56 (52%)	18 (17%)	2 (2%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The range of curriculum opportunities is **satisfactory** overall. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory** and opportunities for enrichment are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good.
- The alternative curriculum offered in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- The range of vocational subjects offered is too narrow.
- The school offers less teaching time than the best practice recommended by the DfES.
- The curriculum and staffing structure are under rigorous review.

Commentary

24. The range of curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. The school is correctly undertaking a rigorous review of its curriculum and staffing structure as part of the development of its new specialist school status. The school offers less teaching time per week than the 25 hours recommended as best practice by the DfES, though all subjects of the National Curriculum plus religious education are offered in Years 7 to 9. Drama is not taught as a separate subject because there is no adequate accommodation; consequently pupils are limited in their understanding of the dramatic elements of literature. The school varies the time offered to subjects from what is usual nationally. For example, more time is offered to religious education and PSHE together than the ten per cent usual in a church school. Provision for cross-curricular literacy and numeracy is uncoordinated but along with that for ICT provision is satisfactory overall.
25. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is skilfully constructed and subject combinations carefully managed to provide varied pathways to meet many individual needs. There is a very well managed and successful course for potentially disaffected pupils mixing English, maths and science with work placement and college experience and offering a variety of certification. However, the vocational curriculum, both internal and off-site, is not yet wide enough. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. The vocational ICT course is very successful but involves substantial work at home. There is insufficient time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 to meet the requirements of specialist sports and science college status. Overall, the school's contribution to the 14 to 19 curriculum is satisfactory and a high proportion of pupils go into extended education and training at age 16. At the moment curriculum innovation is satisfactory. The school makes very good provision for those with special educational needs and offers good curricular access and opportunities for all pupils.
26. Careers education is good, well led and managed and starts early in the school as part of the PSHE programme. There is a good level of planning and organisation and good use of resource materials for teaching. Good use is made of the Connexions service and other agencies which provide speakers and advice and guidance for pupils. There is a similar programme for Year 10 and 11, including individual interviews through the Connexions service. Pupils appreciate the support they receive. They are guided well both about progression to post-16 education and about future careers. All pupils follow a structured programme and in addition each one is provided with very helpful individual advice and support matched to his or her needs. Very good use is made of local employers to support the programme through presentations and discussions.
27. Work experience is very well planned and the school arranges relevant and stimulating placements to a wide range of local retail outlets, businesses, manufacturers and public services. There are good links with local employers and the Education Business Partnership which help provide work-experience placements. The preparation and debriefing for those on work experience are good. The school has good links with the local college and local

employers who provide work-based vocational training for a small group of pupils and this is accredited through NVQ level 1.

28. Opportunities for pupils to enrich their educational experience are good. Support for the curriculum outside of the school day is good. Most subjects offer regular clubs, coursework support, revision clubs or booster classes including some at the weekends and during holidays. Access to the library and to computers outside of classes is good. Participation in music and sports is very good, and in school productions and the arts participation is good. Large numbers of pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
29. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive good support as do all others on the school register of pupils with special educational needs. All pupils receive their basic curriculum entitlement. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have difficulty accessing some areas of the main curriculum have good opportunities to participate in vocational courses and to achieve recognised national vocational qualifications. The programme of support for pupils with special educational needs is very organised.
30. Staffing overall is satisfactory. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good overall, though English has a weakness. Here, a new head of department has minimal support with the management of the subject and whole-school literacy. The bulk of teaching is done by senior staff who, whilst being experienced and specialist, have other major duties in the school. The match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum is generally good. A skills audit has been conducted to ensure the best use of staff. However, financial constraints limit the expansion of the team so that, for example, in this specialist college, one term-time only technician services the six laboratories in science.
31. The level of resources supports teaching and learning at least adequately in all subjects. Resources in mathematics, history and history and modern languages are good. In music they are very good. ICT resources are good within the subject area and satisfactory across the curriculum, although there are some problems of access which mean that one or two subjects, for example geography, cannot meet their curricular obligations. The library is a good resource for learning, and its importance in the school means that resources overall are good.
32. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is good in English, modern foreign languages, design and technology, music and ICT and is very good in science, where the laboratories have been recently refurbished. Most departments have good-sized rooms. In art and geography, some teaching takes place in rooms away from the relevant specialised areas, which causes some loss of time and a need to move resources around school. Drama cannot be offered in school because of the absence of a drama studio. There is no cross-curricular ICT room of appropriate size, but there is, however, a good-sized library, well equipped with computers, for class use and independent learning. There is a lack of indoor space for physical education and this necessitates the use of the hall and because this is used as a dining area, places restrictions on teaching and learning. Use of the limited outdoor space is hindered by poor drainage. The planned new buildings, through the specialist school status, should go some way towards alleviating these problems. Facilities for the disabled are inadequate. The lack of a lift restricts access to the upper floors and there are no ramps for wheelchair access. The well-maintained appearance of the school contributes to a positive ethos, but narrow corridors restrict movement between lessons.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **very good** support for pupils' personal development and **good** support for their academic development. Pupils are involved **very well** in school life. Management of health and safety and day-to-day care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships result in pupils having confidence and trust in their teachers.
- Teachers know the needs of their pupils very well and are flexible in their approach to helping them.
- Good arrangements help new pupils settle into school life quickly.
- Pupils feel their views are important and they contribute to school improvement through the year councils.
- Health and safety is managed well across the school and within departments.

Commentary

33. The school provides very good support for its pupils' personal development on a day-to-day basis. Pupils' personal and emotional well-being is central to everything the school does and it has successfully created a happy and caring place where pupils feel safe and comfortable. The well-established and experienced pastoral team work together very closely and have a very good understanding of pupils' individual circumstances and needs. Because of this, pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the school, the very good relationships result in teachers and pupils interacting very well and there is a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. The lay-chaplain has an important and valued role in school and many pupils benefit from the counselling and listening support provided.
34. Support for pupils' academic performance is good. From Year 7 onwards, the very good tracking of progress highlights underachievers quickly and these pupils are supported in a variety of ways. Pupils are becoming more involved in evaluating their own performance but the quality of individual targets to help pupils improve is inconsistent and they do not always give pupils practical direction to help improvement. In Year 11, some pupils work with mentors to help them organise and cope with their coursework and revision classes help pupils prepare for their examinations.
35. Year 7 pupils settle into secondary school quickly and easily because of the good arrangements to help them. They are well prepared during Years 5 and 6 and well supported throughout their first term. Tutors and pupils have 'away days' together which help to forge strong bonds among pupils and with their teachers early in their secondary school life.
36. Pupils receive good information and support to help them make appropriate decisions about their future once they leave school. Through good information from school and good links with local colleges, pupils get a good insight into post-16 choices. Last year, 77 per cent of Year 11 pupils went on to further education.
37. Pupils are very positive about the school and feel that their views and opinions are genuinely considered. The year councils look at issues important to them but which also affect the whole school. For example, Year 10 gave a presentation to the full staff on the benefits of having drinking water in classrooms and Year 8 is currently doing a survey on bullying.
38. The school pays good attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. There is an effective child protection policy which follows the local authority procedures and all issues are handled appropriately and with great care. The management of health and safety has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Regular checks and risk assessments ensure the school is a safe place in which to live and work.
39. Links between departments in the school and the learning support department are good and are very effective in ensuring that most staff have an appropriate understanding of the specific learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs. Liaison with primary schools is very good and forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through

testing of pupils on entry. This provides relevant information which helps the school to make decisions about the level of support. This is a very inclusive school and significant progress has been made to ensure that all pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress and have access to the whole curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **good** partnership with parents and parents are very supportive of the school. The **good** links with schools and colleges and **good** links with the community support and develop pupils' learning well and broaden their experiences.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication between home and school is good and parents are very supportive of the school.
- Written reports to parents do not clearly indicate progress and how to improve.
- Good links with primary schools ensure the transition for Year 6 pupils is smooth.
- Good community links extend pupils' opportunities for learning.
- The school serves the needs of its diocese well.

Commentary

40. The school values the support and interest of parents and works hard to develop and strengthen the relationship. Communication between home and school is very good and parents are comfortable in approaching teachers with questions or problems. Teachers are quick to contact parents personally to explain problems and how they intend to deal with them. Parents are very supportive of the school and very happy with the experience they and their children have. The turnout at parents' evenings is high and the number of replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire was much higher than is usual.
41. Some parents feel they are not well informed about the progress their children are making. Parents are invited to a parents' evening with subject teachers and receive an interim and full written report during the year. The interim report gives a useful snapshot of progress but the full reports add little to this. They do not give sufficient specific detail to give parents an informed picture. The comments are brief, rarely relate directly to the subject and mostly refer to pupils' attitudes rather than clearly indicating what pupils need to focus on to improve. Suggestions for improvement are occasionally referred to but they are mostly too bland and general to be of significant help.
42. The school works well with other schools in the diocese. Headteachers and other staff meet regularly to discuss common issues and good practice and to consolidate the commonality between them. English, mathematics and science teachers work with Year 6 pupils in the summer term which helps prepare pupils well for the move on to secondary school. Primary schools appreciate the spirit of co-operation and feel well supported by the secondary school, being able to ask for help, advice and resources at any time. Special events, such as the recent highly successful concert at Bridgewater Hall, involve pupils from many schools and are organised and co-ordinated effectively by the school's music department. Primary schools were consulted and involved in the school's bid for specialist science and sports college status.
43. The school uses its local and wider community well through a variety of trips, activities, speakers and specialists for all year groups. These add an important extra dimension to pupils' learning, helping them see the relevance of their studies and giving them first hand experience. As part of its specialist science and sports status, the school is developing a partnership with the local primary care trust to improve health and first aid awareness in the local community. The school has plans to encourage more people to become accredited sports coaches and referees at club level and to improve facilities and opportunities for a local

sports club for people with disabilities. Pupils are quick to want to help others and organise many fund-raising events for local and national charities. Pupils organise a summer and Christmas party for elderly people in the diocese and Year 10 pupils are often involved in running the Barnardo's summer playscheme. Good relationships with local businesses support the curriculum well and help prepare pupils for life after school. The school is popular and well thought of in its local area and within its diocese.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good and contribute to rising standards.
- The quality of departmental management, whilst good overall, is inconsistent. It is excellent in music and contributes to pupils achieving well.
- The leadership of the headteacher provides a strong sense of educational direction for the school and strategic planning is good.
- Governors are well informed and support the headteacher effectively.

Commentary

44. The recently appointed headteacher provides good leadership and a strong sense of educational direction for the school. She successfully involves staff and governors in developing the vision of a high performing school where improving the quality of learning is the cornerstone of success. She is supported well by a hard-working senior leadership group. Each member makes a distinctive and useful contribution to the work of the team. She is also supported effectively by the majority of heads of department and year heads; leadership is good in most departments, very good in science and excellent in music. It is satisfactory in design and technology and business education.
45. The quality of whole-school improvement planning is good and is based on an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. The work of the specialist college is being incorporated into mainstream school improvement and priorities are sharply focused and shared by all staff. Planning recognises the need for improved consistency of practice across the school and for best practice to be embedded in all areas of the school's work. Leadership of the curriculum is satisfactory and the needs of individual pupils are met well. Teachers work well together and the recently formed effective learning group, a voluntary group of teachers who meet six times a year to promote school improvement and improve learning, is proving a useful vehicle to promote positive change.
46. Management is good overall. Self-evaluation by the senior team is good and provides valuable information to all staff, as well as providing a good basis for improvement planning. Monitoring and support of departments by linked senior managers are effective in identifying areas for improvement and providing support and challenge. Whilst the quality of middle management is good overall, the range is wide, from excellent in music to satisfactory in design and technology, English, business education and mathematics. Overall departmental planning has improved significantly since the last inspection, but remains sketchy in design and technology. There is too much variation in the implementation of policies, strategies and systems. For example, in some departments, the Key Stage 3 Strategy, a national initiative designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning, is operating very well, and is contributing to raising standards, whereas in other areas it has had as yet a limited impact. Tracking of pupils' progress, identifying underachievement and taking remedial action are very good or excellent in some areas whereas in others, such as physical education, they are in the early stages and are satisfactory.

47. The school is well governed. Governors have a good knowledge of the school, and are fully informed. They know the strengths of the school, and what is needed to take it forward. A new chair of governors is effectively up-dating procedures to enable good governance, including the simplification of reporting of financial information. He is also giving good support to the new headteacher, who has clear directions for the school.
48. The management of support for learning is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator has good links with departments who are in turn very well informed about pupils' special educational needs. Regular monitoring of individual education plans is effective and is a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils. There is a clear policy and a good and developing range of information for staff although there is no clear analysis of the overall progress of all pupils on the register. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and a named governor who is also a support assistant is very well informed and supportive.
49. Staff performance management is satisfactory. Induction of new staff is generally good, with a well-considered programme of support and development available. Continuing professional development for staff is good, being linked closely to identified school or departmental priorities. The school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training, with well-established links with Edgehill College as well as to Maryvale RC College, Birmingham. Other than in English, recruitment and retention of staff are satisfactory. The school business manager, who oversees non-teaching staff, has made great strides over the adoption of the national agreement on remodelling the workforce, with most of the 24 identified tasks no longer the responsibility of teachers.
50. Specialist status for science and sports was awarded in April 2004. The school has a very strong Catholic ethos which underpins its work. The specialist college designation is too recent for that new ethos to come to an accommodation with what is already so firmly established. At present, when approaching the school by road, there is no obvious indication of specialist status. With such a recent designation, few key targets have been met. The school has laid sound plans to increase the time available for physical education and sport as well as to increase participation levels. The school is generally on track to meet its targets.
51. Approaches to financial management are good and confirm the most recent audit report by the local authority. The governors make secure financial decisions to manage a very tight budget because the school has received and spent substantially less per pupil than the national average.
52. There is a good and improving working relationship between the governors, the new headteacher and the very effective business manager. This is based on openly shared information about the budget linked with new and open processes of rigorous school review. The development of specialist college status has only just begun but foundations are being carefully laid and the disbursement of new investment is being prudently managed. Large sums carried forward are earmarked for spending on specialist school projects. Funds allocated for pupils with special educational needs are carefully deployed and well spent. The governors make good arrangements to obtain best value for their spending.
53. The school has every reason to be optimistic about its future and gives good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,645,769	Balance from previous year	104,637
Total expenditure	2,596,229	Balance carried forward to the next	154,177
Expenditure per pupil	3,102		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

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

Commentary

54. A good careers programme allows pupils to prepare for work and to balance opportunities available to them. All pupils experience the world of work whilst at school through a successful work-experience programme and some, on the course for disaffected pupils, have extended work and college placement. Whilst the option pattern for Years 10 and 11 offers good pathways in preparation for extended education and training, not all can experience a suitable vocational course because the necessary range of courses is not yet available. Though subjects like geography and history teach about work, the school has not yet completed an audit of provision and pupils do not experience work-related activities consistently in all subjects.

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

- Improvements in planning have led to rising standards by Year 9.
- Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged in Year 11.
- Good teaching ensures that many pupils in middle and low ability sets achieve well.
- Leadership has a very clear view of how to raise standards.
- The lack of a clear structure for management reduces the pace at which improvements can be implemented.
- There is no co-ordination of the literacy strategy in the school.

Commentary

55. Standards in the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average and better than those in similar schools but dipped in 2004 where there was a large reduction in the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in the tests. This was the result of severe staffing problems and a very limited scheme of work to guide teaching. The current Year 9 pupils are performing better and standards are above average because of the new strategies introduced by the recently appointed head of department. Achievement is now satisfactory.
56. In GCSE English, standards were above the national average in 2003 and in 2004 but few pupils achieved the highest grades. In English literature results were very high in 2003 but dipped sharply and were just above the national average in 2004 when more pupils were entered for the examination. Considering that most pupils are above average on entry to the school they maintain satisfactory achievement into Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do many middle ability pupils. They respond well to the carefully structured teaching and well-focused activities, and they work hard, with many developing answers to literature questions in good detail. Overall, the current Year 11 pupils produce work at above average levels. Higher attaining pupils often write well but they are given insufficient challenge in some lessons where teaching is too prescriptive. There is no observable difference between the performance of boys and girls in lessons with most pupils keen to take a full part in discussions.
57. Oral skills are very good. Pupils are skilled at organising their thoughts and developing a coherent argument in class. They listen well, choose the most appropriate vocabulary and engage well with adults in a mature way. When discussing their choice of reading in groups, Year 7 pupils not only describe the plot but also refer to the subtleties of characters. In Year 9, high ability pupils prepared and delivered very clear, and even humorous, speeches in their prosecution of the main protagonists in *Macbeth*. The lack of drama shows in the reticence of some older pupils to engage in role-play when studying plays
58. Reading is good. The comprehensive new programme for encouraging reading in Year 7 is proving popular and effective. It ensures that pupils can explore a range of fiction and non-fiction in a variety of ways, including the use of ICT, to test their understanding and to give them enjoyment. The well-stocked and very welcoming library supports this programme. Pupils continue to have adequate practice in reading throughout their time in the school and in Year 8 the boys particularly read with gusto.

59. The quality of writing is good and at times very good. Standards are above average in both Year 9 and Year 11. It is fluent and engages the reader with lively use of imagery and apt expressions. In Year 9 they show the ability to write for a variety of audiences, whether composing a new ending for *Lord of the Flies* or devising a house sale advertisement for an estate agent. The work in Year 11 shows an equal amount of skill and development with low attaining pupils writing well and at length. The main weakness is in the lack of accuracy in proofreading the final draft of some of the work by middle and lower attaining pupils in both Year 9 and Year 11.
60. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are more instances of very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in 10 and 11 because the teachers make specific demands on pupils to work out ideas for themselves and give them time to do so. The questioning techniques in a Year 8 class were very good, for example, "Why is the Flannan Isle lighthouse *blinded*? Dark, yes but what else? Why use this metaphor?" Such demands are not as frequent in Year 11. The teaching of lower attaining pupils varies. It is good in Year 9 where there is an assistant to help the teacher put across a challenging and successful lesson on Shakespeare. It is unsatisfactory when an inexperienced teacher has a large group of wide-ranging ability with no classroom support. The lack of structure and unclear aims, coupled with material that is too difficult for most pupils, lead to a confused lesson.
61. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The new head of department has made an immediate impact by providing good schemes of work and clear advice to teachers through her monitoring programme. The department's development plan is much better than reported last time showing clarity and pragmatism as well as vision. There are some good systems for helping pupils to assess their own work but not enough interpretation of examination data to inform curriculum development. The pace of change is adversely affected by the fact that there are not enough teachers with the time to support the head of department in her management of a major subject in the school.
62. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with standards steadily improving in both Year 9 and Year 11 since last time. The quality of teaching is almost as good as was previously reported.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Standards of reading and writing across the curriculum are above average. Pupils are intelligent and confident speakers who listen very well to others. These skills inform their discussions and help them to learn better. The lack of a co-ordinator for whole-school policy leads to an inconsistent approach to promoting literacy in all classrooms. Some good practice exists and is at its best when linked to departmental policies, as in geography and science. In many subjects, literacy skills are being developed without recourse to policy guidelines and tend to be haphazard, if often effective, as in history and special educational needs. There is no guidance on marking to help pupils to develop their writing style to a higher level so that the top grades can be achieved in examinations.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in French and very well in German.
- Leadership is good and is leading to good teaching and learning.
- ICT is well used to support learning.
- Teachers make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In French, a small number of gifted linguists do not achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

64. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were above average but in 2004 fell back to the level seen at the previous inspection – around the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2003, results were above average in both French and German but in 2004 they declined sharply to below average. At the time of the previous inspection they had been close to the national average. The 2004 results represent underachievement due in part to poor teaching at that time – an issue that has been resolved. In the French results of 2004, performance in relation to other subjects was close to that of pupils nationally, but in German it was below.
65. Standards seen are average in Year 9. High attaining pupils speak and write well about events in the past. Most pupils have a satisfactory grasp of grammatical detail. All pupils pronounce their French well. They receive opportunities to make presentations to their class, which others then assess, and this helps their spoken language skills. Pupils are clear about what to do to move on to the next level. No German lessons took place during the inspection.
66. In Years 10 and 11 three quarters of the pupils continue with a language and about ten a year take two languages, which indicates strong interest. Standards are above average in French because all pupils achieve well. The lowest attaining groups contain pupils who have a serious prospect of a higher grade at GCSE. In German pupils achieve very well on the basis of minimal prior knowledge. In one Year 11 lesson seen pupils in random mixed-ability pairs could play the parts of doctor and patient or pharmacist and customer with confidence. Gifted linguists are identified and further challenged in German but insufficiently so in French.
67. Teaching and learning are consistently good and the German lesson referred to above was very good, with a good input from the German *assistante*. Teachers plan their lessons well, sharing good practice to good effect. Two interactive whiteboards are made available to all, and data projectors are effectively used. Pupils have sufficient access to computers. The quality of assessments is good because it covers all skills associated with the subject. Assessment information is used effectively to set targets to help pupils improve. Particularly useful is pupils' assessment of each other's speaking. Teaching is inclusive and reaches all pupils, including those with special needs. Teachers manage their pupils well, and good relationships lead to positive attitudes which promote good learning and form part of the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. European culture is well promoted through teaching materials and school trips to Boulogne and Paris, and contact with Spanish culture is established through a lunchtime Spanish Club. There is also a Pen Pals Club, but as yet no link school nor exchange of correspondence by Internet.
68. Leadership is good, and has created a departmental ethos in which staff can feel supported and encouraged to share best practice. Management is satisfactory, with some good practice, for example in the use of assessment leading to good knowledge of pupils and their potential. The department is recovering well from a downturn in its fortunes because of issues related to staffing. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory in the context of rising national standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The highest attaining pupils achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching is good, helped by pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes.
- Marking is inconsistent, not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels and rarely explaining what a pupil must do to improve.

- The department lacks a number of key policies so is unable to act in concert in these areas.
- Pupils have limited access to ICT in support of their learning.

Commentary

69. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well above the national average and better than in 2003. Gender differences in these most recent results are insignificant and overall, the 2004 results reflect those at the time of the last inspection. In the GCSE examination taken in 2004, results were close to the national average and represent a significant fall from those of earlier years. In these results, boys generally did as well as girls but the most able mathematicians, those achieving grades A*-B, did far better than those nationally. The overall fall in results was caused by some disruption to the teaching of middle sets resulting from staffing turbulence at a key time in the school year. Now that staffing problems have been resolved, achievement has improved and this improvement is evident in the majority of lessons.
70. Standards seen are above average by Year 9 and pupils' achievement has been satisfactory over time taking into account their attainment on entry to the school and recent staffing difficulties. In the great majority of lessons achievement is now good. In one class of lower attaining pupils, pupils coped competently with their first lesson dealing with areas of circles and segments. Higher attaining pupils began work satisfactorily on simultaneous equations. In both groups, numeracy skills were an issue, for example when dealing with positive and negative numbers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, taking into account their prior attainment. Standards seen are above average by Year 11 and achievement is good. Higher attaining pupils working on algebraic substitution to find the co-ordinates for the two points of intersection of a circle and a straight line achieved very well. They called on prior knowledge to good effect but were a little hesitant when factorising a simple quadratic equation. Another group following the foundation tier programme achieved satisfactorily. These pupils, predominantly boys, worked collaboratively matching algebraic expressions with word statements and did so competently.
71. Teaching and learning overall are good. Teachers have a good command of their subject as is evidenced by the way they answer pupils' questions. Teachers' explanations are cogent and well delivered and overall questioning is challenging and makes pupils think about the subject carefully. However, occasionally teachers' questions to pupils are trivial and do not encourage debate, encourage pupils to explore reasons or challenge the rightness or wrongness of answers. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in class are normally very good, often exemplary, and this ensures a brisk pace to lessons. Interactive whiteboards are available in two rooms and they are well used by the teachers to add to pupils' understanding. However, only a small proportion of pupils' work seen was ICT generated. Work with those classes containing predominantly pupils with special educational needs had the good support of teaching assistants. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and provide good guidance and support.
72. Leadership is good. The staff have a firm grasp of what drives improvement and they are imbued with a sense of common purpose. Management is satisfactory. Monitoring of the department's work and of individual pupils is good, but too many policy issues either go unheeded or are handled differently by different staff in the department. For example, there is no consistency in marking despite the introduction of new departmental guidance. Not all pupils know what is the particular level of work they are given and few know what to do to improve. Policies for literacy, citizenship, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ICT do not exist.
73. Since the last inspection, improvements have been satisfactory and on a limited front. Standards in the subject remain above national averages and are in line with those in similar schools. The overall quality of teaching has improved. Computing facilities, though improved,

remain sparse. Much teacher marking still fails to tell pupils what they need to do to improve and most teachers' comments still do not link work to National Curriculum levels.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory and standards of numeracy are average overall. There is no one in the department with this whole-school responsibility nor does the department handbook make any reference to it. Despite this, some departments have built numeracy into their work to good effect, notably science where graph work particularly is of a high standard.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well.
- Standards of results in national tests and examinations have risen.
- Some teaching is too directed and fails to foster a sense of enquiry.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in experimentation.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are excellent.
- The department is very well led and well managed.

Commentary

75. In the National Curriculum tests, taken by pupils in Year 9 in 2004, results were well above the national average. Over recent years, results have risen and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, results were well above average and compared with their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement has been good. In the GCSE examinations, taken in 2004, results were above average, and higher than at the time of the last report. In recent years, results have improved. These results represent satisfactory achievement, taking into account that the prior attainment of pupils was above the national average.
76. Standards seen are well above average by Year 9 and reflect the results in the national tests. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics and make good use of scientific terminology. They carry out practical work confidently, but the investigative skills of prediction and evaluation are often underdeveloped. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and lower attainers give clear explanations. Across the ability range, pupils' numeracy skills are secure and their graph work is good. Pupils achieve well overall.
77. In Year 11, standards are well above average. Standards are higher than those indicated in the 2004 GCSE examinations, partly due to the department's responsive actions following analysis of the subject's performance. These pupils are achieving well. Pupils following the dual award course have a detailed knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts, to varying levels of sophistication. They write fluently and coherently. They handle the more complex scientific calculations well, and produce and analyse very good graph work. Overall, coursework is of a high standard. Many gifted and talented pupils take their understanding of biology, chemistry and physics to greater depths, by opting to take the triple award science. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because of appropriate grouping, specialist teaching and effective use of individual education plans.
78. Teaching and learning are good overall. Sampling of pupils' work, especially in Years 7 to 9, indicates a significant amount of very good teaching. Teachers' command of the subject material is very good and facilitates pupils' depth of understanding. Lessons are planned well to ensure continuity and progress of learning. Teaching methods include more variety in Years

7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, where some of the teaching is too prescriptive. In practical work there are missed opportunities to foster and develop a sense of enquiry. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and consequently, there is a mutual respect that has a very positive effect on learning. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and the pace of lessons is good. Pupils' attitudes to work are very good and this contributes much to the good progress they make. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend the work done in class, but day-to-day marking is inconsistent and sometimes poor. It often gives little indication of how to improve. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, throughout all the year groups, is good. Teachers make good use of the ICT provision available, but it is used insufficiently in measurement, where there is a shortage of resources. Technical support for teachers is of a high quality.

79. The quality of formal assessment is excellent. Target setting is very thorough and pupils' progress is monitored in detail. Underachievement is promptly identified and a comprehensive range of strategies provides extensive support.
80. Leadership and management are very good. The acting head of department has taken on his responsibilities very positively. He has a very good vision of the way forward and is continuing and developing the very good systems, already in place, with commendable enthusiasm. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are very thorough and the teaching team share the head of department's enthusiasm to raise standards. The subject's performance is monitored carefully and effective action taken. The curriculum is being developed well to provide a range of certification in science. The newly refurbished laboratories provide a very good working and learning environment.
81. Improvement, since the last inspection, has been good. Teaching has improved, standards have risen and pupils make better progress. The time allocation for teaching in Year 10 remains low, but responsibility for the co-ordination of Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 has now been established. The strategies for assessment, tracking and improvement of pupils' performance, are more thorough.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement since the last inspection is very good.
- Teaching is good and encourages effective learning.
- Leadership is good with clear vision of future development issues.
- Some able pupils in Year 7 do not have enough opportunities for independent learning.

Commentary

82. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were above the national average and have been consistently so over recent years. At the end of Year 11, pupils taking vocational examinations attained standards above the national average, which is consistent with previous years' results. On entry to the school, pupils have attained above average standards and this represents satisfactory achievement throughout the school.
83. Evidence from the inspection shows that the standards are above average and are rising. Achievement in all years is good; pupils work hard and with enthusiasm. They speak confidently and articulately about their work, using and understanding technical terms. Some pupils in Year 7 who have strong technical skills do not get enough opportunities to develop these further through individualised learning. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 use national strategy materials to produce multi-media texts of growing complexity and sophistication as well as showing expertise in working with spreadsheets and databases. This work is extended and

refined into high quality coursework for examination in Year 11. Pupils use appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in the presentation of their work. They have very good relationships with their teachers and peers and present work with accuracy and care.

84. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good in Years 10 and 11, where pupils are encouraged to work independently. Pupils learn well and show confidence and skill in working with a wide range of applications. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is evident in their high expectations of pupils and the quality of lesson planning, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers establish very good working relationships and have very high expectations of behaviour and effort by pupils. Assessment systems are well developed and provide good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and understand how to correct and improve it.
85. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision of priorities, which are consistent with the key aims of raising attainment, improving the curriculum on offer and spreading the use of ICT across the school. There has been good progress in implementing these developments. Courses are delivered by a team of experienced teachers who work effectively together and are well supported by links with senior management. Regular classroom observation is effective in ensuring consistently high standards.
86. Curriculum provision is good and further improvements are planned to reduce still further the number of pupils who fail to attain an examination grade. Very good use is made of on-line resources and there are plans to increase the provision for home-based access to learning via computers. There is good technical support, which promotes greater confidence in the use of hardware by pupils and teachers.
87. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All areas of concern identified there have been addressed and standards are higher across all years.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. Provision is satisfactory. All pupils follow a specialist course in ICT leading to public examination. The planning to include ICT in all subjects is good. However, teachers do not consistently use ICT in their lessons. Pupils' ICT competences and skills are in line with the national average, though not all subjects contribute to the development of these skills. In French and German, pupils analyse a range of language websites. In music there has been considerable development and the curriculum is delivered through the use of keyboards linked to computers and in physical education pupils use ICT to analyse their performance. Data logging, which would enhance work in geography and science, is underdeveloped. In geography and art there is insufficient provision to meet statutory requirements but improved access is planned to address this. Additional space is available in the library where a suite of machines is well used during, before and after school. Homework tasks involving ICT are often set and pupils produce interesting and creative research and presentations. Good use is being made of interactive whiteboards to present lessons and to engage and motivate pupils. The network manager offers very good technical support, which has helped raise confidence and competence levels of staff and pupils, identified as a weakness in the previous report.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.

- Very good relationships and very good pupils' attitudes and behaviour contribute significantly to this success.
- Access to computers for whole-class teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The use of examination and test results to analyse performance and set targets for further development is unsatisfactory.
- Work does not always meet the needs of the very highest attainers.

Commentary

89. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well above the national average. This represents good progress on above average attainment on entry in 2001. Attainment at GCSE in 2004 was significantly above the national average overall. Boys performed better than girls. There were well above average A grades but fewer than average A*s. Improvement on the previous year was good and on the last inspection, very good. Pupils made good progress in sustaining their well above average standards on entry to the GCSE course.
90. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and pupils make good progress overall. Average and below average attaining pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress. When given tasks where they can work at their own level and pace, for example in homework projects on global trade or plate tectonics, pupils of above average prior attainment make good progress to high standards, but sometimes tasks set for whole-class learning do not challenge the highest attainers enough.
91. By Year 11 all pupils make good progress to attain well above average standards in class. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment successfully solve a complex formula to measure the spheres of influence of neighbouring towns. However, whole-class teaching of pupils of mixed ability supported the needs of average and below average pupils well but held back the most able who had to wait to be instructed twice before resolving the problem quickly.
92. Teaching is good overall and is sometimes very good. Teachers are good subject specialists who manage their materials well so that pupils learn good geographical knowledge and skills. Very good relationships and very good attitudes and behaviour contribute strongly to good learning. Teachers give pupils well-structured, varied, tasks which help them to learn in logical sequence. The pace of work is good. Pupils use ICT frequently for homework but do not receive sufficient whole-class teaching using computers because of irregular access to specialist rooms. Geography makes a good contribution to the development of citizenship, literacy and numeracy. Vivid coloured images from data projectors stimulate good learning. Assessment is satisfactory overall because pupils know their target grades and can talk about their individual progress. Where thorough marking sets them targets for improvement pupils use these well. However, the analysis of data to set departmental targets for improvement is unsatisfactory.
93. Leadership is good and teachers co-operate effectively to produce well above average standards. Teachers are good role models for pupils. One teacher uses a number of different rooms which diminishes time available to teach and is wearing of transported stock. Management is satisfactory because there remain problems related to the use of assessment and teaching and learning for the highest attainers. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching has led to good achievement and well above average results at GCSE.

- The pupils display very good attitudes to their work and enjoy the subject.
- Leadership and management are good and much improved since the previous inspection.
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
- ICT is not used widely enough.

Commentary

94. By the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is above national expectations. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well above the national average and the percentage of entrants gaining A* and A grades is more than twice the national average. All pupils obtained at least a pass grade. This represents good achievement in the light of their prior attainment. Results have much improved over the past three years and history compares favourably with most other subjects.
95. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average. Pupils demonstrate a good and increasing knowledge and understanding of topics such as the Roman Empire, the Civil War and the Spanish Armada, and the topics of Agriculture, Industry and Transport. Pupils show great interest in their work, which is always well matched to their age, capability, and interests. This was particularly apparent in the teaching of pupils in Year 9 – both the top sets and those with special educational needs. Achievement is good overall.
96. By Year 11 standards are well above average and all pupils achieve well, many very well. In Years 10 and 11 the work seen shows a very good build-up of knowledge and understanding of topics of modern European and American history and an understanding of the importance of source evaluation. Teachers use good assessment procedures accurately to predict pupil progress.
97. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the help of adapted materials, modified teaching styles and some in-class support. Pupils in all years have adequate numeracy skills and good literacy skills. ICT skills are evident but are not taught or used widely enough across the department. Most pupils, including the gifted and talented, achieve their predicted grades in examinations and some exceed them. The history courses and the extra-curricular activities, including visits to places of historical interest, make a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. Pupils are introduced to the rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens and to legal, economic and governmental systems. They also discover that many historical topics involve moral issues and multicultural dimensions. Pupils also receive an indirect understanding of the world of work in its historical context from the industrial revolution onwards.
98. Teaching and learning are good over time and during the inspection very good teaching and learning were seen. Some lessons contained first class elements. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons very effectively and establish very good relationships. In every class observed the pupils responded accordingly and co-operated fully. A particular strength was the balance of imparting information and getting pupils to work things out for themselves.
99. The previous inspection found some weaknesses in the leadership and management of the department, particularly in relation to marking, planning and the integration of ICT into the schemes of work. All these things have been addressed and the present leadership and management are good. The team has overseen a big improvement in results over the last two years and has made the subject a popular option choice.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of pupils work is frequently of a high standard.
- Good teaching promotes good learning.
- The quality of assessment and monitoring of student progress is good in food technology but underdeveloped elsewhere.
- There is very little evidence of the use of computers for manufacturing or control.

Commentary

100. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, attainment was well above average, but inspection evidence indicates that assessment was over-generous and teachers' assessment skills are not accurate enough. In the 2004 GCSE examinations for design and technology, results were well above the national average overall and were similar to the previous year.
101. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average and pupils achieve well. They produce articles of good quality and have the skills to express their ideas and communicate their designs. The high standards and good achievement, particularly in food technology, are due to the high expectations of teachers and the pupils' positive response. For example, in a food technology lesson where pupils learned about methods of batch production and carried out sensory analysis of different ingredients, their involvement and high level of achievement were a result of the high expectations and imaginative presentation by the teacher. Pupils make good use of computers for research, and there was good evidence of this in a graphics lesson where pupils designed heraldic shields. However, there are very few opportunities for computer-aided manufacturing. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the standard expected nationally. They achieve well overall. Practical skills are very well developed. Pupils show confidence in using materials and processes and work with accuracy and precision. The quality of manufacture in all aspects of the subject is of a very high standard. Design specifications and subsequent analysis are consistently used as the basis for performance criteria within projects. This is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and leads to good quality design activities. All pupils follow this pattern and the impact on the attainment of the highest attaining pupils allows them to reach the highest GCSE grades. The quality of presentation of pupils is good and in the best lessons pupils are given a very good level of guidance, support and comments on how to improve the standard of their work. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils.
102. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is good. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. The pace of lessons is brisk, but lessons are not always well planned, particularly in resistant materials and graphics lessons. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate that matches those of other pupils. The good teaching is demonstrated through high expectations and challenging activities, especially so in food technology. The work set is always well matched to the needs of pupils and higher attaining pupils are consistently extended and fully challenged. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging, motivating comments that show students how to improve. However, this assessment information is not used consistently and effectively to adapt future planning and teaching. Use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has helped to improve planning and assessment in food technology but has had limited impact in other areas of the subject.

103. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They show a high level of interest in their lessons and work co-operatively. Pupils come prepared to work hard and concentrate for long periods.
104. The department makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills by concentration on the use of technical vocabulary. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons.
105. The leadership and management of the subject as a whole are satisfactory. However, the contributory subjects work too independently. For example, food technology, which is well led and managed, works largely independently from resistant materials and graphics even to the extent where there are separate action plans for future development. In consequence pupils' learning opportunities developed in one area are not reinforced in the other. The use of teacher planning, assessment, target setting, the tracking and monitoring of student progress and attainment to help raise standards are all inconsistent features of the department. Assessment systems are not well established and information from marking and assessment is not used to set targets, although in food technology assessment systems are better developed and used. The level of technician support is good and makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the department. The department has access to computers but the provision for computer-aided manufacture and control systems is limited and restricts access to modern production methods, particularly for older pupils.
106. Overall the subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Child development

107. The subject was sampled; one lesson was seen and pupils' work was examined. The results achieved in the GCSE examination in 2004 were above average and the standard of work seen for current pupils is above average. The teaching and learning are good with good use of questioning and explanation, regular review of pupils' progress and a well-structured sequence of activities. This leads to pupils gaining a secure knowledge and understanding of the physical condition of babies at birth and learning about the special care of babies. The subject is well led and managed and there is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflected the course requirements and recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of pupils' performance from testing and assessment is well established.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weakness

- The achievement of higher attaining pupils is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good
- Boys in Year 10 often underachieve.
- The management and leadership of the department are good.
- ICT is not used enough in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is insufficiently rigorous or accurate.

Commentary

108. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well above the national average. In the 2004 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-

C GCSE was above the national average and similar to the previous year. Over a fifth of the pupils gained the top grade of A* and A and all pupils who were entered gained a grade. Pupils performed better in art and design than within their other subjects. Girls did much better than the boys.

109. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average but are lower than recorded in teachers' assessments in 2004 because teachers' assessment was inaccurate. Nevertheless, pupils achieved well, given the level of skills and understanding on entry to Year 7. Pupils use technical skills competently and show a good understanding of how to develop and research work. They study and apply a range of artists' work confidently to their work. Higher attaining pupils produce very good papier-mâché sculptures using complex hieroglyphics as surface decoration, whilst lower attaining pupils simplify designs based on tombs. Pupils' literacy skills are above average with good written and oral evaluation of work. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a direct result of the sensitive and structured teaching they receive. ICT is not used enough for research or creative purposes.
110. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average. Pupils reach high standards in painting and drawing and three-dimensional work and use a range of materials and techniques including ICT to express their creative ideas well. They explore, interpret and analyse when researching areas such as Pop Art and use artists such as Lichtenstein as an influence for high quality large-scale work. Higher attainers have very good technical skills. Fewer boys than girls choose to study art and where their work is below the expected standard, it is frequently linked to poor organisational skills. Achievement is good overall and the achievement of higher attaining pupils is very good.
111. Teaching and learning are good. In the very best lessons the teacher's expertise, enthusiasm and commitment inspire and challenge pupils. All pupils are given strong direction on what they have to do to achieve with exemplars and demonstrations of good practice. This strongly supports the learning of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and work hard to encourage pupils to extend work in their own time, which significantly raises the standard of higher attaining pupils. The pupils respond very well to the effective teaching and attitudes and behaviour are good.
112. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in the Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9 it is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure accuracy in the assessment of National Curriculum levels. Teachers give a high level of individual attention, advice and encouragement to pupils. Marking is very helpful with diagnostic and achievable targets set. Pupils understand what they have to do to improve, though they are not always sure of the level they are working at as effort and attainment are not marked separately.
113. Leadership and management are good. The head of department promotes a culture of high expectation and achievement and has led training for the rest of the school staff. Within the department there is a strong shared commitment to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; examination results have risen and high standards have been maintained. The subject is becoming increasingly popular but due to rising numbers in examination classes, some lower school classes are taught in non-specialist rooms. This limits the breadth of curriculum offered to these pupils. After-school classes are well attended and the ethos of the subject is strongly supported by high quality displays within the art area.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well by the end of Years 9 and 11 due to overall very good teaching.
- Results in GCSE examinations are consistently excellent.

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- The use of music technology as the principal means of delivering the curriculum across the school is very good.

Commentary

114. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments for 2004, results were well above average, and were higher than in the previous year. These results were very good considering attainment in the subject on entry to the school was overall in line with the national average. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, all 12 pupils gained pass grades A* - C, with five of them gaining A* grades. This represents very good achievement as none of the 12 received additional individual instrumental tuition before starting the course.
115. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. Pupils produce very high standards of composition, using music technology. They have a very secure knowledge of chord formation, and can move between major and minor chords effectively. All can write fluent melodies, and the majority can add accurate counter-melodies. Pupils demonstrate a considerable sense of style in the work they produce. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils achieved very well when learning to play Pachelbel's *Canon*. All could play the ground bass by the end of the lesson, including the pupils with special needs. Many could add the melody line. Able pupils could play all three melodic lines. Achievement is very good.
116. Standards in Year 11 are well above average, pupils being on target to gain good or very good results by the end of the course. Standards in Year 10 are very high with pupils currently on target to produce almost entirely A* or A grades at GCSE. Pupils are producing very high quality compositions which display a great sense of creativity and originality. The very firm foundation in extensive composition techniques which pupils receive in Years 7 to 9 serves them well when they start the GCSE course. Achievement is very good.
117. Teaching and learning are overall very good. The head of department is an excellent practitioner, with first class knowledge of music teaching methodology, and she has passed on her experience to other teachers in the department, as well as to other music teachers in the area. A particular strength of teaching is the careful way in which new concepts are introduced in order to ensure that all pupils are fully included and can develop and extend their practical skills. Teachers have the highest expectations, and will only accept what they know individual pupils have the potential to achieve. This applies to both curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Assessment procedures are excellent, enabling pupils to effectively target and achieve high levels by the end of Years 9 and 11.
118. Leadership and management are excellent. The music department enjoys an exceptional reputation in the school, and in the local and wider community. The whole school reflected the credit when many musicians from the school performed in the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, last year, to great acclaim. The head of department is held in high respect. She has significantly improved the department since taking up post. In particular, she has concentrated on teaching the music curriculum largely through use of music technology. As a result, many boys are attracted to the subject, and achieve very well in examinations.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning in many lessons result in pupils' good progress overall.
- Good relationships between pupils and with members of staff make a significant contribution to the good learning in most lessons.
- A very good range of activities after school supports and enriches work done in lessons.

- Some higher attaining pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they could.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is often not providing enough information to ensure appropriate progress.

Commentary

119. In the 2004 teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average.
120. Standards seen in Year 9 are above the national average with many pupils performing at well above average standards. This represents good progress overall during pupils' first three years in the school, given the average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. Pupils have good basic racquet skills and are able to apply these to a game situation. The ability of pupils to observe and analyse performance is inconsistent but in lessons where it is used it has a significant impact on achievement. All pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of health-related fitness. Standards obtained by Year 11 are above average overall. Those pupils not on the GCSE course reach standards that are broadly average. Some of the higher attaining pupils on this course do not quite reach the levels they are capable of, particularly in practical skills. Pupils in a lesson who were taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award developed very good planning skills although opportunities for this in other lessons were restricted. GCSE pupils achieve standards that are above the national average overall and many pupils have very good skills, knowledge and understanding. This represents good achievement – pupils sustain high levels of effort and concentration. They have a good understanding of many aspects of the course including physiology and anatomy and the acquisition of skills. In a lesson on developing skills in a football lesson, pupils successfully applied some of the knowledge from their theory lessons on anatomy and physiology to the development of practical skills.
121. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies, and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning are features of good lessons. In a very good Year 10 GCSE football lesson, pupils developed the range and quality of their passing skills and their ability to create space – a result of the excellent range of activities and intervention by the teacher to indicate how individuals and groups of pupils could improve. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils respond with enthusiasm. In some lessons individual pupils are not set clear targets for improvement and there are limited strategies for further developing the skills of the higher attaining pupils. Pupils are not yet involved sufficiently in setting their own targets for improvement, although pupils on the GCSE course are aware of their target grades and most do have a good understanding of what is required for improvement. ICT is used well by pupils in their GCSE coursework and opportunities to develop this use in other areas of the course are improving. There is a very good range of activities after school for pupils of all abilities to support and enrich work done in lessons. The school competes very successfully with other schools in a range of sports and many pupils achieve representative honours.
122. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject should improve with a clear emphasis on raising standards. Communication and co-operation between members of the department are good; all teachers are very good role models for the pupils. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. While there is sufficient time for pupils on the GCSE course, time is limited for non-examination courses and teachers manage time well to ensure that pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The standards of teaching are now consistently good and development planning is thorough.
123. The school has been a specialist sports school for just over one term. Pupils are beginning to take pride in being part of a specialist sports college and to embrace the specific values of the

school. There have already been improvements in the range of activities available for pupils after school and the numbers of pupils involved has increased.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher has good subject knowledge.
- Teaching lacks sufficient strategies to involve pupils in their own learning.

Commentary

124. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were above the national average, maintaining the levels of recent years. This represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils' use of literacy and numeracy is generally satisfactory and they are able to discuss their work and answer questions appropriately. Standards are currently above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
125. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons contain challenging work and the teacher expectations are high. The teacher has good subject expertise and this is evident in the quality of materials used. The quality of worksheets is good, but there is over-reliance on them at the expense of encouraging pupils to learn for themselves. Some good use is made of games and activities to stimulate memory of concepts.
126. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Over the past three years there have been small groups of pupils taking the subject and the subject leader is working to increase numbers emphasising the vocational element of the course, which is currently missing. Support provided by a subject specialist from another school has contributed to staff development.
127. Texts and worksheets are not up to date with the correct terms and current case studies. Good use is made of ICT facilities to enhance work and encourage individual work.
128. The subject was not reported on in the previous inspection.

Vocational courses

129. Provision was sampled. The school offers a satisfactory vocational curriculum for the majority of pupils but within a very limited range. These include ICT, leisure and tourism, which are school based, and engineering which takes place in the local college. The ICT course is very popular and a significant number of pupils take part. Numbers taking part in the other courses are very much lower. The courses are all accredited at level 2. In discussion pupils said they enjoyed the courses and responded very well to the opportunities and challenges. Pupils' achievement is good and standards are in line with those expected. The school is aware of the need to provide a much wider range of opportunities for vocational qualifications.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to pupils achieving well by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- The school has good links with the local community.
- There is no formally recognised citizenship co-ordinator.
- There is no system enabling the teacher in charge of citizenship to thoroughly monitor and evaluate how the subject is being taught within subjects.

Commentary

130. Citizenship is taught in a cross-curricular way, with different aspects being addressed through curriculum subjects. In addition, specific elements are taught within the PSHE/citizenship lessons which all pupils from Years 7 to 11 receive once a week. Aspects of citizenship are very clearly distinct from the PSHE topics.
131. During the inspection, four lessons were observed in Years 7 to 9, and three lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11, in which citizenship was the focus.
132. By the end of Year 9, pupils have reached above average standards and have achieved well. They have a secure understanding of budget control, and appreciate how to exercise this control when they become adult earners. They have a comprehensive knowledge of how central government works, and are able to accurately name members of the Cabinet. Year 11 pupils perform at average levels and have achieved well. Discussion in one lesson demonstrated that pupils realise what responsibilities they will have when they become citizens of the world, and how they must be prepared to help weaker members of the global community. In that lesson, the head boy and two senior prefects spoke enthusiastically about their responsibility within the school community.
133. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers thoroughly research the background to the projects they cover, gaining a secure knowledge of what they are teaching. Lessons are well balanced and successfully developed. Pacing is always appropriate, and teachers give pupils ample opportunities to express their ideas. This leads to a good quality of learning.
134. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. There is no formally recognised subject co-ordinator, but the member of staff responsible has successfully overseen introduction of the subject into the school, and has personally produced extensive programmes of study for citizenship topics to be included into the PSHE programme. She has also produced a most effective Citizenship Recording Booklet which all Years 7 to 9 pupils possess, in which they record all aspects of citizenship they cover within other subject areas. There is no system for managing the monitoring and evaluation of how aspects are being taught within subject areas by the member of staff responsible for citizenship, other than by reporting by subject leaders.
135. Community links are extensive. Pupils, for example, have visited the Crown Court, and have taken part in the Magistrates' Court Competition. Some took part in the Political Awareness Quiz in the Town Hall. The school has a very good reputation for raising money for charity. During the inspection, a group of five orchestral players were independently practising in the music suite one lunchtime, in order to put on a concert in a local church the following week to raise money for victims of the Asian tsunami.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

136. Provision for personal, social and health education was sampled in lessons where citizenship was the focus. PSHE contributes positively to the very good attitudes and very good behaviour of the pupils. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are well prepared to become healthy, aware and confident members of the school and wider community. In Years 10 and 11, there is a strong emphasis

upon enabling pupils to become effective students in their examination preparations, as well as further developing the personal and social skills they have acquired lower down in the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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