

# INSPECTION REPORT

## LOSTOCK HALL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119755

Headteacher: D A Lowe

Lead inspector: Clare Gillies

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268412

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	816
School address:	Todd Lane North Lostock Hall Preston Lancashire
Postcode:	PR5 5UR
Telephone number:	01772 336293
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr William Pitcher
Date of previous inspection:	September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lostock Hall Community High school acquired Arts Specialist status in September 2004. It is a mixed, 11-16, smaller than average comprehensive school with just over 800 pupils. In 2002 it received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for its work with children with leukaemia and the National Award for Voluntary Endeavour. In 2003 it was granted the Artsmark, Sportsmark, Investors in People and a School Achievement Award. The socio-economic background of the pupils, and their attainment on entry, are average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is average but the percentage of pupils with statements is above average. Less than two per cent of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and English is the mother tongue for practically all. The pupil population is stable and the school is oversubscribed. Evening classes, organised by Lancashire College, are held in the school once a week and the school uses the South Ribble Leisure Centre facilities. The school is involved with training new teachers and has links with several local training institutions.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20597	Clare Gillies	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
12682	Jim Griffin	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
33160	Natalia Power	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; English as an Additional Language.
8756	Pat Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.
20533	David Rogers	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.
2793	Ross Maden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and Technology; Work Related Learning.
3755	Trevor Hulbert	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Leisure and Tourism.
33115	Martin Horne	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.
22906	Barry Hodgson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology; Business Studies.
32855	David Farrant	<i>Team inspector</i>	French and Spanish.
8360	Frederick Peacock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Drama.
4578	Glen Beaumont	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical Education; Health and Safety.
27803	Joe Clark	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious Education; Special Educational Needs.

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# REPORT CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>4</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>9</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>WORK RELATED LEARNING</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>37</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Lostock Hall is a good and effective school in which all pupils' abilities and interests are supported well, so they flourish. Overall leadership and management are very good. Standards are at least average and rising and pupils achieve well. Most teaching is good or better and pupils learn well. The school provides good value for money.**

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

- Together, teachers, support staff and pupils generate a cheerful, co-operative working atmosphere where everyone is respected and encouraged. As a result pupils behave very well and concentrate hard in lessons.
- Teachers and support staff are committed to giving pupils as much support as possible for both their academic and pastoral development.
- Teaching is good overall and particularly effective in art and design and mathematics – both have high GCSE results.
- The headteacher's leadership is very good and he is equally well supported by a most effective leadership team. The supportive governors, whose chairman is thoughtful and astute, contribute much to the school's development and growth.
- Year 9 test and GCSE results, and pupils' achievement, have all improved since the last inspection, notably in mathematics and science. In 2003 and 2004, English results were not as strong as these subjects. GCSE results in drama and French were low.
- The curriculum, especially the vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, is well matched to pupils' interests. The range of extra-curricular activities in sports, art and music is very good. However, with too little time, statutory requirements for religious education and citizenship are not met. Both are taught by a large number of non-specialist teachers.
- Initiatives and partnerships, for example with other education institutions, bring valuable benefits. The school's recently successful Arts Specialist bid reflects the very high quality of provision in art and design and the exciting experiences pupils have.

**The school's effectiveness has improved well since its last inspection.** Standards have gone up. Teaching is much better in science and overall pupils make good progress. They use information and communication technology (ICT) more and the ICT facilities have increased, although there is still room for development. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship has not been met. A significant change is that the amount of time for religious education has decreased, so standards have dropped. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development has not changed and it continues to be an area for development.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations		B	C	D

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

**Overall standards are average and achievement is good.** Year 9 national test and GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, and the trend has been above that seen nationally. In 2003, Year 9 test results, and pupils' achievement, were average in English and science, and well above average in mathematics. 2004 results were similar. Since 2002 girls have done better than boys in English and mathematics, but in science results for boys and girls are similar.

Since 2000, GCSE results have been consistently at least average, but in 2004 the school achieved its best ever results - well over half the pupils attained five GCSE A\*-C grades and all pupils attained one GCSE A\*-G grade. Achievement, below average in 2003, certainly improved in 2004. Subjects which performed very well included mathematics, science, art and design, ICT, geography and physical education. Teaching issues, now resolved, contributed to the low drama and French results in 2004.

**Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** They respond very well to the excellent yet subtle way the school establishes expectations of high social and moral standards. Pupils have limited scope to develop their spiritual awareness and their experience of different cultures is not wide enough. Pupils' attitudes are very good. In practically all lessons they arrive ready to work and they are receptive to the good teaching they receive. Many join in extra-curricular activities enthusiastically, especially in arts, sports and music. Their behaviour is very good. Some parts of the school are cramped, especially the dining area, but pupils always move about sensibly and they get on with each other very well, both across and within different year groups. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good** and in nearly a quarter of the lessons seen during the inspection it was very good. There is now very little teaching which is unsatisfactory, mostly explained by non-specialists teaching religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). **The quality of learning is good** because pupils settle down quickly and concentrate well. Most teachers explain what the lessons are about, so pupils know what they have to do and listen attentively.

The curriculum is good, especially in Years 10 and 11, where it includes worthwhile vocational and work related courses. Careers education and work related learning are very good overall. Care, guidance and support are very good. Teachers and staff know the pupils very well and many elements, from the special educational needs department to arrangements for older pupils to help younger ones, contribute to the calm, secure and supportive atmosphere. The school's partnership with parents is good. It listens to their comments and concerns and parents, in return, are supportive. The school's partnership with the community is good, particularly in the links it has with arts organisations and other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership is very good and management is good.** The headteacher leads by example, setting the tone for work combined with respect and enjoyment. The leadership team is equally hard working and effective. The school's determination to care for each pupil and to give each one of them equal opportunities to flourish and do well is evident in all its work. The work of the governing body is good, particularly in how it challenges and supports the school's work.

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

Parents are very satisfied with the school. A minority are not happy with the reports they receive and the inspection team agrees that reports could be more detailed and constructive. Pupils are very satisfied with the school. They much appreciate the very good relationships they have with the teachers and that teachers give up their free time, for example to take them on visits and provide extra-curricular activities.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards in English and drama, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and in French in all years.
- Extend the quality of provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Increase the amount of time for religious education and citizenship and introduce a daily act of collective worship. Appoint a specialist religious education teacher.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

**Achievement in all years is good. Standards in all years are average. There is an upward trend, above that seen nationally, in end of Year 9 tests and in GCSE results. The average GCSE points score attained in 2004 is likely to be above average.**

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematics: well above average GCSE grades; and success in 2004 when over 30 Year 8 pupils took the end of Year 9 tests a year early.
- Science: improved Year 9 test and GCSE grades since the last inspection.
- English: less improvement than that seen in mathematics and science; pupils do better in GCSE literature.
- Art and design and ICT: consistently very high GCSE grades.
- French and drama: low GCSE grades.

#### Commentary

1. The trend for end of Year 9 national test results has been upward since the last inspection, above that seen nationally. In 2003 pupils' results matched the national average test results in English and science, and were well above average in mathematics. Although the ambitious targets for the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above (the expected level), were missed by one percentage point in English and science in 2004, the target for mathematics was exceeded. Since 2002 girls have done better than boys in English and mathematics but in science boys' and girls' results are similar.

2. The progress pupils made by Year 9 in 2003, related to their standards at the end of primary school, was in line in English and science with that seen in schools with a similar starting point, and well above in mathematics. With almost the same average points in 2004 (see below), progress between 2001 and 2004 is likely to have been the same. In 2004, over 30 Year 8 pupils took the end of Year 9 mathematics tests a year early and all gained Level 6; they certainly achieved very well in the two years they had been in school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.7 (33.7)	--- (33.4)
Mathematics	37.8 (37.9)	--- (35.7)
Science	33.7 (34.3)	--- (32.7)

*There were 161 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Since the last inspection, the trend in GCSE results has been upward, above that seen nationally. Since 2000, the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C has been consistently close to the national average and in 2004 the school achieved its best ever results - well over half the pupils attained five GCSE A\*-C grades, exceeding the school's target. All pupils attained one GCSE A\*-G grade. Girls attain a higher average points score than boys but in 2002 and 2003 the gap between girls' and boys' average points scores was less than that seen nationally.

4. The progress pupils made between the end of Year 9 and GCSEs in 2003 was overall below that seen in schools with similar Year 9 standards; it was below average in English but above average in mathematics and science. In 2004 the percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades

dropped in English but rose in mathematics, and leapt from 52 to 66 per cent in science - overall progress is likely to be average. As science was a weak subject at the time of the last inspection, considerable improvement is evident and mathematics continues to go from strength to strength.

5. In Years 7 to 9, present standards of work are:

- \* well above average in mathematics;
- \* above average in science, art, geography and history;
- \* average in English, ICT, design and technology, French, Spanish, drama, music and physical education;
- \* below average in citizenship and religious education.

6. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve:

- \* very well in mathematics and art;
- \* well in science, ICT, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education;
- \* satisfactorily in English, French, Spanish and drama;
- \* unsatisfactorily in citizenship and religious education.

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

	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (47)	--- (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (93)	--- (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (97)	--- (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.0 (34.9)	--- (34.7)

*There were 158 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. The table below reveals that several subjects performed very well in 2004, including art and design and ICT (which both performed well in 2003), geography and physical education. 2004 results in mathematics, science, German and most design and technology subjects were much better than in 2003. The school is confident that the teaching problems which contributed to the low results, for example in French in 2004 and drama in 2003 and 2004, no longer remain.

### **GCSE RESULTS 2003 and 2004 (percentage with grades A\* -C)**

**Bold shows where performance was above average in 2003 and likely to be in 2004**

	<b>2003</b>	<i>National 2003</i>	<b>2004</b>	<b>Comments 2004</b>
<b>English language</b>	54	58	44	
<b>English literature</b>	60	63	59	
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>52</b>	48	<b>60</b>	9% A*/A.
<b>Science (double)</b>	<b>52</b>	51	<b>66</b>	11% A*/A.
<b>Art and design</b>	<b>80</b>	65	<b>86</b>	30% A*/A
<b>Business studies</b>	21	55	53	
<b>French</b>	34	45	25	
<b>Geography</b>	48	58	<b>82</b>	18% A*/A
<b>History</b>	57	60	<b>61</b>	
<b>German</b>	36	51	<b>64</b>	
<b>ICT</b>	<b>93</b>	55	<b>84</b>	14% A
<b>Drama</b>	23	65	27	
<b>Music</b>	50	65	<b>N/A</b>	
<b>Food</b>	46	Subjects combined 53	<b>57</b>	
<b>Graphics</b>	46		<b>70</b>	
<b>Resistant materials</b>	43		<b>68</b>	
<b>Electronics</b>	18		39	
<b>Textiles</b>	46		<b>73</b>	26% A
<b>Physical education</b>	<b>56</b>		55	<b>86</b>



8. In Years 10 and 11, present standards of work are:
- \* well above average in mathematics, geography and art;
  - \* above average in science, ICT for GCSE, design and technology, history, and physical education;
  - \* average in English, ICT, Spanish, drama, music, business studies, leisure and tourism and health and social care;
  - \* below average in French and citizenship;
  - \* poor in religious education.

9. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve:
- \* very well in mathematics, science and art;
  - \* well in ICT, design and technology, history, geography, Spanish, music and physical education;
  - \* satisfactorily in English, drama, business studies, leisure and tourism and health and social care;
  - \* unsatisfactorily in French and citizenship;
  - \* poorly in religious education.

10. Most pupils with special educational needs attain the standards they are capable of and make good progress. Progress in mathematics is very good but it is only satisfactory in French and Spanish because of the lack of support in some lessons. At the end of Year 11 pupils are entered for GCSE examinations and obtain creditable grades in a range of subjects. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are often supported by the social inclusion provision, make very good progress in learning to manage their behaviour more effectively, improving their attendance and raising their self-esteem. The achievement of the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. They are withdrawn from lessons on a regular basis for language study to make sure they can keep up with their studies in all subjects.

11. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve at least as well as all other pupils. Their talents are spotted in art and design, music and physical education and teachers encourage them to take part in extra activities. The school is equally proud of pupils' academic and non-academic achievements. Recently a Year 9 pupil won a public speaking competition, a Year 11 pupil won Excellence in Workmanship and Engineer of the Year awards, the school won the Lancashire football tournament and individual athletes have entered Lancashire tournaments and done well. Two talented pupils received training at a local Netball Academy. Year 11 art and design pupils displayed their work at the Victoria and Albert museum in London.

12. Gifted mathematicians in Years 7 to 9 are well catered for (see paragraphs 80 and 85). Where the school has not moved forward fast enough is in offering stimulating activities for those with academic gifts in many subjects. These pupils have been identified but no non-subject specific events or courses have been introduced for them. The newly appointed co-ordinator for these pupils is keen to move forward in this area.

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

**Pupils' attitudes are very good. Their behaviour is very good. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are proud of their school and show very good attitudes to their work.
- Nearly all pupils form very good relationships with each other and staff. They behave very well.
- Pupils have a very well developed awareness of social and moral issues but their appreciation of spiritual and multi-cultural issues is not as strong.
- Pupils' attendance is good and their punctuality is very good.

### **Commentary**

13. Most pupils are proud of their school and like being there. Key reasons behind their pride in the school are its good local reputation, the uniform and the confidence they feel that they are being taught well. They particularly value the clubs and other activities after school, appreciating that staff give up their free time to run them. Pupils are positive about how well they get on with their teachers. In lessons, nearly all pupils are well organised, listen attentively and show real determination to complete the tasks teachers set. They respond particularly well when teachers' expectations are high and when they are involved in a variety of practical activities and group work. This enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in art, physical education, design and technology and ICT lessons. In contrast, pupils show the least interest and enthusiasm in lessons that are dominated by listening to the teacher and copying materials from the board.

14. Very harmonious relationships among nearly all pupils are a very positive feature. Younger pupils, for example, speak enthusiastically about how friendly and helpful they find older pupils. Most teachers value pupils' work and praise effort and good work. As a result, the majority of pupils are ready to express views and ask questions in lessons. Many pupils spoke positively about how most teachers are very approachable outside lessons, if they have personal concerns or queries arising from lessons. This significantly contributes to both pupils' learning and the very positive community atmosphere that prevails.

15. Behaviour in classrooms during lunchtime and playtimes is very good. The way nearly all adults treat pupils with respect and apply the discipline policy consistently and fairly contributes significantly to pupils' very good behaviour. Senior staff are often seen around the school and are well respected. Pupils show high levels of tolerance and politeness in crowded conditions in narrow corridors and stairs during changeovers between lessons. A relaxed, social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall, despite the cramped accommodation. Parents and pupils confirm that there is some bullying which is mostly verbal in nature. Pupils are ready to report such incidents and know that teachers and support staff nearly always resolve these situations effectively. As a result, incidents of bullying, racism or other forms of harassment are kept at a very low level.

16. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Through the subjects they study, and their experience of school life generally, pupils acquire strong personal beliefs and values that underpin their very good attitudes and behaviour. The school encourages pupils to value and respect both themselves and others. Assemblies make a powerful contribution in helping pupils to become sensitive to the needs of others. However, the absence of a daily act of collective worship, and the inadequate time given for religious education, severely limit the opportunities pupils have for spiritual reflection.

17. The mature and responsible behaviour of pupils shows how successful the school is in guiding them to have strong moral and social values. Pupils know the importance of observing rules and the principle of treating others with fairness and consideration, for example, as exemplified in the physical education department's Fair Play agreement. Pupils show concern for people less well off or less advantaged than themselves both within and outside the school community; they have raised considerable sums of money in support of local and national charities.

18. Moral issues are dealt with effectively in lessons, whether in discussions on the ethics of cloning in science, or the use and misuse of the Internet in ICT. The school council is particularly effective in helping pupils acquire social skills, and encouraging them to make decisions for themselves and to form opinions based on collected evidence. In the classroom pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively with others and an impressive number of out of school clubs encourages them to pursue their wider interests in the company of others.

19. Both boys and girls participate in a good range of educational and social visits at home and abroad, for example in trips to France and Spain. Visiting artists and theatre groups raise pupils' appreciation of the ethnic and cultural diversity of modern Britain, seen for example in the nearby town of Preston. There are no school visits to mosques or temples and local non-Christian faith leaders are rarely invited to come to school and talk to pupils. Few subjects, apart from English and music, cover multi-cultural issues well. English makes a valuable contribution, introducing pupils to texts and materials that reflect different ethnic cultures around the world. In music, the steel band provides an insight into the musical traditions of other countries.

20. Nearly all parents ensure that pupils attend school regularly and on time. Similarly, in the event of absence, parents provide a reason. As a result, unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school's measures to combat absence, including first day contact, are good; truancy is minimal and concerns about absence are confined to very few families. The recently introduced measures to improve punctuality are very effective.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2003-2004 (93%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0	School data	0.2
National data (2002-2003)	7.2	National data (2002-2003)	1.1

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

21. In the previous school year, there were two permanent exclusions and the number of fixed term exclusions is below that found nationally. Many are for only one or two days and are generally effective in preventing further exclusions. The school has recently created space for an inclusion unit to reduce the level of fixed term 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	797	43	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

22. Pupils with special educational needs generally show a willingness to learn, can sustain concentration throughout the whole one-hour lesson and rarely give less than their best. They often work enthusiastically with their support assistants. They co-operate with their teachers, get on well together and nearly always behave well. Even pupils with severe emotional and behavioural problems generally show respect and consideration for their teachers and teaching assistants. Across all years, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.**

### Teaching and learning

**The quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is good although practice varies between departments.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching which was at least good in almost two-thirds of lessons during the inspection.
- Compared to the last inspection, far fewer lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory, and easily addressed reasons why they were not successful.
- Particularly effective teaching in art and design and mathematics and much improved teaching in science.
- A lack of networked computers for teachers to easily download and manipulate assessment data for analysis.

### Commentary

23. In almost two-thirds of lessons seen teaching was at least good, almost the same as it was during the last inspection. The percentage of very good and excellent teaching was not quite so high but the number of unsatisfactory lessons was much lower – the issues in teaching, particularly in science, have been resolved. The few lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory were mostly linked to the unsatisfactory arrangements for religious education and PSHE, which are mainly taught by non-specialists. The weak elements in these lessons were lack of specialist knowledge and/or too little achieved in the hour.

24. Teaching is particularly effective in art and design, mathematics and physical education. During the inspection it was consistently good or better in business studies, music and Spanish. Examples of excellent practice were noted in English and art and design. Interestingly, it was in Years 7 and 11 that the highest percentage of good teaching was seen though the percentage of very good teaching was lower. Early in the school year, teachers in these years are getting to know the pupils and establishing good working habits and therefore the more stimulating lessons were not so evident.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 117 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1.5 %)	25 (21.5%)	49 (42%)	37 (32%)	4 (3%)	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.*

25. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well both in lessons and when they work in small groups, for example improving their literacy. In small group sessions little time is wasted

getting down to work and this encourages good learning. Very supportive relationships encourage pupils to want to learn. Teachers plan well and use an effective variety of teaching methods and resources. When teaching assistants work in the classroom they generally contribute helpfully. However, they rarely know in advance what work is to be covered, and so do not prepare suitable texts or resources. In one PSHE lesson, for example, pupils were asked to use the Internet to find out about Charles Darwin. The sites they accessed were difficult to read. With better planning, the teaching assistant could have researched suitable sites before the lesson began. In some lessons, for example modern foreign languages, the lack of teaching assistant support holds back pupils' progress.

26. There is a clear correlation between high standards, good achievement and the following features of teaching seen during the inspection:

- \* Prompt starts to lessons so that pupils' attention is captured and they quickly get into the right frame of mind for work. A Year 9 Spanish lesson began with pupils singing a Spanish song that introduced key words for the lesson.
- \* Helpful explanations at the beginning, outlining the content of the lessons, so pupils feel confident and know what they are expected to do. Mathematics and geography teachers do this particularly well. Within minutes of a Year 9 religious education lesson starting, pupils could appreciate that they were discussing the existence of God through their knowledge of church weddings.
- \* Frequent checks on pupils' understanding so that misunderstandings or misconceptions are overcome quickly - a feature of several effective mathematics and science lessons.
- \* Pushing continually for high standards was noted in several physical education lessons. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson the alert teacher constantly challenged pupils to aspire to their very best effort, guiding them with high quality comments as they reflected and evaluated very well on their performance. Using pupils to demonstrate key points was a most effective technique.
- \* Creating a sense of urgency when needed so pupils work fast enough, for example in food technology making cakes and buns.
- \* Recapitulation of work covered either in previous lessons or earlier in the current lesson. Such constant reinforcement of knowledge and understanding contributes to the rising standards in science. A Year 10 group were reminded about heat transfer and conduction before moving on to study convection.
- \* Inspiring and exciting delivery and content. The dramatic use of a balloon to show the tensions in Europe before 1914 captured the attention of Year 9 history pupils. In a very good Year 8 music lesson on the Samba pupils much enjoyed using authentic instruments.
- \* Clear and interesting demonstrations of, for example, physical education skills or science practical techniques. In a Year 7 ICT lesson the teacher's well prepared template allowed pupils to prepare their own timetables fast.
- \* Skilful questions which go further than extracting factual information and make pupils think about what they are learning and consider issues deeply. The history department, particularly, has focused on developing such skills - teachers pose questions which both reveal pupils' understanding and highlight where they need further guidance. In an excellent Year 10 English lesson, the questions posed deepened pupils' thinking and demanded that they show their understanding with sophisticated vocabulary.
- \* Concluding lessons by getting pupils to summarise and share what they have learned, rather than the teacher describing what has been taught.
- \* Using stimulating and fun resources, such as white-boards, word-games, writing frames and word-searches in English. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils mastered the relationship between the circumference and diameter of a circle using string and prepared shapes. A vibrant 'word bingo' game in geography developed pupils' understanding of rainforest eco-systems.
- \* Exploiting the potential of interactive whiteboards to help pupils understand difficult concepts, mainly seen in mathematics and science, the only two departments to have this technology installed in all classrooms.
- \* Sharing expertise of professionals such as visiting artists or going out of school to visit art museums.



27. When few of the above elements were present, lessons were only satisfactory. In several lessons pupils were given the same work regardless of their capabilities so that higher attainers finished before others and then sat making no further progress. In other lessons the pace dropped off and pupils' attention wandered. On the very rare occasions when teachers raised their voices, the calm learning atmosphere was interrupted and progress did not follow smoothly.

28. Teachers mark and assess pupils' work well overall. Their interpretation and response to the data generated vary as departments are at different stages of development. Assessment is very good in art and design: pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum Levels and from this information teachers set them realistic targets. In mathematics, science and ICT teachers accurately tell pupils in Years 7 to 9 their National Curriculum Levels. Data analysis of pupils' capabilities in Years 10 and 11 is particularly good in design and technology and mathematics - teachers set clear targets, and pupils understand what they are capable of achieving. Although other departments are beginning to use National Curriculum Levels to inform pupils how well they are doing, pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve. There is no common mark scheme and departments have freedom to develop their own. This means that pupils cannot compare their results in different subjects.

29. Without full integration between the administration and curriculum computer networks, data is manually transferred from the administration network to a new database which is being piloted at the present. This increases teachers' workload as they input information about pupils' performances which is already available electronically. This lack of a single network further reduces teachers' opportunities to make effective use of the data available to predict grades and set targets. The school is determined to overcome the network problems, appreciating that form tutors must have information about pupils' work and targets in all subjects if the new pupil review days are to be effective. Such information will also highlight where pupils' target grades related to their abilities are not equally balanced across subjects.

## **The curriculum**

**The curriculum is good. Opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are very good. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Worthwhile, well-planned vocational courses.
- Valuable extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and music, and exciting enrichment activities in art and design.
- Statutory requirements for religious education and citizenship are not met. Too little time is available for these subjects and PSHE.
- Double lessons, which are useful for vocational courses, are not so helpful for subjects such as French.

## **Commentary**

30. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is now relevant and balanced and has moved a long way since the last inspection. The range of courses is effectively geared to pupils' individual needs and serves them well as preparation for the world of work or further education. In leisure and tourism in Year 10 and textiles in Years 10 and 11, for instance, the school is prepared to invest in small teaching groups to accommodate pupils' aspirations. In addition to National Curriculum subjects pupils can choose from a strong range of work related or vocational courses (see paragraph 61).

31. Pupils following the new vocational course in health and social care pursue study projects based in nurseries, care homes for the elderly and leisure centres. Double lessons are ideal for such courses but this means that some other subjects, such as French and Spanish, also have

them, which is far from ideal. Pupils who choose vocational courses are comprehensively informed about course content and intended outcomes. Assessments are undertaken to ensure that course demands are well matched to pupils' intellectual and practical ability. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an ICT course and a number choose an additional vocational course leading to double GCSE accreditation. A qualification is not available for other courses.

32. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has breadth and balance. The school particularly values and develops pupils' creative and aesthetic potential. The recent designation as a Specialist Arts College confirms the strong curricular provision made for art and design. The new music scheme of work has significantly improved pupils' motivation for this subject, and given them much greater access to music from around the world. Time for physical education in Year 8 is reduced, partly because a second modern foreign language is introduced for higher attaining pupils. This prevents dance being offered as an additional creative element of the taught curriculum.

33. The school is not meeting the statutory requirements for religious education because the locally Agreed Syllabus cannot be covered in the time currently allocated to this subject. The same is true of citizenship. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met.

34. Provision to prepare pupils for the world of work and provide them with balanced careers education is good. All Year 11 pupils have access to a comprehensive package of interviews designed to help them make informed choices about Post 16 education. Approximately half Year 11 pupils attend an optional evening where external careers staff help them to refine their job interview technique. The Year 11 careers room is well resourced and a small group of specially trained pupils help to keep information up to date and well ordered. Careers information for the rest of the school is available in the main library. Work experience in Year 11 is efficiently managed and pupils value it. Careers education now starts in Year 7 and is offered mainly through PSHE. There is a focus on work related learning (WRL) in Years 7 to 9. In geography, for instance, Year 9 pupils studying the fashion industry visited a retail outlet and identified links between design production and marketing.

35. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and are effectively integrated in most lessons, with very little work done away from main lessons. There is good extra provision in the form of pre-school reading and extra help with basic literacy. When needed, targeted courses are made available such as the new Basic English Compact course for Year 10 pupils. This course is directed at lower attaining pupils and offers accreditation in key skills such as communication and ICT. The overall curriculum for the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language is not fully balanced and appropriate to their needs. One pupil attends only one out of three French classes a week. Pupils who are supported by the social inclusion provision do well following programmes which raise their self-esteem and bring about an improvement in their behaviour and attendance.

36. The programme offered to enrich and extend learning beyond the taught curriculum is of a high quality and well attended. At lunch-time and at the end of the school day pupils can join in a large number of clubs and experiences which further develop their sporting, artistic and musical talents or provide additional support for those who have learning needs. Educational visits in this country and abroad are undertaken regularly and managed safely.

37. With the exception of religious education and collective worship the school has effectively addressed all the issues identified in the last inspection, including teaching time over the working week. In many instances the school has turned these issues into strengths. This particularly relates to the provision now made for vocational education, access to ICT for older pupils, and the provision for art.

38. Teachers' qualifications are well matched to the curriculum overall with particular strengths in mathematics, geography and art and design. There are serious concerns in religious education, PSHE and citizenship because of the high proportion of non-specialist teaching. A history specialist teacher leads and manages religious education, PSHE and citizenship – a very large load.

39. Plans for the essential new dining hall, two classrooms and the art and design block refurbishment are underway. Increased pressure for space inside leads to unacceptable queuing and movement outside in all weathers. Disabled access is limited to the ground floor only. The very high quality sports hall, gym and recently drained pitches provide very good conditions for learning in physical education. Mathematics, history and French and Spanish have suites of rooms and science has six slightly dilapidated laboratories. The remaining subjects, apart from music and English, have reasonable facilities and most departments have very good displays which make their rooms interesting.

40. Music has two of its three rooms, the practice room and another room (to be converted to an ICT suite), away from its main teaching area. Noise between the music and drama rooms interferes with learning in these subjects. The English classrooms are not all together which makes sharing of resources and support awkward. The school has enough resources to meet the needs of the curriculum, with particular strengths in art and design and physical education, where the range and suitability contribute positively to the quality of teaching and learning.

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

**Care, guidance and support are very good overall.**

**The school ensures pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good.**

**The school provides good support, advice and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development.**

**The school seeks to involve pupils very well in its work and development.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.
- Pupils' personal development is very well supported but there is room for improvement in the support for pupils' academic progress.
- Impartial guidance on further study and career opportunities is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The school makes very good use of the views of its pupils when considering improvements.

### **Commentary**

41. Levels of minor accidents are very low. First aid and health and safety arrangements are clear and effective. Arrangements for child protection and looked after children are very good. Arrangements for new pupils are very effective. Three prefects from Year 10 support each Year 7 form as they settle in. This also develops older pupils' sense of responsibility and the very good relationships that prevail between pupils of all ages. Year 7 pupils' and parents' views form the agenda for an early pastoral evening to discuss and highlight any significant issues. The school has responded to a number of issues arising, such as supplying lockers, refurbishing the toilets and increasing the choice of food. Nevertheless there has been no progress dealing with pupils' comments, confirmed during the inspection, that the food is unhealthy and boring.

42. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are very good as are those for testing, recording and tracking their progress as they move through the school. Individual education plans (IEPs) are in place but they lack short-term attainable targets. The school's teaching assistants work very well and have good, supportive and encouraging relations with their pupils. They make themselves available at lunchtimes and before school for pupils to consult, for example, about homework and coursework assignments. They have the major responsibility for writing pupils' IEPs and setting them targets. The social inclusion provision is very supportive in helping pupils manage their negative behaviour.

43. Pastoral staff provide very good support for pupils' personal development. Most form tutors and other staff know pupils very well and recognise their needs. Staff act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle. The school makes very good use of other professionals, such as the counsellor, nurse and educational social worker, to help pupils with personal problems that they do not want to discuss with their teachers. The school recognises that support for pupils' academic progress is less systematically developed, however. As a result, the school plans to introduce bi-annual reviews with each pupil, aimed at identifying their key areas for improvement.

44. Good support and guidance are provided for Year 9 pupils in choosing their GCSE options. Careers' guidance is very well led in Years 10 and 11, based on getting all pupils to make up their minds about their Post 16 route by the middle of the spring term before they leave. Work experience is very well organised in Year 10. For a small minority of pupils, extended work experience is very successful. Year 11 pupils speak very positively about the value of visits to colleges, work experience and interviews in determining the next stage of their education or training. The school works very effectively with the 'Connexions' service, which provides well-targeted careers interviews for the majority of pupils.

45. The very positive relationships mean that pupils are happy to express their views. The school council's discussions give management some important insights into the issues that concern pupils, such as toilets, food, dining arrangements and aspects of the uniform. Councillors and other pupils speak positively about how pupils' views have influenced improvements in these features. Similarly the Eco-group has had very positive impact on litter reduction. Older pupils carry out a range of monitoring duties responsibly. Whilst some departments, such as science, seek pupils' views on what they like and find difficult at the end of each unit of work, this practice is not part of most departments' evaluation.

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

**The school's partnership with parents is good. The school's partnership with the community is good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents rightly value the school's genuine open door policy, the safe, friendly atmosphere and the strong sense of community and care.
- Some parents would appreciate more regular information on pupils' progress and tighter adherence to the published homework schedule.
- There are ambitious plans for community art and design projects as part of the successful bid for Arts Specialist status.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges bring significant benefits for staff and pupils.

### **Commentary**

46. Nearly all parents find the school very approachable and committed to addressing most of their concerns. Regular surveys of Year 7 and Year 11 parents ensure that school has a clear understanding of parental views. Parents rightly speak very positively about how well pupils are made to feel welcome and the leadership provided by the headteacher and his leadership team, which has led to steady, sustained improvement. The success of the partnership is reflected in the fact that the school is oversubscribed. Most parents attend parents' evenings.

47. Nevertheless, based on the parental survey, around a fifth of parents have some concerns about the information they receive on pupils' progress. Some would appreciate more regular information, with a clearer overview on how pupils can improve. Inspection findings support these views. Annual written reports provide a clear picture on pupils' current performance and effort but

they do not clearly identify the key areas for improvement in subjects. The long interval between reports also means that the response to concerns is too slow to be effective. However, parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews. Inspection of pupils' planners indicates that homework is not set regularly and, on occasions, there could be more of it.

48. Community education classes in computers, yoga, Spanish, martial arts and first aid are held at the school. Outside speakers from the public services, such as the police, fire, army and prison services, enrich PSHE lessons with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Pupils' careers education is significantly enhanced through work experience, an Industry Day and mock interviews involving a wide range of outside organisations. Pupils take part in several collections for local and national charities. The school's steel band and cheerleaders take part in the local carnival and last year a drama group produced a pantomime for younger children. Development of a community plan formed a major part of the successful bid to become an Arts Specialist College. The school now has ambitious and sustainable plans to work with a wide range of partners, such as local and national arts organisations, on a range of projects involving a significant number of pupils.

49. There are very good links with the five main feeder primary schools, including a 'Partnership Week', when primary pupils experience specialist art, music and ICT teaching. The school is a member of the South Ribble Learning Federation of secondary schools that has won significant DfES funding which the school has used to develop aspiring middle managers, teaching and learning and computer use. There is some sharing of staff and expertise with a local secondary school, an encouraging development for the future.

50. Very effective links exist with local sixth form and further education colleges and training providers. Consequently, pupils have a very good understanding of their career and education options before the end of Year 11. The school takes trainee teachers from two local colleges, takes part in the associate and graduate teacher programmes and sends older pupils on visits to local universities as part of the gifted and talented provision.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management overall are very good. Leadership is very good. Management is good. The work of the governing body is good.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good, calm and focused leadership by the headteacher, supported by an equally strong leadership team.
- At all levels, leadership and management are characterised by respect for pupils. Staff are very good role models, putting into practice the school's focus on equality of opportunity for all.
- Excellent leadership of the school's successful bid for Arts Specialist status and the consequent developments.
- Confident, honest and realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the headteacher and leadership team.
- A supportive, questioning governing body which is chaired very well.

### **Commentary**

51. The headteacher leads by example and his leadership team, teachers and support staff follow. He correctly describes the quality of pupil-staff relationships as high and many pupils wrote on their questionnaires that teachers were kind, friendly and helpful. During the inspection the school was calm and the team rarely heard any raised voices. Such a working environment does not happen without care and consistency, which the headteacher and leadership team generate at all times.

They and the staff are excellent role models. Their genuine interest and attention to detail for every individual pupil are an important feature of the school.

52. The headteacher leads very well, with a firm eye on raising standards, for example introducing well thought out vocational courses and successfully overseeing the Arts Specialist bid. He and the governors are in total agreement about the school's rigid policy on drugs, and pupils appreciate knowing the boundaries set for behaviour, even though they complain about some of them. Heads of department mainly carry out their leadership roles well, with significant strengths in mathematics, science, geography and history. Leadership of art and design is outstanding.

53. Other experienced teachers and support staff, for example the counselling team or the administration staff, carry out their work sensitively and efficiently. The social inclusion provision is very well led and managed and provides very effective support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The special educational needs co-ordinator goes to enormous lengths to ensure that the two pupils who speak English as an additional language, who both have special educational needs, are well catered for. She prepares materials for the English course without help from outside specialist teachers or support services.

54. Leadership and management of the special educational needs provision are very good. The interests of pupils with special educational needs are positively promoted and there is a shared sense of purpose throughout the school. Administration procedures and record keeping are excellent although there is too little monitoring of how well pupils are meeting their IEP targets on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Links with external agencies and primary schools are very well managed.

55. Performance management procedures are very good but a mixed picture emerges concerning the quality of the targets teachers have for pupils' progress. Arrangements for teachers and staff who are new to the school, and for continuing professional development, are very good. The newly appointed teacher with responsibility for gifted and talented pupils has already been on a course which has inspired her to develop the school's range of activities for these pupils. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is excellent. The school is generally very successful in the recruitment and retention of staff.

56. The governing body is extremely supportive and proud of the school's improvements and achievements. Led by an astute and thoughtful Chair, governors bring common sense and a good breadth of experience and expertise to their deliberations. They are quite prepared to challenge the headteacher and leadership team because they are well informed and know that their questions and suggestions will be considered carefully. They are determined that the new Arts Specialists status will permeate the school's work and lead to further growth and better standards. They are fully aware of the statutory requirements that are not met for religious education, citizenship and a daily act of collective worship.

57. The school development plan is rather long and it is not easy to get an overview of the key areas being developed, despite the colour coded sheets the governors requested. Governors have not yet planned how they want the school to be in five or ten years; after the success of the Arts Specialist bid, now is the right time to do so. The most interesting aspect of the school development plan is the column headed 'The present situation', where the school is admirably self-critical and realistic; none of the issues raised during the inspection surprised the headteacher. The school monitors its performance well. It is working hard to make it easy for all teachers to access assessment data on the schools intranet so they can share the good practice that already exists.

58. It is not clear whether the governors fully considered the limited contribution religious education, PSHE and citizenship would be able to make to pupils' spiritual and cultural development following the management decision to reduce the time for these subjects, which are delivered by non-specialists (see paragraphs 16, 100 and 139). Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development was mentioned in the last report and has not moved forward. Whilst there is much evidence that respect for all individuals is a key element of what the school stands for, and no

evidence that pupils are not tolerant of other faiths and ethnic groups, they do not learn enough about religious beliefs and cultures and their horizons are not extended widely. This remains an area for improvement. Other issues raised in the last report have been dealt with and standards have improved, but not consistently in all subjects.

59. The school's finances are managed very well. The governors' finance committee meets regularly and regular reports from the school business manager help it to monitor actual and committed expenditure against the budget. Nearly all recommendations from the recent audit have been completed. The school makes informed decisions about purchasing. It compares the cost and quality of different suppliers' work to make sure that money is spent wisely. It also uses local education authority information well to inform financial decisions. The school spends just above the average amount of money per pupil for a school of its type and provides good value for money.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,493,229.00	Balance from previous year	137,859.00
Total expenditure	2,491,406.00	Balance carried forward to the next	137,722.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,083.00		

**WORK RELATED LEARNING**

Provision in WRL is **very good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils regard vocational courses as having equal status to academic courses.
- A high proportion of pupils have chosen vocational courses.
- Very good guidance is provided in selecting pupils for vocational courses.
- There is a wide breadth of vocational courses for pupils to select from.
- Some departments have yet to identify the contribution they make to WRL.

**Commentary**

60. Pupils' understanding about work is very good, as a result of their two weeks work experience in Year 10. For this they are well prepared during their PSHE lessons with very good follow-up when they return to school, including writing a letter of thanks to their host companies in English lessons. In 2003/4, a small number of pupils followed an extended work experience programme in Year 11, spending three days a week in a work placement. This opportunity has not been felt to be the right path for any Year 11 pupils at present.

61. Pupils learn very well about the world of work. In addition to business studies, over 150 pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following one or more vocational courses. These include health and social care, applied ICT, leisure and tourism, and applied art and design. Almost 50 pupils are following a dual award GCSE in engineering, attending either a local college of further education or a training provider for half a day a week. The latter organisation has links with over 600 companies and pupils who attain the GCSE are guaranteed an interview and references for vacancies. This is an excellent example of collaboration: pupils gain access to expertise and equipment not available in school whilst the school concentrates on the theory necessary to pass the examination. Year 10 pupils are also following a national pilot course in engineering, which not only leads to double award GCSE but will also, if they are successful, allow them to gain NVQ Level 1 accreditation.

62. The school is the only one in Lancashire taking part in a national pilot project sponsored by the Learning and Skills Council. The outstanding feature of all the vocational courses is the great care, support and guidance that have gone into the selection of pupils for these courses, to be sure that the course content suits pupils' aptitudes and interests. The school has very successfully established that vocational courses are not seen as the 'poor relations' to academic courses.

63. Pupils' preparation for work by developing skills for enterprise and employability is also very good. In Year 10 all pupils attend an Industry Day where the emphasis is on developing skills for employability. There is also an optional evening when pupils practise their interview skills. Over half the year group attend, to be interviewed and assessed by one or more of over 30 local business people, who give up their time voluntarily to support this initiative. A good range of outside speakers, including the careers officers of the Connexions service, contribute to Years 10 and 11 lessons on careers. Pupils participate actively in the Young Enterprise scheme and Lostock teams have been winners in the South Ribble area for the last two years. Two governors support the school's team as business advisers, as well as taking further responsibility for the promotion of the South Ribble Young Enterprise group.

64. Most pupils are strongly motivated to work and have high levels of relevant skills that are valued in the workplace. Many pupils take responsibility and are given the opportunity to be innovative. The teaching in several subjects, but not all, emphasises applications of knowledge and understanding and skills, using a very good variety of contexts in which pupils can acquire and apply their learning. For example, in modern foreign languages Year 9 pupils follow a six-week module on the professions, when they talk about the kind of job they would like to apply for in writing for a job. Subjects such as design and technology encourage pupils to work independently and show initiative.

65. In art and design there are strong links with design studios, local industry and the community, where skills learnt in class can be seen in application such as bookbinding. In physical education pupils can become Junior Sports Leaders. In addition there are established procedures for involving practising artists in school and for pupils to visit artists' studios. Although the provision the school makes for preparing pupils for life after school is extensive, several pupils stated that they would like more. The school's WRL strategy is broad and coherently structured for pupils to make progress. It is very well led and the various activities are well monitored and effectively evaluated.



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

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Standards are average	Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory	

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall although pupils are not always encouraged or helped to aim for the highest grades.
- Teachers correct pupils' written work carefully and give them clear guidance on how to improve.
- Staffing difficulties and a new syllabus contributed to the drop in GCSE results in 2004.
- New and temporary teachers are given excellent support by the head of department.
- Two English classrooms are distant from the others, making it difficult for teachers to be fully supported by colleagues.

#### Commentary

66. Year 9 test results in 2003 were average, reflecting pupils' attainment on entry to the school. The average points score was the same in 2004. In both years, English and science results were lower than those attained in mathematics. Girls gained higher results than boys, as seen nationally. Boys' performance is a little better than the national results for boys because teachers choose texts which appeal to them, and because teachers always involve them fully in discussions. Higher attainers do not always achieve as well as they could. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well catered for in all years and make relatively better progress.

67. In 2004 pupils' GCSE results in English language declined. In the previous four years pupils gained just below average A\*-C grades. In 2003 and 2004 few pupils gained high GCSE grades in either of the English examinations. 2004 was the first year pupils had been entered for a new syllabus so the headteacher, leadership team and head of department have carefully analysed why it did not serve the pupils well. Changes have been introduced in response to this and the signs are that achievement is set to improve. Most pupils are entered for English literature as well, with results being close to average in 2003 and 2004. The school is considering whether some pupils should not be entered for both examinations to leave them more time to prepare for the language examination.

68. Progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The teachers now teaching the two top sets are focusing well on raising these pupils' achievement. There have been a number of other changes in staffing but a few classes are still taught by non-specialists. The head of department goes to great lengths to ensure that new and temporary teachers are fully supported, aware that a lack of continuity in some classes also contributed to the recent decline in GCSE results. The present staffing situation is more stable.

69. At the time of the last inspection pupils' speaking and listening skills were good, and they continue to speak confidently and articulately and to listen attentively. Their reading and writing was satisfactory but their spelling and handwriting needed to be better. Teachers have put considerable effort into improving pupils' spelling and continuing to support their reading and writing. Standards in all these areas are average. The programme of library study introduced by the head of department for younger pupils is impressive in encouraging pupils to read widely and undertake research. Teachers plan lessons carefully and choose tasks thoughtfully. Pupils are willing to learn and to contribute their own ideas. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils are taught in mixed ability groups; in lessons seen the progress of higher ability pupils was limited by a lack of work shaped to their specific needs.

70. The quality of teaching overall is good. Teaching as a whole is better in the first three years than in Years 10 and 11, though excellent teaching was seen in a Year 10 lesson when an energetic teacher challenged pupils to think at a mature level, asked questions skilfully to deepen their thinking, and insisted that they show their understanding with sophisticated vocabulary. The department does not use computers enough to tackle work imaginatively, for example by generating newspaper articles, storyboards or merging text and pictures. Teachers use materials such as individual white boards, word games, writing frames and word searches to stimulate pupils' understanding of vocabulary as well as of the texts studied. They mark pupils' work carefully, correcting their spelling and punctuation mistakes, and offer clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. The department arranges valuable visits to theatre productions for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

71. However, when lessons did not move fast enough, pupils went through the motions of completing the work set but they were not enthused and genuinely interested. Neither was learning strengthened in lessons where, at the end, the teacher told the pupils what had been learned rather than the other way round. Examination of pupils' predicted grades reveals that the department could be more ambitious - pupils are given safe rather than challenging targets and in a few lessons this feeds into the style of teaching which is solid and professional but lacking stimulation and challenge.

72. The department is well managed, especially as two of the classrooms are at a distance from the three main rooms – an unsatisfactory arrangement. The hard-working head of department and her team have a clear understanding of how well the pupils are doing and, to some extent, of what needs to be done to raise standards. Leadership is not receptive enough to innovative ideas or different approaches that could raise pupils' expectations and drive up standards. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, as results have declined relative to national ones; teaching issues related to this have been tackled. The headteacher is closely involved in working with the department to push standards up.

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

73. Provision for raising literacy across the curriculum is good, with examples of good practice in mathematics, English, art and design and history. Practice is unsatisfactory only in religious education. The school library is used very well to encourage pupils to read and research. Planning diaries, used by all pupils, contain a wealth of helpful guidance on literacy and are a very good resource. The school has adopted a common policy on marking to promote literacy, though not all teachers mark spelling and punctuation errors in pupils' work. The literacy co-ordinator has identified the need to help pupils to write at length and has produced resources to help departments.

## French and Spanish

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and below average, but rising, in Years 10 and 11	Pupils achieve satisfactorily
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

Provision in Spanish is **good**.

Standards are average	Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 8 and 9 and well in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching marked by good pace, variety and subject expertise challenges pupils to work hard.
- The introduction of Spanish as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9 has increased pupils' interest in learning a foreign language.
- Staffing issues contributed to the below average GCSE results in French, particularly for boys, in 2004. GCSE German results in 2004 were significantly better than those attained in 2003.
- The department is in the early stages of setting targets for pupils, so they are not always sure how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

### Commentary

74. Standards at the end of Year 9, particularly boys', were below average in 2003, but in 2004 standards rose with a higher percentage of boys and girls attaining the expected levels. Despite the noticeable increase in the number of A\*/A grades compared to previous years, results in GCSE French in 2004 were below the previous year's national average, and boys' attainment was well below. German GCSE results improved in 2004 with 64 per cent A\*-C grades; this language is no longer taught. The staffing issues which contributed to the below average French results in 2004 have now been resolved.

75. Pupils' understanding of spoken French and Spanish is good because teachers conduct most of the lesson in the foreign languages. In a Year 11 French lesson pupils achieved well on a listening exercise about train timetables because they were familiar with the key words and phrases the teacher had used throughout the lesson. By the end of Year 9 pupils can hold a basic conversation in French and Spanish around the topics they have studied. However, teachers do not ask them to write longer pieces of work in the foreign language often enough. By the end of Year 11, high attaining pupils write extensively and accurately in French, but many pupils do not do this well enough in their GCSE coursework. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and are well supported by teaching assistants, though this support is not available in all their language lessons.

76. Pupils are keen to join in, enjoy learning languages and make good progress in individual lessons because teachers plan their lessons well and use a wide variety of activities and resources to keep them interested. Pupils concentrate well because the pace is brisk and teachers take into account their different learning styles. For instance, a Year 9 lesson began with the pupils singing, to the tune of the 'hokey-cokey', a song in Spanish that introduced the key words about sport! Next, pupils had to sort the words into two categories on the interactive whiteboard and do so within 60

seconds. They enjoyed matching pictures of well-known celebrities to the sport for which they were famous and worked well in pairs practising the new words and phrases. Finally, they wrote a short letter in Spanish about their favourite sports. An effective blend of challenge and support led to pupils making very good progress in this lesson.

77. During lessons teachers assess pupils' understanding of the work and adapt their teaching in response. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson pupils made good progress in using the past tense accurately to speak and write about a holiday because the teacher guided them skilfully and quickly corrected any mistakes they made. However, teachers do not yet use assessment to inform pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is evident in the way in which teachers mark pupils' work and in Year 11 pupils' uncertainty about their current standard of work and their target grades.

78. The head of department provides good leadership to a hard-working, enterprising and committed team. She has identified priorities for development and put in place strategies to raise attainment, especially at GCSE. The good teaching in both French and Spanish, and Year 11 pupils' current achievement, suggest that GCSE results will be better in 2005. Although management is satisfactory, procedures for monitoring and evaluating the department's effectiveness are not yet fully in place. Pupils have individual targets but teachers do not systematically track their progress and use assessment information to raise pupils' aspirations.

79. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In the last three years the department has successfully raised the profile of modern foreign languages. The introduction of Spanish as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9 has contributed to pupils being more motivated. Most pupils now choose to follow a full GCSE in either French or Spanish. Despite the dip in the French GCSE results in 2004, the foundations for a marked improvement in standards in 2005 have been laid.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Standards are well above average	Pupils achieve very well
Teaching is very good	Learning is very good
Leadership is very good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils' hard work and very good behaviour are key factors in their very good learning and very good achievement.
- Very good teaching is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils' different abilities and needs.
- Strong leadership of an enthusiastic team of specialist teachers has significantly contributed to the improving standards.
- Pupils do not use ICT enough to help them learn.

### Commentary

80. Standards on entry to the school are average. The well above average test results for Year 9 pupils in 2003 continued a strong upward trend since the previous inspection. Comparison with similar schools, using prior attainment as a benchmark, shows that pupils achieved very much better than expected. Results in 2004 were similar to those for 2003; about one sixth of Year 8

pupils were entered a year early, with very good results. GCSE results in 2003 were above average, and showed that pupils achieved better than expected; results in 2004 were much higher, building on the improving trend in Year 9 results. The percentage of pupils obtaining A\*/A grades increased in 2004. Virtually all pupils take GCSE and pass at grades A\*-G, very few with the two lowest grades. There is little difference in girls' and boys' standards in lessons, but there are sometimes differences in test and examinations; in 2003, boys did much better than girls at grades A\* to C. However, overall there is no discernable pattern.

81. In both Years 9 and 11, the well above average standards of work seen are similar across all aspects of mathematics. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve very much better than expected. Teaching groups are formed on the basis of similar prior attainment, and this helps teachers to target work effectively and contributes to this very good achievement. For example, in high attaining classes, teachers expect pupils to grasp ideas more quickly and to be able to spot patterns and express them in general terms. This is shown in the rapid development of these pupils' algebraic skills.

82. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 solve problems involving quadratic sequences confidently. In lower attaining groups teachers use more practical activities to help pupils to understand and so learn very effectively. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11 understood the relationship between the circumference of a circle and the diameter after a well planned practical task. Frequent practice and reinforcement of lower attainers' basic skills provides a very good foundation for their progress.

83. Teachers are very skilled at quickly assessing how confident pupils are with a particular topic and whether any skills need reinforcement. This emphasis on assessment is a key factor in raising standards. There is some variation in the way in which teachers mark written work, but any problems are dealt with effectively in class. Teaching is characterised by a strong emphasis on getting pupils to think, and to talk about their methods; this approach helps pupils to learn better. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic, with high expectations as to pupils' participation and work rate. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and work hard. Teachers' planning and organisation are very good, so learning starts as soon as pupils enter the classroom. No time is wasted. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has helped to improve the variety and effectiveness of teaching and learning since the previous inspection.

84. Some problems with access to ICT have made it difficult to use it effectively as a learning tool for all pupils. Some good practice exists, and teachers share their ideas and expertise well. The relatively new head of department makes very good use of performance data to highlight areas for improvement. She provides very strong leadership to a specialist team of teachers who are committed to helping pupils learn with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Good systems are being developed to monitor the work of the department.

85. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and teaching is better and much livelier. The 2004 GCSE results and early national test entry for some Year 8 pupils show the effect of increased challenge for higher attainers. Although use of ICT is better than at the previous inspection, it remains an area for improvement.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

86. Pupils' numeracy skills are well above average and make a strong contribution to their achievement in many subjects. Although the school has a good numeracy policy, there are not as yet enough planned occasions to use and develop these skills across other subjects. However, pupils' skills contribute to their progress in subjects such as science, geography and design and technology. In science pupils represent experimental data accurately and interpret graphical information sensibly. In geography their mathematical skills contribute positively to their coursework in Years 10 and 11, for example in analysing data. Pupils' ability to measure and weigh accurately helps to improve their work in design and technology.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Standards are above average	Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is very good	Management is very good
Improvement since the last inspection has been very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is contributing to a rise in standards.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, and good relationships between pupils and teachers, support good learning.
- The very good target sheets help pupils to learn and evaluate their work although not all staff use them consistently.
- Very good leadership and management have resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teachers do not always ask questions which extend and develop pupils' thinking.

### Commentary

87. Test results at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003 and improved in 2004. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards in science and achieve well by the end of Year 9. Current Year 9 pupils are working at a level that is above average for this stage in the course. In lessons they showed a mature approach to issues, such as cloning, and came to grips with balanced chemical equations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils and currently there is no significant difference in boys' and girls' achievement.

88. Practically all pupils obtain a GCSE grade A\* to G. In 2003 the proportion of pupils who obtained A\* to C grades was just above average. In 2004 this figure rose significantly. These results are much better than at the time of the last inspection and show a continual rising trend. Year 11 pupils' exercise books confirm their broad range of in-depth knowledge covering the biological, chemical and physical aspects of the course. By the end of Year 11 standards rise even higher, so in Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good.

89. Teaching and learning are good in all years. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen - a great improvement since the last inspection. The consistently good level of teaching, which includes an interesting variety of activities, is leading to good learning. Lively starts to the lessons stimulate scientific thinking; regular change of activities maintains pupils' interest; and work covered before is constantly reinforced. Pupils' enthusiasm, combined with their good relationship with teachers, generates a productive atmosphere that contributes to good progress in lessons. Pupils work well on their own, in pairs and in groups and they appreciate the support teachers give them if they need help beyond lessons. Procedures for pupils to track and monitor their own progress are very good. However, all teachers do not use these consistently, and so on occasions pupils do not know how they can improve their work.

90. Pupils feel free to ask questions but occasionally teachers answer them without extending pupils' thinking to develop their deductive skills; or they ask questions merely to draw out factual information rather than encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Teachers emphasise the correct use of technical language, and this helps pupils' literary skills. Pupils have the necessary numeracy skills for the subject and use ICT, data-logging and sensing equipment well, more than during the last inspection.

91. Leadership is very good with thoughtful and measured responses to areas needing development. The department works well together. Management of the subject is very good - seen by the way improvement since the last inspection has taken place; the numerous areas identified in the last report have been addressed. Teaching and learning within the department are monitored but a more formal process is required. Standards are continuing to rise.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Standards are average overall (above average in examination groups)	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are interested in the subject and keen to do well.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement by pupils.
- Accurate assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9, using National Curriculum Levels, is used to plan future work.
- Pupils who study ICT for one hour a week in Years 10 and 11 do not follow an accredited course.

### Commentary

92. Over 90 per cent of pupils gained GCSE A\*-C grades in 2003, almost a third with A\*/A grades, well above average. Almost half the year group took the examination. In 2004, 84 per cent of a smaller group of pupils gained A\*- C grades. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils take a Key Skills ICT course which is suitable for pupils of all capabilities. Since September 2003 the vocational double GCSE has been introduced. Less than 20 pupils have chosen this course in Year 10, with over 80 pupils following it in Year 11. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall – above average in the examination classes and average in the others.

93. In Years 7 and 8 pupils learn how to search the Internet and how to use different software programmes, such as word processing, presenting slide shows, creating websites, publishing brochures and using spread sheets. Having established these skills they then apply them in Year 9 to a project called 'The Haunted Hotel'. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the use of these programmes is satisfactory. In the unit of work using spreadsheets, pupils understand how to enter formulae, adapt their spreadsheets to wrap text, and how to insert headers and footers in their print-outs.

94. Pupils taking examination courses in Years 10 and 11 develop higher level skills to complete longer projects well. They make effective use of desktop publishing to create flyers and business cards. The websites they produce have active hyperlinks allowing navigation. Higher attaining pupils have good evaluative skills and confidently identify the strengths and areas for development in their work. Some lower attaining pupils fail to complete all parts of their projects. However, overall standards are above average.

95. Achievement is good. Pupils arrive in the school with mixed levels of experience of ICT; many of them have below the expected levels of knowledge. By Year 9 they reach the levels expected for pupils of this age. Year 11 pupils taking the double award GCSE course are achieving well. Pupils

with special educational needs achieve equally as well as other pupils, as they are fully included in lessons and well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

96. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and give pupils good, clear explanations about the use of software, so pupils learn methodically and make good progress. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The National Key Stage 3 strategy for ICT is being adapted to ensure that work set matches pupils' capabilities. In a lower attaining Year 7 lesson the teacher's careful preparation helped pupils to make a good start to word processing their timetable. Pupils have good attitudes in lessons, and their work rates contribute to the good progress they make. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately. Target setting, marking and pupils' self-assessment help pupils to understand their National Curriculum Levels.

97. The subject is well led and managed. Staffing is good, with a core team of ICT teachers, a network manager and a technician. The department makes the best of the adequate accommodation with good displays of pupils' work. Progress since the last inspection has been good, supported by an increase in the number of computers and computer rooms. There are several interactive white boards in the school but none in the ICT department.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. Pupils have satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding to use their ICT skills in a range of subjects. Most departments have planned use of ICT in their schemes of work. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography, especially when teachers manipulate interactive white boards effectively. In design and technology, music and business studies pupils use computers to present their work neatly and clearly. In physical education in Year 11 pupils use ICT very well to analyse data and produce performance graphs for practical training sessions in the gymnasium. Some departments still have difficulty in accessing computer suites, despite improvement since the last inspection. The plans in place now the school has Arts Specialist status will further increase opportunities for pupils and teachers to use their ICT skills.

## HUMANITIES

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 and well below average in Years 10 and 11	Pupils achieve unsatisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and poorly in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is unsatisfactory	Management is unsatisfactory
There has been no improvement since the last inspection	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The locally Agreed Syllabus is not being adequately covered because there is not enough time for the subject.
- Pupils have a very limited knowledge and understanding of the major world religions.
- Too few visits are made to places of worship or prayer in order to enhance learning.
- Given their capability, pupils could and should be achieving much higher standards.
- In lessons, pupils work hard and have good attitudes to teachers and each other.
- Some very enthusiastic and skilful teaching was observed in Year 10.

### Commentary



99. Religious education is taught with citizenship and PSHE in the same one lesson a week. This does not give enough time to religious education, so pupils do not cover the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have only a superficial knowledge of Christianity and the main beliefs of other world religions. They have few insights into why people worship different gods and cannot recognise similarities in religions, for example, in the importance of fasting in Christian and Muslim religions. Pupils have the capability to learn and bring very good attitudes to their work. However, they are underachieving because they are not being challenged enough. Standards in Year 11 are well below average because religious education is not part of the weekly lesson in this year. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and they have not moved forward from where they were at the end of Year 9.

100. Contributing to pupils' underachievement is the lack of specialist teachers engaged to teach the subject. In all, nine teachers share the teaching of religious education, many of whom are knowledgeable in other subject areas but not in religious education. A small minority lack enthusiasm and commitment. Books are marked but the marking is unhelpful in showing pupils how to improve. However, there is some very good teaching in Years 9 and 10 where all pupils are now studying for the short GCSE course. Teachers use very effective methods that help pupils to learn and their enthusiasm and verve motivate pupils to want to learn more. Pupils do not visit places of worship or prayer, particularly mosques and temples, often enough and non-Christian faith leaders are rarely invited to come to school and talk to pupils. The subject makes an unsatisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

101. The leadership and management of the subject at whole school level are unsatisfactory. The statutory requirement to teach the subject to all pupils is not being met. The head of religious education, who is also in charge of history, PSHE and citizenship, has too many other responsibilities and cannot focus enough attention on promoting the subject within the school. Non-specialist teachers are provided with worksheets, for example, but because the head of department only teaches one lesson of religious education a week it is not possible for him to monitor what is being taught and how well pupils are achieving. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The principal teaching room is not fully enclosed and is subject to noise from a nearby corridor. Since the previous inspection, when religious education had its own head of department, the subject has gone into serious decline. Then, standards were above average, pupils' achievement was good and teaching was a strength.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good, and very good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership is very good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' extremely positive attitudes and motivation contribute to the high standards achieved, particularly at GCSE.
- Very good subject leadership weaves the knowledgeable and dedicated teachers into an effective team that systematically reviews the best way to teach geography.
- Pupils are not clear about what they need to do to produce better work and so do not set themselves clear progress targets.
- Regular, well-planned fieldwork is a strength of the department and contributes to the high standards reached at GCSE.

## Commentary

102. Pupils enter the school with average skills and knowledge. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, the proportion of those with above geographical skills and understanding was higher than that found nationally, showing that pupils achieved well. Teachers' assessments of standards in 2004 and work seen confirm that current standards are just above average. Boys in particular do better than average because they respond particularly well to practical approaches in lessons and to the regular fieldwork opportunities.

103. GCSE results in 2003 were much lower than in previous years and were below average. However, in 2004 a change in exam syllabus coincided with a return to the previous very good performance and 82 per cent attained grades A\*-C and nearly 20 per cent A\*/A grades. Very good fieldwork contributed to this success. Similar high standards of presentation and analysis are evident in the current Year 11 studies of the Grasmere area. Achievement continues to be good. In all years, the standard of presentation is high and most pupils take a real pride in completing work carefully.

104. Teachers plan in detail and use a wide variety of approaches. This results in interesting lessons that motivate the pupils; for example a vibrant 'word bingo' game developed pupils' understanding of rainforest eco-systems and created genuine enthusiasm in a lower attaining group. Pupils are encouraged to give reasons for their judgements and this supports the development of skills that lead to the award of higher GCSE grades.

105. High standards are consistently encouraged. This develops self-motivation so that pupils work hard to complete extended projects. Year 7 pupils confidently read out good quality homework that they have researched themselves. Year 8 pupils combine extended well-written accounts of volcanic eruptions with good quality models. Pupils use computers regularly although the facilities are limited.

106. Teachers regularly and accurately assess end-of-topic tests and tell pupils clearly about their performance. However, they do not set individual progress targets and pupils do not monitor their own work. Most pupils, including those taking GCSE, are unable to explain what they need to do to become better geographers. Reports to parents also lack helpful advice on how to make progress. Encouraged by teachers, pupils are highly motivated and work hard; their extended written work is of a high quality. Well-planned support by classroom assistants helps pupils with statements of special education needs to make the same progress as others. Teachers adapt well to the somewhat limited accommodation, although it sometimes restricts the range of learning activities that can take place.

107. Leadership is very good. The head of department drives the subject forward with determination and enthusiasm, characteristics of all the geography team. Teachers share their experience of different ways of teaching, consider how effectively they are marking and constantly keep topics of study under review. All this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Management is good. The recent syllabus change has improved results. Good practical support for non-subject specialists mean that all pupils benefit from good teaching.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

Standards are above average	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is very good	Management is very good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management provide a very strong and clear direction for the subject's development.
- Pupils are keen to learn and work hard.
- Very good relationships increase pupils' enjoyment and motivate them to succeed.
- The quality of marking and assessment is good, encouraging pupils and showing them how they can improve.
- Teachers do not monitor teaching and learning systematically.
- Development of individual research is held back by limited access to ICT.

## Commentary

108. With skilful and enthusiastic teaching, standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils enter the school with a mixed range of historical skills and knowledge but they do well. Year 7 pupils on entering their 'murder scene' classroom, were, in an exciting way, introduced to the historical skills of selecting and interpreting evidence, which, along with other skills, are developed, practised and tested as pupils move through the school, thus ensuring they make progress.

109. GCSE results were just below average in 2003 but they improved in 2004, continuing an upward trend. All pupils attained A\* to G grades and 60 per cent attained A\* to C grades, with no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. All pupils have the chance to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in longer pieces of homework; higher attaining pupils produce some exceptional work. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' spoken and written responses show depth of understanding and reflect their increased ability to select, organise and use relevant information.

110. Teachers use different ways to interest and motivate their pupils. The dramatic use of a balloon to show the tensions in Europe before 1914 captured the attention of Year 9 pupils. It led to pupils analysing source materials, which tested their ability to select evidence and their understanding of cause and effect. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, using well chosen materials and receiving good support from teaching assistants, who work closely with the teachers. Teachers give the very highest attainers activities which often require independent research so that they can demonstrate their knowledge and skills at a high level. The head of department has introduced teaching and practising of examination techniques in Year 9, which is beginning to have a positive effect on the way pupils learn and tackle questions.

111. Teachers expect pupils to do well and this encouragement has a marked impact on their learning. High quality, lively and imaginative teaching, together with very good relationships, ensures that pupils of all abilities gain confidence, learn and achieve. On occasions pupils mark and comment on each other's answers or, as in Year 11, give a presentation to another group, thus building their confidence and deepening their understanding. Pupils settle quickly, take pride in their written work, co-operate sensibly, share ideas and answer questions confidently. Teachers mark and assess work regularly in a way which encourages pupils and helps them to improve. They set targets and provide support and guidance readily.

112. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear focus on the development of his subject and strives constantly for improvement. He has introduced a very focused and effective approach to the style of questions teachers ask, blended with assessment of specific skills in Years 7 to 9. Fieldwork, for example a visit by a Year 8 class to a local industrial museum, makes the subject come alive for pupils. The department runs smoothly and the teaching is well co-ordinated, although the head of department does not have time to monitor and observe others teaching. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been built on and the areas for improvement addressed. Standards are now above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11 and the wider use of ICT is in hand.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to learn.
- Good teaching enables pupils to learn effectively.
- Good leadership provides a clear way forward for raising standards.
- There are not enough extension activities for higher attaining pupils.

### Commentary

113. Teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 as significantly improved over those of 2003, which were below average. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are now average. Pupils' achievements are good in relation to their below average standards when they enter the school. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy design and technology. Over time, working with a range of materials, they make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding and develop their skills so they can use a variety of tools and equipment with confidence and competence. Higher attaining pupils complete tasks well with some independence. Lower attaining pupils do not always pay enough attention to detail and their research and design skills are below average. Pupils with special educational needs learn at the same rate as other pupils overall, especially when they receive additional support from learning support assistants. ICT skills are well developed.

114. GCSE results were below average in 2003, especially in electronics, but they improved significantly in 2004. Results for textiles, graphics and resistant materials were stronger than those in food studies and electronics; many pupils exceeded their predicted grades based on their prior attainment. Girls achieved more higher grades than boys in 2004. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils are working in line with, and many above, national standards, representing good achievement over time.

115. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop a good understanding of the design process and their making skills, especially in textiles and resistant materials, are good. Higher attaining pupils do good products work that shows detailed research and good drawing skills and techniques. Their presentation of coursework is of a very high standard and they use technical vocabulary accurately when talking about their work. Average and lower attaining pupils have limited design skills and weaker drawing techniques and organisational skills. Older pupils in particular have developed good skills at being able to work both independently and together. In their coursework pupils use ICT effectively to support their learning. Engineering pupils have a good understanding of design ergonomics because their teacher demonstrates key points very well through practical demonstrations.

116. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. In one Year 7 lesson, all the pupils were able to construct a circuit diagram because the teacher presented difficult concepts with extreme clarity. Particular strengths of teaching and learning are the insistence on high standards of behaviour and planning for pupils to work independently. The department has successfully reduced dependency on worksheets, so pupils now learn with the freedom and responsibility to work independently, with the teachers' expert guidance; Year 9 pupils generated their own designs for

aprons for pre-school children with little input from the teacher. Less well developed is the provision of opportunities for higher attaining pupils to be set tasks which fully extend their capabilities. The department has developed a good system to record assessment of pupils' work and teachers effectively identify ways to help pupils make further progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning as a result of creating a separate ICT facility within the department. The schemes of work for design and technology modules are good. The quality of individual lesson plans is more variable.

117. Leadership and management have improved. The head of department analyses strengths and weaknesses well and knows how to generate improvements. The range of the courses in Years 10 and 11 has been extended with the introduction of the double award GCSE course in engineering, taught in collaboration with a local training provider and a college of further education. The department is well served by its technician. Pupils now make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and there have been significant improvements in developing design features within food technology courses. The breadth and balance in the technology courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is now good. Teachers have improved the quality of pupils' learning as there is now less dependency on worksheets.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

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

Standards are well above average	Pupils achieve very well
Teaching is very good	Learning is very good
Leadership is excellent	Management is excellent
Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11, with very high GCSE results.
- Teaching is very good, lively and inspiring.
- Excellent leadership and management have generated a very high profile for this subject.
- Pupils are very well motivated to succeed.
- Reflection on spiritual and multicultural aspects of art does not permeate all year groups equally well.
- At the end of lessons, evaluation of what pupils have learned is not always rigorous.

### Commentary

118. Pupils enter the school with below average standards which improve considerably by the end of Year 9. Pupils achieve very well because the teaching is so effective. Strong features of the pupils' work in Year 9 include how well they manipulate a range of two- and three-dimensional materials. Teachers particularly emphasise the development of good drawing and colouring skills, which is helped by the subject having two lessons a week in Years 7 and 8. Increasingly, teachers base work on research and experimentation. They set homework that both supports learning and encourages individuality and imagination.

119. GCSE results in 2003 were very high and they were even better in 2004, with 86 per cent of pupils attaining A\*-C grades, almost one-third with A\*/A grades. As well as impressive skills working in two- and three-dimensional materials, pupils' drawing skills are very accomplished and many finished pieces are developed to high standards of competency and originality. Research is extensive, often prolific. The double GCSE course in applied vocational arts, new this year, is very well planned and taught. It will make a significant contribution to pupils' experience of WRL.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is occasionally outstanding. An exciting Year 8 lesson on Egyptian art included a fast game to check what pupils already knew followed by putting together jigsaw pieces of an Egyptian wall painting, which pupils then discussed in terms of religious symbolism. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and keep them well informed of their standard of work and ways in which they can make improvements. Work is challenging and interesting, and relationships in class are very good. Visits to galleries and work with artists in residence further enrich learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years. Pupils who are gifted and talented are challenged through the range of extra, ambitious projects offered throughout the year. Literacy is well developed and provision for ICT is good.

121. Pupils are very enthusiastic. They work hard and behave well because they enjoy their lessons and make progress. Occasionally the pace set is not demanding in the time available or, at the end of lessons, evaluation of what pupils have learned is not rigorous. Teachers have considered how art and design can strengthen pupils' appreciation and knowledge of spirituality but reflection on these aspects does not permeate all year groups equally well. Similarly, the department includes only a few lessons where pupils' awareness and understanding of life in a multi-cultural society is stressed.

122. Very high standards are set by a highly experienced and very enthusiastic specialist head of department, who was the driving force behind the school's successful Arts Specialist bid. She has realistic and exciting plans to support and develop this status, both within the school and in the community. Community links and involvement in local and national initiatives are already very strong. A fertile and stimulating work environment has been established in which high levels of achievement can flourish. The impressive displays of work in the department and public areas of the school make a very good contribution to the school's appearance.

## Drama

123. GCSE examination results in 2003 and 2004 were very low. In a Year 11 lesson observed standards were higher although still below average. However younger pupils are receiving a better grounding in drama techniques. Stimulating teaching in two lessons with Year 7 and Year 9 motivated pupils to be interested, work hard and co-operate well in groups. This resulted in improved improvisations on social and moral issues relevant to many teenagers. Staffing has changed since the previous year and, at present, there is no head of department.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Standards are average	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and occasionally inspirational teaching encourages pupils to behave sensibly and work hard.
- Music now has a high profile and many pupils choose it for GCSE.
- Many pupils, including boys, take part in musical activities and over one hundred pupils learn instruments.
- Assessment of pupils' standards is often over-generous; it is not yet used effectively as a means of raising standards further.

## Commentary

124. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly average for the small number of pupils who were entered; boys' attainment was higher than girls. There were no entries in 2004. Since the arrival of the new head of department there has been a renewed interest in music and large numbers of pupils, including some who have special educational needs, have chosen to follow the GCSE course. The recently successful bid for Arts Specialist status has also been a motivating factor behind the higher profile of music in the school.

125. Pupils enjoy music. Considering that pupils in Year 7 start with limited musical experiences, the standards they achieve at the end of Year 9 reflect good achievement. Years 10 and 11 pupils are also now making good progress. Standards are rising because of an expanded curriculum and the lively teaching that has caught pupils' imagination.

126. Because teaching is challenging, firm foundations are being laid in Years 7 to 9 that encourage pupils to learn well, join in lessons sensibly and enjoy themselves. Whether tackling singing, rhythm work, world music projects or improvisation, teachers deliver work in a stimulating way and pupils extend their knowledge and skills well. This was seen in a very good lesson on Samba in which Year 8 pupils used authentic instruments to master cross-rhythms, producing a pleasing class performance. An otherwise good Year 9 lesson on the Blues lost some of its momentum when a few pupils quickly mastered the task and did not move on to more demanding work. Although teachers refer to pupils' work using National Curriculum Levels and examination grades, they are often over-generous.

127. Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to a strong commitment from pupils to learn independently. Because pupils perform and compose well teachers put much effort into raising their depth of musical knowledge and understanding of examination techniques, which are weaker. These areas are brought to life by inspirational and at times amusing teaching that harnesses pupils' interest. A few pupils produce work of a high standard at home using their music stations. The department now has six computers and all pupils feel more confident using music software.

128. Extra-curricular activities and joint music projects with feeder schools are popular. The choir, brass band, samba band and steel pans combine for concerts, and the school's own version of the Pop Idol competition is a sell-out. Visiting artists run workshops to raise pupils' musical skills, and community events, such as the local carnival, are a showcase for the music department. All these activities offer a rich musical diet that adds value to the work done in lessons. The inspired leadership of the head of department ensures that music has a high profile within the school. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Physical education

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

Standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11	Pupils achieve well
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been very good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2004 a very high percentage of pupils attained GCSE A\* - C grades.
- Extra-curricular provision for sport and physical activity is very good.
- Very high standards are achieved in gymnastics in Years 7 to 9 and in health related fitness in Years 10 and 11.
- Too much emphasis is placed upon fitness testing in Years 7 to 9.

## Commentary

129. The percentage of pupils who chose to take GCSE physical education in 2004, and achieved an A\*-C grade, significantly exceeded the national average. Pupils in Year 11 taking the present GCSE in physical education have, and put into practice, a good understanding of health and fitness. They accurately describe the contribution made to fitness by different physical exercises, and how principles associated with frequency and intensity inform an effective training programme. Year 10 pupils play football with average levels of skill but their evaluation of their performance, and adoption of strategies to retain possession, are less well developed. Year 11 pupils participating in non-GCSE physical education devise effective fitness circuits and their use of ICT in this process helps their learning.

130. Standards in some activities are well above expectations. In Year 8 gymnastics, pupils display a very high quality of movement in terms of poise, control and creativity. Passing skills and movement of the ball in games such as football and netball are generally satisfactory but are compromised by shortage of physical education lessons for practice time in Year 8. Some Year 7 pupils do not have a clear understanding of the health related benefits of physical activity due to an over-emphasis on fitness testing.

131. The majority of pupils including those with special needs make good progress in physical education because teaching throughout the department is knowledgeable and supportive. Teachers explain tasks well and offer guidance and feedback of high quality when helping pupils improve their performance. They use effectively a range of teaching styles and visual resources, including digital imagery, to maximise learning. When pupils are asked to lead lesson warm-ups or work independently, for example when completing an orienteering course, they do so responsibly. Several pupils in Years 10 and 11 participate in the National Junior Sports Leader Award, providing them with opportunities for the development of both WRL and citizenship.

132. Excellent teaching was seen in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson. Pupils showed an advanced understanding of movement quality. Their performance of partner sequences, exploring the theme of counter-weight and balance demonstrated outstanding creativity and control; linking movements were fluent and synchronised. The teacher clearly defined what was to be achieved so pupils knew exactly what they were doing. Learning was reinforced by colourful wall charts displaying key words and gymnastic terminology. The teacher constantly challenged pupils to aspire to their very best effort, guiding them with high quality comments as they evaluated their performance. Using pupils to demonstrate key points was a most effective technique. The pupils worked most enthusiastically.

133. Leadership and management are effective in sustaining and developing good quality resources and accommodation for physical education and sport. Well constructed schemes of work have clear continuity and progression. Assessment methods and systems provide useful information about individual pupils but do not always help them to plan what they need to do in the future. A comprehensive range of policies encourages consistency and safe practice although more could be done within the department to monitor its own teaching and disseminate individual strengths. The school has been awarded Sportsmark endorsing the good quality provision it makes for physical education and sport. Girls are particularly well catered for.

134. Extra-curricular sport and physical activity is a strength because all the members of the department, together with contributions made by non-specialist colleagues in dance-related activities and games, give considerable time, energy and expertise to this aspect of school life. Extensive



opportunities are available at lunch times and after school for pupils of all abilities to enrich and extend their learning and enjoyment in physical activity. In terms of its quantity and quality, this programme makes a significant contribution towards the two-hour pupil entitlement to high quality physical activity, outlined in the government strategy for physical education and school sport.

135. The previous inspection reported favourably on the provision made for physical education but did refer to minor disruption occasionally impairing progress. There was little evidence of this in the work observed. The department consistently offers a good quality and inclusive physical education and sporting experience to all its pupils.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

136. GCSE standards were well below average in 2003, mainly for staffing reasons. In 2004 there was considerable improvement, with 55 per cent gaining A\*-C grades. Work seen during the inspection was of an average standard. Teaching is good, as is achievement, particularly in Year 10 where pupils make a confident start to a new subject. In Year 11 pupils' work is accurately marked, with good information given to help them improve their work. The subject, part of the ICT department, is well led and managed.

### **Health and Social Care**

137. Health and social care is offered as a double vocational GCSE. Encouragingly, the course has attracted pupils with different abilities and career aspirations, though in this first year all the participants are girls. With helpful timetabling, teaching occupies one morning per week, so pupils can work off-site, for example at local health centres, in care homes for the elderly or at leisure centres. There are plans to include external speakers working for local care options. Without a permanent and exclusive classroom it is hard to create permanent displays and keep all the resources together. Pupils have dedicated access to the ICT suite in order to pursue individual projects and use relevant health related websites. The course has got off to a good start.

### **Leisure and tourism**

138. Two lessons and Year 10 course work were sampled. The school prepared carefully for the introduction of this new double vocational GCSE course, which is well planned and resourced. The course is popular and attracts a wide range of pupils who feel that the work is interesting and challenging. They say that their teachers are particularly helpful. Pupils use computers to gather information effectively and to present their work in a variety of forms. Good teaching and well-organised placements, such as one in customer services at Manchester Airport, result in thoughtful and well-presented coursework.

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

139. A significant weakness, at leadership level, is that the head of history has been given responsibility for leading and managing religious education, PSHE and citizenship. With this demanding workload, he leads and manages the latter two subjects competently, but the overall situation is unsatisfactory. All three subjects have to be covered in just one lesson a week in all years, which is not possible. Nine non-specialist teachers deliver the weekly lessons; not all of them have chosen to do so.

## Personal, social and health education

Provision in PSHE is **satisfactory**.

140. As other subjects, mainly science, deliver key elements of the programme such as sex education and drugs, statutory requirements are met. During the inspection it was possible to see only two lessons, both in Year 8. Standards are average. Pupils have a good understanding about drug and alcohol abuse, for example knowing that drugs can alleviate pain and help eliminate disease but can also be misused. Teaching is variable but satisfactory overall. It is good where teachers are committed to the subject, plan lessons carefully and teach enthusiastically. It is unsatisfactory where they do not want to teach the topics, put little thought or effort into lesson planning and convey to the pupils a general lack of involvement in the subject.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course is taught by nine non-specialist teachers. No lessons could be observed.
- There is too little time for the subject to be studied properly.
- Pupils feel the flourishing school council is effective.
- In Years 10 and 11 there are some excellent work related experiences, which overlap with citizenship (see paragraphs 60 to 65).
- No reports were sent to parents covering attainment in citizenship in 2003.

141. Until September 2003 pupils had two lessons a week in religious education, PSHE and citizenship. Using well-prepared booklets they just about covered, mainly in Year 9, key citizenship topics such as how government works, the European Union or the media and the news. However, in discussion, Year 11 pupils could recall little about these issues. Year 7 pupils are keen to learn about world issues and Year 8 pupils were not sure whether they had covered citizenship topics through PSHE. Standards are below those expected at the end of Years 9 and 11 and pupils are not achieving well enough.

142. The pupils' planners have sheets which list the key citizenship topics but these have made little impact on pupils so far. Although no lessons could be seen, numerous discussions with pupils made it clear that very few of them can define citizenship, appreciate its importance to their lives or articulate and discuss what being a good citizen might mean. All departments have considered how their subjects contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship, but they rarely emphasise the links. The school has not fully investigated what topics pupils have studied in primary school, so some of them are studied at too superficial a level. The materials to support teachers delivering the work are limited and lack imagination. Assessment procedures do not meet statutory requirements.

143. The school council is certainly a positive example of democracy in action and all pupils feel it is effective and does bring about changes that they want. As the council evolves into year councils as well its impact will increase, which is good. The new vocational courses, with a strong work related element, do broaden pupils' understanding of business and employment. Through commendable fund raising and liaison with other schools, many pupils appreciate the significance of voluntary work and work in the community, particularly those involved in Duke of Edinburgh or Young Enterprise. The school is aware of the deficiencies in the citizenship programme and is already considering introducing whole days when significant issues can be examined in depth.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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