

INSPECTION REPORT

MATTHEW MOSS HIGH SCHOOL

Rochdale, Lancashire

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105839

Headteacher: Mr A Raymer

Lead inspector: Mr D Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st April 2005

Inspection number: 268417

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	879
School address:	Matthew Moss High School Matthew Moss Lane Marland Rochdale Lancashire
Postcode:	OL11 3LU
Telephone number:	01706 632910
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Ames
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Matthew Moss High School is an average sized comprehensive that is popular with parents; there are more students wishing to join the school than there are places available. Most students are White-British, with a sizeable group of Asian-Pakistani origin. However, there are small groups of students from each of a very large number of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion for whom English is not the first language is very high, although most are fluent in English and none is at the early stages of learning the language.

Students come from the local area, where socio-economic indicators are below average. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are now below average. However, standards on entry in previous years have varied between below and well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN) is average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Most students are on the SEN register because they have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, or moderate learning difficulties.

The school is a 'Leading Edge' school, which means it has been chosen as part of a national initiative to help other schools improve the quality of education they provide. The school is part of an Excellence in Cities initiative. The school plays a leading role in the

training of new teachers through its recognition as a 'Designated Recommending Body', which is similar to being a teacher training college, and by being on of the first Training Schools in the country.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
30973	G. Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school that provides a **good** quality of education and **good** value for money. The school is led and managed very well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership has instilled a sense of openness among staff and a high degree of mutual respect between staff and students.
- Standards are average by the end of Year 11, reflecting students' good achievement as a result of good teaching that has a very strong focus on learning.
- Students are underachieving in design and technology in Years 10 and 11 as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Students achieve very well in mathematics, history and religious education, although not all students study religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Pastoral care is very good.
- Provision for staff development is outstanding.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment outside the normal school day.

Progress since the last inspection has been **good**. Achievement is better and results have improved. All of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully, with the exception of providing religious education in Years 10 and 11 and a daily act of worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	D	C	B

*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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is **good** overall. Standards are average by Year 9 and Year 11, having joined the school with below average standards. Students achieve well in most of their subjects, but underachieve in design and technology in Years 10 and 11; achievement is very good in mathematics and history, and religious education for those students who study it. Students with special educational needs and girls from an Asian background achieve better than others.

Students' personal qualities, including their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is average, and punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **good overall** in all years. The best teaching is found in mathematics, history, ICT and religious education, but teaching is unsatisfactory in design and technology. Teachers have a very good understanding of how students learn, so they match the teaching method to students' needs very well.

The curriculum is good; it is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There is a very good range of extra clubs and activities. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. The quality of guidance and support for students is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The leadership of the school by the headteacher, governors and other staff is very good; management is good

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting.

Parents are very happy with the education their children receive and have no major concerns; they say their children like school. They are particularly pleased with the teaching, the amount of work students are expected to do, the progress that students make, the school's leadership, pastoral care and the range of extra activities. Students too are very happy; they feel that teachers respect them and treat them as young adults. They feel that teaching is good and they are expected to work hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in design and technology
- Ensure that all students are taught sufficient religious education in Years 10 and 11
- Ensure all teachers pay attention to the data with which they are provided when planning their lessons

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship
- Ensure that fume cupboards are tested with sufficient frequency.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students' achievement is good in all years. Parents are particularly pleased with the progress their children make.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in their GCSE examinations given their standards on joining the school.
- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are improving faster than the national average.
- Students achieve very well in history in all years, but underachieve in design and technology in Years 10 and 11.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are average, which represents good achievement given students' standards on joining the school, which were below the national average. Results from the national tests in 2004 were below average in English and science and average in mathematics. However, results have been improving over recent years in English at a faster rate than the national trend and this is reflected in the current standards, which are average. Results in science, on the other hand, started to decline after 2002. The results in science showed that students underachieved in 2004 and the school put into place several initiatives to ensure that the unsatisfactory performance was not repeated. Standards in science are now improving again; students' achievement is satisfactory, given their below average standards on joining the school. Results overall are improving at a faster rate than that seen nationally, despite the decline in science results.
2. Students achieve well in most of their other subjects, but they achieve very well in history and in religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE course, where teaching and learning are very good.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.0 (35.2)	33.3 (33.4)
Mathematics	34.8 (34.4)	36.5 (35.4)
Science	31.2 (31.8)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 178 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The students who are currently in Year 11 started their GCSE courses with below average standards; standards are now average and they are achieving well. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were average overall. Results have been improving, but at a slightly slower rate than that seen nationally. Students performed best in history, and worst in science. The results in science had most effect on the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades, as the science examination is worth two grades. Whilst

the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades was below average last year, the proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades was well above average, helped by the very good achievement of lower attainers and those with special educational needs.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	37 (37)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (89)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.4 (31.0)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 172 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Students achieve well in most of their subjects. Achievement in mathematics and history is very good, because this is where the best teaching occurs. Teaching is also very good in religious education, but students' achievement is not quite as good because they are not made to catch up work they have missed through absence. Similarly, teaching is very good in ICT in Years 10 and 11, but achievement is only good because these students did not receive enough lessons in the past and are still trying to overcome this deficit in their learning.
5. The school is very good at spotting weaknesses in students' achievement as they develop. Recent problems in modern foreign languages and geography, resulting from staffing issues, have been dealt with well so that students' achievement in these subjects is now satisfactory again. The same is true of science, although the switch to a modular course was not made soon enough to avoid students underachieving in the 2004 double science GCSE. The big weakness that remains is in design and technology, where students are underachieving because teaching is unsatisfactory, although the school's management team are working hard to correct the inadequacies.
6. In all years, there are few differences between the achievements of different groups of students. There are two groups that tend to achieve better than others: girls from an Asian background and students with special educational needs. Girls from an Asian background tend to have better attitudes to their work than do other girls, especially in Years 10 and 11. They are more likely, for example, to make up any work they have missed or to spend longer than others on revision. Students with special educational needs achieve very well; year after year the GCSE results for lower attainers show that they gain much better GCSE results than would usually be expected given their standards at the end of Year 9; this is a result of the very good support they receive, both in and out of lessons.
7. There are no students at the early stages of learning English, but the proportion for whom English is an additional language is very high. While almost all students are fluent in English, there are a few who need extra help in lessons. These students are generally well supported in the school and so are able to make progress at the same rate as other students. Though data on these students' prior attainment is available to teachers, there is inconsistency as to how well this is used to plan lessons and so provide relevant support for students.
8. Standards in the basic skills of mathematics, language and literacy are average, as is students' competence in ICT. This represents good progress in these skills, as standards on entry to the school are below average.

9. Overall standards of achievement have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

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

Students like school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is good and their attendance is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very successful in developing positive attitudes to learning and achievement in its students.
- The school has high expectations regarding students' conduct and has very good procedures for raising standards of behaviour.
- Relations between students and adults in the school are very good.
- Different ethnic groups do not mix voluntarily in lessons and around the school.

Commentary

10. Students have a high opinion of the school, and speak well of the quality of teaching and the range of extra-curricular activities that it provides. They have a positive approach to learning, and their good attitudes make a significant contribution to their academic achievement. In lessons students show interest in the subject and take part in activities with enthusiasm, although a minority of them get easily distracted and lose valuable learning time as a result. Some students also have a casual attitude to punctuality. They arrive late for morning registrations and dawdle when moving from one lesson to another. Attitudes are consistent across the school, with relatively little variation according to age or level of attainment. Students with special educational needs are keen to learn and work well. They have very good attitudes to school. Students are positive about learning outside lessons, as their eagerness to take part in clubs, school plays and extra classes shows. In general they are independent and well-motivated learners who are conscientious about completing homework tasks and coursework assignments. However, some absentees fail to catch up on the work that they missed while they were away, and a minority of boys lack the ability to organise themselves effectively, which limits their attainment.
11. The school is very successful in removing barriers to achievement and in stimulating a desire to learn in its students. Its 'Learning to Learn' programme develops their understanding of how they learn and helps teachers to employ the teaching methods that best suit their class. This was most apparent in history lessons during the inspection. Teachers focused on developing students' thinking powers, and the students responded by showing very good attitudes to learning. The school's extra-curricular provision also has a positive effect on motivation and learning. The 'Reach Your Goal' initiative, or RYG as it is known, gives many students the opportunity to work with well-known local figures on a wide range of enriching and ambitious activities, such as the recent Fashion Design Workshop at Touchstones Museum. Those who have taken part in the initiative have been very successful, and their achievements have raised not only their own aspirations, but also those of their peers. Overall, RYG has a very positive effect on attitudes to learning, particularly in the case of boys. Together with Learning to Learn, it boosts students' confidence in their ability to achieve well and creates a culture in which it is 'cool' to learn.

12. Relations between students and adults in the school are very good and enhance the quality of lessons. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in the classroom. Teachers share learning objectives with their classes, talk about learning styles and discuss what has been achieved in the lesson. As a result students feel that they have ownership of their learning. They work well collaboratively in lessons, but given the choice, divide into groups on ethnic lines. This is also the case outside lessons. Students are tolerant of one another but the different ethnic groups do not mix together much at breaks and lunchtimes. For example the boys' informal games of football are virtually segregated by ethnic grouping. However, abrasive relationships and confrontations between students are uncommon.
13. Behaviour is good overall. There have been instances of bullying and some racist incidents, but students say that they are not characteristic of life in the school. A small minority of them feel threatened and insecure. Sometimes their fears stem from the large groups of students who gather together at lunchtime. These groups are not actively aggressive, but some of their peers find their presence intimidating. Behaviour is good in lessons, and is often very good. Students always behave well when the quality of teaching is good, and usually remain quiet and orderly even when it is not. Disruption to learning is rare, thanks to the school's very good procedures for promoting high standards of conduct. Members of staff monitor behaviour closely and as a result identify students with problems an early stage. Individuals who give cause for concern receive very good help with modifying their behaviour and developing their self-control. The learning mentors play a very important role in this area. They work with students who have behavioural difficulties, and are very effective in keeping them at school and in learning. Exclusion is used as a sanction of last resort and for justifiable reasons. The rate of exclusion has risen since the previous inspection, but is in line with the national average.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	549	68	4
Mixed – White and Asian	9	1	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	247	12	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	35	1	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

14. The spiritual, social and cultural development of students is good. Their moral development is very good. The school encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour and as a consequence they are developing into mature, confident young adults. They display interest in the process of learning and are encouraged to reflect on their achievements and to believe in their own success. They are consulted on all areas that directly affect them, and feel they are working in partnership with the school. The RYG programme in particular encourages students to believe in themselves and to grow in confidence. Religious education encourages students in Years 7 to 9 to reflect on their own beliefs and values, but this is not

available to all students in the upper year groups. While opportunities for them to take personal responsibility are very good, there are few demands on them to take responsibility for others through leadership or advisory roles. Where there are such opportunities, for example as part of the 'happy to help team', or as junior sports leaders, they respond well to the challenges. One outstanding initiative is the way that students are used as assessors of the quality of teaching. Students adopt an exceptionally mature attitude to their role in this respect and teachers find the feedback most rewarding.

15. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and students respond well. Most students share and support the school's ideals. In many subjects they are encouraged to consider moral issues, and their response to charitable appeals demonstrates that they can empathise with those in distress. Students are expected to respect the rights of others to learn, and within the classroom they are co-operative and work well in their friendship groups. There are fewer opportunities for them to work in random groups and few choose to do so. The activity days, however, are good opportunities for students to mix, and to be introduced to new experiences.
16. The school offers good opportunities to visit France and Germany. The visit to Ypres provided a significant spiritual experience when the students visited the war cemetery. Students are encouraged to appreciate the culture of England through humanities and to recognise the contribution of different groups within society. The range of musical experiences, however, is more limited and although art rooms have very good celebrations of students' work, display about school is inspirational rather than a celebration of students' own work and cultures.
17. Attendance is satisfactory. It is now in line with the national average, and has improved since the previous inspection when it was below average. The rate of unauthorised absence has risen, but this reflects changes in procedures rather than students' actual performance. For example, the school is no longer prepared to authorise more than ten days' holiday leave. The attendance of a small number of students is poor. It impairs their progress and brings down the attendance rate for the whole school. The latter is also affected by the increasing number of families who take their children away for holidays in term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	1.6
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in all years. The quality of assessment of students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good understanding of how students learn, so they match the teaching method to students' needs very well.
- Teaching is very good in history and religious education in all years and in mathematics and ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in design and technology, so students underachieve.
- Teaching of students with special educational needs is very good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 116 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (3%)	32 (28%)	43 (37%)	31 (27%)	7 (6%)	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.

Commentary

18. The proportion of lessons seen which were taught to a very good or excellent standard was much higher than the national average and it is this difference that makes the overall provision good. The school's excellent strategies for staff development have had a very positive impact in the school, with many teachers now using techniques that help students learn at a better rate than would usually be expected.
19. The school has focused its attention very strongly on learning and this focus has been intensified through the Learning to Learn programme. The full impact of this approach is most often observed in mathematics, history, ICT and religious education, where teaching is best. Lessons in these subjects are characterised by fast-paced activities that change frequently. Many different activities are used, to ensure that there is something in the lesson for all students that is optimised to the way that they learn best. Many lessons involve an explanation of what is to be learnt and how it is to be learnt, often involving a discussion with the students about the importance of their learning. The range of activities is far greater than usually seen; students teaching part of the lesson, groups of 50 being made up by combining classes and then being taught by two teachers simultaneously, using signs and signals to communicate quickly how much has been understood, are all common at Matthew Moss. The emphasis is clearly upon using whatever works best. The result is lessons that students find interesting and highly enjoyable.
20. There are, however, two drawbacks to the approach mentioned above. Firstly, some teachers are not as flexible when using the activities as others and stick too rigidly to their plans. In some lessons, for example, one activity may be working exceptionally well with the students totally engrossed but the teacher will change the activity for the sake of changing it, or because that was what was planned initially. In such cases the impetus is lost, and an otherwise very good lesson ends up being simply satisfactory. The other problem arises when teachers do not use the Learning to Learn approach. In these cases, students quickly become bored and restless, and they do not learn enough. This is most often seen in design and technology, where teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
21. Teaching and learning for special educational needs students are very good. Staff know students very well. They break material down into manageable sections so that students can learn more easily. Relationships are very good. Teachers respect students' views and have high expectations of how students should behave and what

they can achieve. As a result, students want to learn and have very good attitudes to their studies. Individual needs are well catered for, and teaching assistants are generally well deployed and make a significant contribution. Staff understand well the next steps students need to take in their learning and they provide a wide range of activities to help students to learn.

22. Throughout the school, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They are quick to answer questions and to follow up an individual student's line of enquiry. As a result, students respect their teachers and are quick to seek help from them. In turn, teachers have a high degree of respect for the students themselves, a point made very strongly by the students. So teachers are genuinely interested in the students' views on the quality of lessons and how they can be improved.
23. Parents and students feel that the teaching is good and that students are made to work hard. This is certainly the case. Teachers expect their students to behave well in lessons and concentrate on their work. Students find the work demanding, but achievable. Standards of coursework are generally good, reflecting the effort that students put into their studies; this is particularly true of girls from an Asian background who put a great deal of time and effort into learning their work.
24. Assessment is good, overall. The school has recently developed a very good central system that collates high quality data on the attainment and achievement of students, and makes this readily available, electronically, to form tutors and subject teachers. The information is used to set target grades for students' future attainment and the great majority of students are very knowledgeable about whether they are 'on target'. The presentation of performance data is so clear that underachievement of individual students or small groups of students can be picked up at an early stage and action taken to remedy the problem. This helps to nurture a culture in which students strive to improve their performance in most of their subjects.
25. The effectiveness with which the information is used by departments is, however, inconsistent. In most subjects assessment practice is good; teachers' assessments are thorough and constructive, inform lesson planning and cater for the needs of students of differing levels of attainment. In these subjects students understand how they are doing and how they can improve. In citizenship, geography, modern languages and religious education, assessment, though less effective, is broadly satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology and music, mainly because assessments of the levels of students' work in Years 7 to 9 are inaccurate and students receive inadequate feedback from teachers' marking of their work. Consequently, in these subjects, students have little understanding of what they need to do to improve. The same is true for individual teachers; some will refer to the data when planning their lessons so they can focus on individual students, while others in the same department will not use it at all.
26. The assessment of students with special educational needs is good. Information obtained from primary schools and from later testing is used well to identify targets in students' individual educational plans. There are often too many targets on these plans and they do not always address the student's most immediate needs. The language used on the plans is not 'student friendly', so some students do not fully understand the targets. However, in practice, the support in lessons is so good that

students are helped to judge their own work and to evaluate what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There is a very good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has sufficient resources and accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is innovative in its approach to the curriculum.
- The range of extra activities is very good.
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not fully met in Years 10 and 11.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

27. The way that the school organises its curriculum is highly innovative. Central to the school's philosophy is that the curriculum should meet the needs of all students. Curriculum innovation is very good. For example, there is the RYG scheme which is an exciting initiative which aims to raise the achievement of students in Years 8 to 11. The scheme provides students with new opportunities and experiences outside the classroom. For example, one student does a football commentary each week for a local radio station.
28. In Years 7 to 9, all students follow the National Curriculum plus religious education. This is taught to all form groups across the ability range. Religious education is taught as part of the humanities curriculum and within personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on students taking GCSE courses. A small group of students follow a specific work-related curriculum at college that meets their needs well. These students gain success and attain vocational qualifications. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11, as insufficient is taught to meet the demands of the locally agreed syllabus, nor does it provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
29. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. Students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities; the numbers involved in activities of all types is in excess of that usually seen in schools. As well as clubs catering for students' interests, there are also many extra academic classes which play an important part in ensuring students achieve well. There is also a good range of sporting activities which occur out of normal school hours. Gifted and talented students are catered for well. Gifted students, for example, have the opportunity to study for statistics GCSE as well as mathematics in Years 10 and talented students in all years have the opportunity to excel in areas such as sport.
30. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Teachers take careful note of students' individual education plans when preparing lessons and generally provide appropriate work. Teaching assistants provide very good support in class and work very well with subject teachers. Withdrawal sessions are well focused on helping improve students' English and mathematical skills. Withdrawal is kept to a minimum and is both efficiently and flexibly organised so that disruption to mainstream

entitlement is minimised. Students say they benefit from the individual attention they receive and the computer programs provided.

31. There is a well-planned PSHE programme. Citizenship is taught through extended curriculum days and weeks that provide students with a flexible, balanced and exciting variety of learning experiences. This may involve outdoor pursuits such as orienteering and abseiling or debating local issues.
32. The curriculum is better than that noted in the previous inspection. Problems with the lack of curriculum time for music and drama have been overcome. Statutory requirements for design and technology and physical education are now met.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides students with very good care and guidance and makes satisfactory arrangements to ensure their health, safety and welfare. The support that students receive is very effective in promoting their academic attainment and personal progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent arrangements to involve students in the work of the school through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Students are confident that there is always someone they can turn to if they need help.
- The school monitors and supports students' academic progress and personal development very effectively.
- There is one significant matter of concern regarding health and safety practice in the science department, and students' concerns regarding the toilets are justified.

Commentary

33. Students feel that they have a genuine partnership with members of staff with regard to learning and the life of the school. They believe that teachers and senior managers value and act on their views, and inspectors strongly agree with this judgement. Arrangements for consulting students are excellent overall. There is a system of student councils that allows them to put forward their collective views on the running of the school. There are excellent procedures for taking into account the ideas of each and every student. They are particularly strong with regard to lessons and teaching. The school's Learning to Learn strategy encourages teachers to engage in discussions on styles of learning and teaching methods with their class. It is regular practice for teachers to ask students for their views on what has been achieved in lessons. Students are happy to express their opinions on teaching and learning because they know that members of staff will treat them with respect and act upon their opinions. They feel they are being treated as young adults and valued as individuals.
34. Students have very good relationships with members of staff, and this enhances the quality of day-to-day support and guidance. Students are willing to turn to adults in the school for advice because they trust them and have confidence in their ability to solve problems. They rightly feel that they will receive effective help and guidance from members of staff. The school provides a very good choice of sources of advice. Heads of year and form tutors are readily accessible to anyone who wants to discuss personal concerns or problems with work. Students say that they can talk to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Some of them say that they would go to the peer mentors or to the school's learning mentors for help. The latter make a major contribution to arrangements for care and guidance. They give particularly good support to vulnerable students who are in danger of underachieving or being excluded from school.

35. The school monitors students' academic progress and personal development very thoroughly. It has good systems for assessing attainment, and very good procedures for recording and tracking attendance and behaviour. Members of staff are therefore able to pick up problems at an early stage. There are very good arrangements to support individuals who are underperforming in any area. For example, students with behavioural problems may be referred to the learning mentors for help. The school also makes every effort to involve parents in support for their children. All students receive very good guidance on their learning. The school has a comprehensive system of target setting and progress reviews. Students and form tutors meet at termly review days to discuss attainment and to set targets for improvement. Students have positive views about target setting and academic guidance through marking and feedback in lessons. They say the system gives them a very good understanding of attainment levels and what they need to do to improve their work. They also say that the school supports their learning very effectively via homework clubs and extra classes. Students are very appreciative of the time that members of staff devote to these extra-curricular activities.
36. The staff in the special needs department make a very good contribution to students' well-being. Staff have very good relationships with students and a comprehensive understanding of students' achievements and development. Students receive consistent, apposite advice and guidance. Students' personal and educational well-being is a priority for special educational needs staff. Outside lessons, staff are available to give individual advice and support and this helps students to learn more quickly. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides a lunchtime club which allows students to develop their interpersonal skills in a supportive atmosphere. All special educational needs staff place a great emphasis on improving social skills. As a result, students think better of themselves and are more confident that they can achieve well. All students with special educational needs are very well aware of their preferred learning style and teachers use this information to the students' best advantage.
37. The quality of PSHE is good and gives effective support to students during their transition to secondary education and later when they make decisions on their future. Arrangements for the induction of students into Year 7 are very good and assist them to settle at the school. Careers education and guidance, including work experience, is good overall. The advice that Year 9 students get on GCSE options is appropriate to their needs and helps them to choose courses that match their aspirations. Year 11 students receive plenty of information on courses at local colleges and sixth forms. The school's provision of careers education and guidance benefits from the input of specialist advisers from the careers service, Connexions. Students who need individual help receive it in the form of one-to-one interviews with the careers advisers. The latter are also on hand to provide advice at relevant events, such as the Year 9 options evening.
38. Procedures for ensuring students' welfare are satisfactory overall. There is good provision for child protection, and arrangements for health and safety are sound overall. Departments are conscious of health and safety issues and their precautions are generally good. However, there is one matter of serious concern in science. The department's fume cupboards have not been tested regularly as required by law. The most recent test was carried out several years ago. At least one of the cupboards was in use during the inspection. Students are unhappy with one aspect of the school's provision for health, safety and welfare. They complain strongly about the condition of the toilets in the older parts of the school's accommodation. The inspection showed that their complaints about unpleasant smells and the lack of locks on doors are justified, despite improvements in recent weeks.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. It has good links with the community and excellent links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents express strong approval of most aspects of the school's work.
- There are very strong and positive links with the community in respect of 'Reach Your Goal'.
- The school's strong links with other providers of education enhance students' learning and progress.
- Annual written reports on progress are satisfactory but give parents only limited guidance on how to support their children's learning.
- There are limited opportunities for students to serve their local community.

Commentary

39. The school has a deservedly good reputation in the local area and is over-subscribed. It is rated highly by parents who are very satisfied with most aspects of its work. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a very high proportion of respondents said their child likes school and is making good progress. Similar numbers of them said that teaching is good and that members of staff expect students to work hard. On the other hand, nearly one in five parents felt that behaviour was not good. Inspectors agree with the judgement of the majority on these matters. They do not find grounds for major concerns about standards of behaviour but accept that there have been a few cases of bullying and racism, which would account for the negative views expressed by some parents.
40. Parents give sound support to the school and make a satisfactory contribution to students' learning. They are willing to co-operate with members of staff if there are any problems with their child's work, behaviour or attendance, although an increasing number of families take holiday leave during term time. The school is mindful of the need to encourage parents to support their children's learning. It provides them with good information on the curriculum, the code of conduct and school routines. It publishes an attractively presented and informative prospectus and sends out regular newsletters. It also maintains an informative website. This contains many useful examples and illustrations of school activities. There is an excellent section that celebrates the achievements of the students who are taking part in RYG. The school makes good provision for information evenings and consultations on students' progress, but the response to them is patchy. Many parents value the opportunity to come to review days and discuss their children's progress and targets with form tutors. Attendance at consultation evenings with subject teachers is generally satisfactory, but some briefing sessions on the curriculum have been poorly attended.
41. Written reporting on students' progress is satisfactory overall. The annual reports give precise information on attainment via actual and target grades or levels in each subject. They also state clearly whether or not the student is on target. Other aspects of the reports are of uneven quality, as is the case with teachers' comments on progress. These often give only broad indications of strengths and weaknesses in the subject, and often focus too much on the student's attitudes and behaviour. As a result, many subject reports give parents little guidance on how to support learning and help their children to raise attainment. The weakest reports are those on history, geography and religious education in Years 7 to 9. The humanities department provides parents with a single sheet covering all three subjects. These brief reports contain little formative comment and give only the most basic facts on students' progress.
42. The school has excellent partnerships with other providers of education in the area. It has strong links with local primary schools; there is good liaison over the transfer of students to secondary education. Curricular links are particularly strong in English and mathematics and help to ensure students' education in these subjects has a seamless progression from primary to secondary school. The school is a training school and works in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University over teacher training. It has developed very good links with other schools and colleges through its work in this area. For example, Matthew Moss runs the training for newly qualified teachers and middle managers for all secondary schools in

Rochdale. The school is also a participant in the Leading Edge initiative and a member of the Excellence in Cities cluster. Its staff and students benefit from the opportunities that these projects provide to share good practice and obtain extra resources.

43. The school has good links with the local community and makes effective use of them to promote students' learning and progress. The curriculum of PSHE is enhanced by the contributions of visiting speakers, such as police officers and prison officers. On the other hand, students get relatively few opportunities to serve the community. Year 10 go to local employers for work experience and junior sports leaders help with physical education in primary schools, but otherwise there is no structured provision for service to the community. Links with local employers are good overall. They are excellent in respect of RYG, which receives strong support from local and national business and from celebrities. Their input plays a major part in raising students' aspirations and self-esteem, and is vital to the success of the project.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher, governors and other staff is very good; management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's very good leadership ensures all concerned work well as a team with a great sense of openness.
- The opportunities for professional development are outstanding.
- Most subjects and aspects of the school's work are led and managed at least well, but there are weaknesses in religious education and design and technology.

Commentary

44. This is a school that is characterised by teamwork. It is a school where students and staff get on well together, respect each other and work with one another to ensure that students can achieve well. There is a great sharing of both tasks and responsibility. The headteacher and deputies have instilled a high level of confidence among staff, both teaching and non-teaching, so that all are ready and willing to try new ideas and take on new initiatives. There is a spirit of openness in the school; weaknesses are not brushed under the carpet, but are confronted in an open manner. This has led to the school being quick to tackle any deficiencies, with weaknesses in science, modern foreign languages and geography in recent years having been rectified.
45. The spirit of openness runs right through the school. It leaves governors exceptionally well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and enables them to play a strong part in drawing up the means by which deficiencies will be overcome. Significantly, little of their time is taken up with peripheral issues as they concentrate on the academic and pastoral well-being of the students. However, their role in managing the school is not quite as good, as they fail to ensure that sufficient religious education is taught to all students in Years 10 and 11, that the school provides a daily act of collective worship and that fume cupboards are inspected regularly.
46. In some ways the school is a victim of its own success. The school makes outstanding provision to induct staff new to the school and support all staff in improving their skills and professional competence. The programme is widely recognised for its high quality and it has a significant impact on the development of teaching styles in the school. Those employed to provide training are national specialists in their fields. Further training is exceptionally well linked to the needs of an individual teacher and all training is analysed and evaluated very thoroughly. However, this means that teachers are highly sought after by other schools; many leave for promotion which can cause difficulties in staffing individual subjects. Nevertheless,

the school has another strength that can alleviate this problem; it is a designated recommending body, which means it trains new teachers and so gets the first pick of the very best available each year. The scheme that the school operates also means that all teachers at the school have been trained as mentors and are able to provide support for student teachers; Matthew Moss is an excellent base for being trained as a teacher.

47. There are very good arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the school by senior managers. This is complemented by lesson observations within departments and leads to the raising of students' achievement and standards in subjects. It is particularly effective in promoting whole-school aims such as the focus on the Learning to Learn initiative. As well as observations by members of staff, students too have been trained as observers. Their feedback to teachers is valuable in three ways; it reinforces the respect between teachers and students, provides a different perspective on the quality of lessons and promotes students' independence and maturity.
48. Most subjects are led and managed at least well. Some, such as mathematics, ICT and physical education, have made great progress in recent years as a result of very good leadership, while others have been 'turned around' from weak to satisfactory subjects. Whilst the leadership of religious education is good, the management at a senior level has been unsatisfactory in failing to ensure all students in Years 10 and 11 are taught the subject. Leadership and management are both unsatisfactory in design and technology, which is leading to unsatisfactory teaching and underachievement in Years 10 and 11. Other aspects of the school's work are led and managed well; the heads of year are very effective.
49. The leadership and management of the special needs department are very good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision and is well informed; systems are sufficiently flexible to cope with initiatives or the unexpected. He leads a unified and hard-working team of teaching assistants who are committed to helping students learn better. All teaching assistants are clear about their roles and responsibilities and all have ready access to guidance, support and relevant training. Administration is very efficiently carried out and annual reviews carefully planned.
50. Most other aspects of management are good. The school has made good progress since it was last inspected because the way the school plans for the future is good. Plans are developed in different ways to use the most appropriate method for the manager concerned. Whilst this usually works well there can be problems for some individual teachers lower down the chain of command, who require more, or different, guidance than the plan provides. Other minor weaknesses relate to variation in approach. The way that teachers improve students' literacy skills, for example, varies significantly across the school. The school has comprehensive data on students' attainment and achievement, which has been translated into an exceptionally clear booklet for all staff, but while some teachers use this rigorously to plan every lesson, others make almost no use of it at all. The school has also fallen behind others in implementing new reforms planned by the government aimed at lightening the workload of teachers.
51. The school's finances are well managed. The school receives average funding, yet provides a good education while at the same time saving enough money to pay for major improvements like the new sports hall. Much of the large carry-over from previous financial years is set aside to pay for such building work. Overall the school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3554022	Balance from previous year	397584
Total expenditure	3483103	Balance carried forward to the next	468503
Expenditure per student	3905		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

Commentary

52. During the inspection no lessons directly related to WRL were observed. Consequently no judgements could be made in respect of teaching, learning, standards or achievement.
53. Overall the school's provision is good, meeting statutory requirements. Although the vocational courses are underdeveloped, the RYG scheme is used very effectively. Over one third of the students in Years 8 to 11 are involved in the RYG scheme, which greatly enhances their learning through experience of the world of work. All Year 10 students had just completed at the time of the inspection a two-week work experience programme. The recent placements showed that students value their placements. They talk confidently about how they enhance their knowledge through the world of work and this helps with their general learning. Work experience and the RYG programmes enable links to be forged with groups like Pizza Hut, local radio, Woolworth, Manchester United FC, Blackburn Rovers FC and the Trafford Centre. Other links and partnerships are constantly developing. Students and teachers realise the great potential for enriching teaching and learning through the world of work.
54. No vocational courses are taught in the school. Only three Year 10 students and three Year 11 students chose to follow building construction and motor vehicle maintenance courses at the local colleges. However, the RYG scheme works with a wide and expanding range of community partners from both local and national organisations. These partners include both companies and personalities from the worlds of sport, media, business and the arts. Careers guidance is thorough and an important element in the PSHE programme. As a result students understand the needs of employers and the changing world of industry and commerce. They learn how to prepare practice letters of application and curriculum vitae. Students receive help and support with the preparation of their curriculum vitae and interview techniques from members of Rotary and local business.
55. WRL is co-ordinated by the senior leadership team with the headteacher taking a leading role. The subject is well led and managed; however, opportunities are missed as no one person has a full overview of WRL. The school is building upon the successes of the work experience programme and RYG scheme. Very good use is made of RYG. The school sees WRL and RYG as tools to enliven teaching, to improve learning and achievement and to make learning relevant to students' needs. The RYG programme is built into the school's everyday work and not contrived.

However, many subjects could make better use of WRL as it does not yet enhance teaching and learning across all subjects.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11.
- Students have good attitudes and behave well and so contribute well to their own learning.
- Monitoring has not yet been successful in eliminating less effective practice and in spreading best practice.

Commentary

Examination results

56. In 2004, results at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, whilst GCSE results in both English and English literature were average.

Standards and achievement

57. Standards in Year 9 are now average, reflecting the rising trend in standards over recent years; achievement is good, as students joined the school with below average standards. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining students are mostly confident individuals and have good speaking and listening skills. Most middle attainers communicate clearly but for lower attaining students this is an area of relative weakness, as they express themselves briefly and have difficulty in explaining their ideas more fully when asked to do so. These differences between students of different attainment are also to be seen in their written work. Higher attainers can adapt what they write for different purposes but a significant proportion of other students do not possess this flexibility. Students have average reading skills. Most students have a sound understanding of what they read and higher attainers can explain why particular words are used in a given context. In general, students do not redraft their written work to improve its quality as much as might be expected.

58. Students in Year 11 started their GCSE course with below average standards; their standards are now average, so they have achieved well. Higher attainers are articulate and persuasive speakers. They show a good understanding of demanding literature and can fully and effectively communicate their understanding of philosophical and literary techniques. However, the work of lower attaining students

contains errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and their vocabulary is limited. Middle and lower attaining students understand the content of what they read but explaining their responses clearly and fully in writing is a weakness. Students redraft their work more than they do in earlier years, particularly when preparing their GCSE coursework.

Teaching and learning

59. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess very good subject knowledge and use this to formulate questions that provoke thought, debate and deeper understanding. Teachers not only know their subject well but also are aware of the requirements of the course and the criteria used in assessment. This, in turn, means that students are given a clear indication of what they must achieve in order to attain high standards. Most teachers have high expectations of students. They are expected to behave politely and to co-operate with each other and their teachers, and in the vast majority of cases this is just what they do. Another reason that explains why students are as co-operative as are is that they are treated with respect: their views are taken into account and they feel confident in approaching teachers, both inside and outside the classroom. A number of teachers use different strategies to advantage. This helps them to create variety in lessons, students know what is expected of them because they know how the lesson will progress and there are opportunities included for them to consolidate their learning. When students' work is marked accurately and thoroughly and targets are set for improvement, they know what they need to do if they are to improve and consequently are willing to work hard to raise their standards. However, when marking is unsatisfactory, progress is slow and students become demotivated. In general, students have good attitudes to their studies and so make a good contribution to their own learning.
60. When lessons are less effective, the work lacks variety, the pace is slow, the teacher talks for a large proportion of the lesson and opportunities are not created for students to be active; consequently students' interest in the work wanes and they become restless. In some instances, support assistants are not deployed to full advantage. Not all teachers use the data on students available to them to determine how they will support all students in the class.

Leadership and management

61. The head of department is an enthusiastic individual who understands the school well and does much to promote its ethos. She is a good role model and has made an important contribution to creating a spirit of goodwill and co-operation amongst her colleagues. Students appreciate the fact that the subject area is pleasant and that the teachers are available throughout most of the day and are willing to help them. However, monitoring has not yet been completely successful in eliminating less effective practice and spreading best practice.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Standards of literacy are average and most students possess a sufficient level of skills to allow them access to the National Curriculum. When students are not able to gain access independently, they receive a good quality of support that enables them to do so.
63. Departments are responsible for the teaching of literacy across the full range of subjects, with some training and guidance being provided by senior management. Current practice is inconsistent. In some subjects it is good, for example in history, where students are taught key words effectively and learn how to structure their written work. In general, however, the demands made upon students are not as consistent or systematic as could be achieved. Drama plays a major part in the development of student's language skills. Teaching observed during the inspection was very good, with a strong emphasis on speaking clearly, while using appropriate

vocabulary. Standards of discipline were high, and the demands made of students were very good.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection.	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement have been adversely affected by the long-term absence of a key member of staff; as a result of a settled pattern of staffing, standards are now rising.
- Higher attaining students achieve less well than others.
- A strong contributory factor in the rise in standards has been the good leadership shown by the head of department.
- Students behave well and have good attitudes to work.

Commentary

Examination results

64. 2004 GCSE results were above average in Urdu and well below average in French and German. Boys do less well than girls in examinations and the gap is wider than that found nationally.

Standards and achievement

65. After a period of decline, brought about by staffing difficulties, standards are now rising. Students join the school with below average standards and standards are now below average by Years 9 and 11, indicating satisfactory achievement. Inspection evidence indicates that writing is the weakest of the four aspects of the subject. This is particularly the case for higher attaining boys who achieve less well than other students as a result. These patterns are consistent across the various minority ethnic groups in the school. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students. Whilst standards are average in the main languages studied, standards are above average in Urdu and students achieve well. The teaching of Urdu has not suffered from the instability in staffing that has been the problem in the other languages.

Teaching and learning

66. Teachers' planning is good both in the longer term and for individual lessons. The school has placed a lot of emphasis on the ways in which students learn best and this is beginning to bring benefits in terms of rising standards. However, teachers do not always give enough attention to ensuring that work matches the range of attainment found in most classes. This affects the achievement of higher attaining students, particularly in their writing development. Teachers in the best teaching control their classes well and no time is wasted in controlling bad behaviour. Students have good attitudes to work and behave well in lessons. Working relationships between students and with their teachers are very good and most lessons are relaxed, happy and businesslike. In the weaker lessons, the teacher does not have strong enough strategies to manage students' behaviour or good enough teaching strategies to engage their interest in lessons. The use of the language being taught is also unsatisfactory in these lessons. As a result students become bored and learning is

unsatisfactory. There are good procedures for assessment. The use of the data provided for setting targets and for showing students how they can improve their work is not focused well enough to raise standards. Students' work is marked and corrected frequently, but the use of marking as a means to help students improve is limited. Teaching in Urdu is consistently good, displaying all the positive features of the best lessons across the department.

Leadership and management

67. The head of department has shown good leadership in the relatively short time he has been in post in identifying priorities for development and in setting about addressing them. He has forged the disparate group of individuals into a working team. Until his arrival, however, the department had been in decline; standards and achievement are still worse than at the time of the last inspection. The subject has made significant gains in the last year and standards are improving again, although monitoring of teaching has still not yet had sufficient impact to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching and learning. A number of trips abroad considerably enhance and enrich the curriculum and the subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics, which support students' achievement very well.
- The students benefit from good regular assessment and the resulting performance data is used very well to monitor their progress.
- The highest attaining students in Year 10 are very well provided for with GCSE statistics, resulting in well above average standards for those students.
- There is very good leadership and management of the department resulting in rapid improvement.

Commentary

Examination results

68. Results in the 2004 National Tests at the end of Year 9 were average and continued the rapid upward trend in these results in recent years. The GCSE results in 2004 were higher than those in 2003 and were average. Around 60 students also study for GCSE statistics in Year 10; this year's results were very high.

Standards and achievement

69. Standards in Year 9 are average and are slightly higher than the results attained in the recent 2004 national tests. However, although these test results are deemed to be below average, they are in fact very close to the national average. By the end of Year 9, students' numerical skills are average and students achieve well, having entered the school with below average standards. Higher attaining students can very effectively convert between fractions, decimals and percentages when solving everyday problems such as planning a bedroom. However, lower attainers' numerical skills are much weaker. Whilst they show an understanding of place value for numbers up to 1000, they lack confidence in working out basic fractions of quantities. In Year 11, overall standards are average. However, higher attaining students have well above average shape and space skills and are able to use trigonometry and Pythagoras'

Theorem to calculate lengths in three-dimensional problems. The lower attainers have well below average shape and space skills. Whilst they are clear as to the difference between two and three dimensional shapes, they are unable to name a sphere or cylinder from their descriptions. The students in Year 11 started the course with below average standards; they have achieved well to reach average standards in mathematics. However, in addition to their mathematics course, relatively large numbers study statistics and achieve very well indeed; this lifts the overall achievement to a very good level.

Teaching and learning

70. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. This, combined with their good rapport and the students' good attitudes to learning, results in the students achieving well in lessons. In Years 10 and 11 this effect is even more pronounced where very good teaching and learning result in very good achievement. Teachers plan their lessons very well, using both the three-part lesson structure and the school's Learning to Learn strategy. This they share with the students, making clear the learning and the different levels of achievement possible in that lesson. Consequently, the majority of students are clear as to what is expected of them and are very well challenged. Good starter activities are used to get students achieving in lessons, and learning is recapitulated very well, allowing students to understand what and how they have learned. Teachers make good use of computers to capture students' interest. For example, in one Year 9 lesson on probability, interactive programs were used very well to reinforce tree diagrams. Students' self-assessment of their learning is developing and helpful. Constructive marking takes place in the better lessons, but in most lessons the teachers' written comments are celebratory rather than informing the students how to improve. In the better lessons very good use is made of students working together and presenting their findings to the rest of the class. This raises the standards of learning very well. Homework is frequently provided and contributes well to improving the students' understanding and the raising of achievement.

Leadership and management

71. The head of department is a very good role model to staff and students, providing very good management and leadership, with a very clear vision for improvement. A very good team spirit exists amongst the hard-working teachers, who have high expectations of the students. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 provide an imaginative, themed programme based on real-life activities, which assists students' achievement well. Good monitoring of teaching takes place and helps in the raising of standards. However, the monitoring of students' books is not as well developed, leading to inconsistencies in marking and presentation. The students benefit from good regular assessment and the resulting performance data is used well to monitor their progress. Students review the outcomes of their assessment and are clear as to their current target grade or level. However, they are less clear on how to improve their performance. Assessment data are used well to track students' performance and set targets. The data is also used to inform planning and monitor needs within the department. Very effective consultations with students have taken place and have led to a very clear understanding of the students' learning needs and perceptions.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Standards of mathematics as a basic skill across the curriculum are average. The mathematics department has carried out an audit of provision in other subjects and steps are being taken to cross-link with other departments to support and raise the profile of numeracy. However, this has yet to have a full impact in all but a minority of subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some students did not do as well as they should have done in tests and GCSE examinations in 2004.
- The department has made many improvements over the last few months and, as a result, standards are rising.
- Teachers now use imaginative techniques to improve students' learning.
- In a few lessons teachers do not demand enough of students so that they lose interest and do not concentrate.

Commentary

Examination results

73. In the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average. Results in the 2004 GCSE science examinations were below average and students did not do as well in science as they did on average in their other subjects. Results in both Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations have fallen over the last two years.

Standards and achievement

74. Standards seen during the inspection show an improvement compared with those indicated by the 2004 test and examination results, although they remain below the national average. This improvement is particularly marked in Year 10 and is confirmed by the module test results gained by these students so far.

75. Most students have satisfactory practical and investigative skills and do better in GCSE coursework than they do in examinations. Students are generally successful in understanding the topics they are currently studying but, even for higher attainers, their recall of earlier topics is often weak. For example, some students in Year 9 did not remember how to use an ammeter in an electric circuit and some in Year 11 struggled with the equation for photosynthesis. Nevertheless, higher attainers do, occasionally, reach standards that are above average for their age, notably in Year 11 where some students showed good understanding of the reasons for displacement reactions in halogens.

76. The 2004 test and examination results were not as good as they should have been and some students underachieved. Lower attainers, following the single award course, generally did as well as might be expected but some higher attainers, particularly those who should have gained grade C, did not. The department has made many improvements since September, particularly in enabling students to learn more effectively, and students are now achieving satisfactorily in all year groups.

Teaching and learning

77. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They generally plan carefully to provide a range of activities to maintain students' interest and concentration. Teachers usually manage students well so that a good atmosphere for learning is established.
78. In lessons that are good or very good, teachers have particularly good relationships with students and expect a lot from them in terms of both effort and achievement. These lessons are characterised by students concentrating really well when the teacher is speaking, trying hard when working on their own or in pairs and always thinking about what they are doing. When teaching is, occasionally, unsatisfactory, the work provided is not sufficiently challenging. Many students then stop listening, and make little effort.
79. The department is developing various teaching strategies to improve students' learning and these techniques are being used effectively in most lessons. However, many of the initiatives have been introduced since September and there has not yet been enough time for all teachers to become confident in using them. Sometimes teachers concentrate too much on the techniques and not enough on actually responding to students' needs for further explanation and reinforcement as they become apparent.

Leadership and management

80. The department was very disappointed by the test and examination results in 2004 and shared the head of department's determination to raise standards. The result was a very clear analysis of the department's weaknesses and a well-planned course of action, concentrating on improving teaching and learning, assessment, use of data and monitoring and evaluation. These are valuable initiatives, already having an impact on standards, although several, notably the change to a modular GCSE course, should have been introduced earlier, when results first started to fall. Nevertheless, the whole department is now all working together in a most impressive manner in order to improve standards across the board.
81. The monitoring of, and support for, teaching are satisfactory. There is a good programme of lesson observations but there is not yet enough monitoring of students' exercise books to gain a clear picture of what, and how, students are learning across the teaching groups.
82. GCSE examination results have fallen from average at the time of the previous inspection to below average in 2004 and hence the department's progress has been unsatisfactory. However, standards have now started to improve again.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and helps to bring about good achievement.
- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection because of good leadership.
- Students' attitudes are very good and help bring about good achievement.
- Weak literacy skills of the lower attainers hamper the development of students' ICT skills.

Commentary

Examination results

83. In 2004, results were average in the short course GCSE.

Standards and achievement

84. Students arrive at the school with below average standards. By Year 9 standards are average and they have achieved well. By the end of Year 9, students have a sound grasp of word processing; higher attainers use more advanced features such as importing clipart or using music within their presentations. Students can control a set of model traffic lights; they use flow charts to help plan the sequence. Higher attaining students use a spreadsheet to project the costs of running a zoo activity. They use the 'goal-seeker' function with ease to help them work out how many visitors the zoo needs to break even. Middle attainers produce charts to show the sales of hi-fi equipment. Lower attainers struggle to use logical operators because they are unable to spell the technical terms correctly. Students' poor literacy skills hamper the development of their ICT skills because many are unable to describe their activities using the specialist vocabulary of the subject.
85. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well given their attainment on entry to the course. Students have a good knowledge of presentation techniques and use these well when producing work on the impact of ICT on society. Higher attainers can discuss at length the advantages and disadvantages of ICT; however, many middle and lower attaining students struggle to convey their ideas because of weak oral skills. Whilst students manage to attain average standards, their achievement is hindered by their limited experience of ICT when in Years 7 to 9 and this has reduced their achievement overall from the very good level that would be expected given the quality of teaching they receive.

Teaching and learning

86. Students benefit from teachers who have a very good knowledge of their subject. They use this well to guide Year 11 students on how to gain the best marks in their examinations. Teachers use a wide range of very effective strategies to aid students' learning. For example, in one Year 10 class, the teacher used communication 'bingo' to test what students had learned about digital devices. Students were enthused and thoroughly enjoyed the session. Teachers use praise very effectively to raise students' self-esteem; they also use team activities to build leadership qualities. Students' attitudes are very good; they are polite and take full advantage of the opportunities to work independently. Relationships are very good between staff and students; mutual trust is evident and teachers give freely of their time outside of normal school hours. When teaching is less effective, the end of the lesson is rushed and teachers do not capitalise on what students have or have not learned and do not take this into account when planning their next lesson.

Leadership and management

87. The recently appointed head of department has made a good start. She has a clear vision for improving the subject and for introducing new courses. However, whilst the head of department knows what needs to be improved, there is as yet no plan for bringing this about. Written reports to parents do not comment on what a student can or cannot do and therefore students do not always know how to improve their work in the long term. Technical support staff are very good and maintain the computer network very well. There has been good progress since the previous inspection; standards are higher in Years 10 and 11, achievement is good overall and teaching has improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. Students' skills in the use of ICT in other subjects are average. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is mostly good, although subjects such as geography, design and technology and art and design do not make enough use of ICT. Most subjects are well equipped and make good use of interactive whiteboards as an aid to improving students' learning. In business studies, very effective use is made of ICT to research topics. In English, students draft and redraft their work.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is leading to rising standards in Years 7 to 11.
- The very good guidance students receive results in them significantly improving their knowledge and understanding of topics.
- The assessment arrangements do not provide enough information about how well students are doing.

Commentary

Examination results

89. Results in the 2004 examination were below average and show a progressive decline in recent years. Boys achieved lower than they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

90. Students arrive at the school with below average standards. By the end of Year 9 students have achieved satisfactorily and improved their knowledge of places and about global topics. Many are insecure in knowledge and understanding of topics because their learning was disrupted in previous years by staffing problems. Map and graphical skills are average except for the lowest attainers who take insufficient care with accuracy and presentation. Students know about the contrasting development of countries and understand about 'fair trade', but answers are too generalised and lack explanation. Higher attaining students, on the other hand, achieve above average standards in project work on volcanoes and written work is well supported through illustrations. Not enough use is made of ICT however, to research and present information.

91. By the end of Year 11 students have extended the range and knowledge of topics such as the impact of flooding in Bangladesh. They understand the 'key' reasons but do not make enough use of examples to support their arguments. Weaknesses in expression and reasoning also reduce standards in written work. Students are now achieving better than last year because of the improved provision and guidance they receive, particularly in examination preparation. Fieldwork improves knowledge and understanding of topics so standards are rising. Work is well organised and supported through ICT.

Teaching and learning

92. In Years 7 to 9 lesson objectives are made clear and students benefit from high levels of guidance and support, which lead to them making good progress in lessons. Teachers place emphasis on training students to think about different ways of learning, which generates interest and engagement and results in improved learning. Lessons are well planned with opportunities for group work but occasionally learning is slow and not enough is achieved because the students are not active enough. Students with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are well supported but there is not always enough extra work for higher attainers. Work is marked regularly, but the use of National Curriculum levels to monitor progress is underdeveloped so students and teachers do not get a clear enough idea of how well students are doing. In Years 10 and 11 teachers are well qualified and explain points clearly so that learning is effective. Lessons are well managed and students enjoy

their studies. As a result learning is continuous and much is achieved. Lessons are well structured but, occasionally lesson summaries are not fully effective. Learning is improving and achievement is better because teachers focus more on developing students' question answering skills.

Leadership and management

93. The newly appointed subject leader has made good progress in improving provision in geography. Teaching is now good, but the improvements have not yet had enough time to improve achievement above a satisfactory level, because teachers are still trying to make up for deficiencies in the recent past. Students now benefit from being taught by energetic and specialist teachers. Morale is improving and student confidence is better. Detailed learning programmes have been developed and resources improved, but development plans are insufficiently detailed. Informal consultation meetings take place but are not sufficiently focused because there is no agreed agenda relating to the development and evaluation of the subject.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, innovative teaching results in students achieving very well.
- Briskly paced lessons are interesting and challenging and students behave very well and work hard in them.
- Students are very knowledgeable about their target grades and how to improve them.
- Teachers use good strategies for improving students' literacy but these do not yet include consistently planned and applied correction of spelling and grammatical errors.

Commentary

Examination results

94. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were average, despite these students being relatively low attainers when they started the course. Students performed better in history than in their other subjects and maintained the standard of results of recent years.

Standards and achievement

95. In Year 9, students reach average standards and, as their attainment in history is well below average when they enter the school, their achievement is very good. In both lessons and written work completed at home, students show that their skills have developed very well in using historical evidence to interpret events. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others because teachers provide lessons and differentiated materials that enable them to understand difficult concepts.

96. Around twice as many students than in most schools choose to continue studying history beyond the age of 14. In Years 10 and 11 students develop further their analytical and writing skills and continue to achieve very well, given their lower levels of attainment on starting the course. Students of varying levels of attainment, for

example, show good understanding of the impact on Germany of the Treaty of Versailles and how this eventually provided a groundswell of support for Hitler and sowed the seeds of World War 2.

Teaching and learning

97. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are very good. All students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect very high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons, and the development of thinking and learning skills, among students of all attainment levels, consistently features in those aims. In a lesson on World War 2 that combined two classes (around 50 students representing the full range of attainment) in a large teaching space, for example, carefully chosen groups of students of mixed attainment levels were constantly challenged to make deductions from a wide range of information sources. The outcome was that their writing reflected good observations and well-reasoned conclusions arising from animated discussions about whether the Nazis were the only perpetrators of atrocities on their enemies. There was a tangible sense of surprise at the evidence of horrific actions across the theatres of war that were not confined to only one side of the conflict. The assessment of the standard of students' written work is accurate and teachers provide informed feedback in such a way that students know clearly how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Teachers' marking, however, does not yet deal with weaknesses in spelling and grammar in a collectively planned and consistent way designed to ensure improvement over time.
98. In Years 10 and 11, students produce good quality coursework assignments and produce them by the deadlines because teachers emphasise the importance of this to the gaining of students' challenging target GCSE grades. Lessons continue to be very challenging and move at a brisk pace. In one lesson, for example, students impressively rose to the challenge of awarding levels and marks to sample examination answers, against the mark scheme provided by the examination board. In explaining their reasons students consolidated their understanding of the requirements of higher level answers and this was reflected in their writing when they tackled a past examination question under examination conditions. Teachers' assessments of written answers are thorough and informative, and this helps to explain why the value that the subject adds to the achievements of students is the highest in the school. Students' learning continues to be enriched by very good use of study visits to several sites of national historical significance, and to the battlefields of Northern Europe.

Leadership and management

99. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is an enthusiastic leader whose clear and intelligent vision for the further development of the subject, very good organisation, and willingness to embrace relevant innovation ensure the success of the subject. Searching analysis of results, and careful monitoring of teaching and students' books, help to ensure consistency of teaching standards. The quality of the subject's teaching and learning is recognised locally and nationally; teachers are used by a number of external organisations to advise and support other schools and teachers. Progress since the last inspection has been very good; teaching and learning are now consistently very good and assessment has improved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching is promoting very good achievement.
- Teachers are good role models and encourage students to respect the views of others.
- High expectations of behaviour ensure a good working atmosphere.
- Not all students in Years 10 and 11 receive enough religious education.
- Marking is superficial and gives little support for the development of literacy.

Commentary

Examination results

100. The first group of students to be entered for GCSE took the short course examination at the end of Year 10 in 2004. Results were average, although 25 per cent of students gained grade A. The group will sit the second part this summer, when they will achieve a full GCSE grade.

Standards and achievement

101. Standards in Year 9 are average, which represents very good achievement as students entered the school with very limited religious knowledge. Their oral responses are more original than their written work, which is limited by a lack of confidence in their literacy skills. This leads them to depend on the given text rather than their own analysis of it. Lower attaining students fail to complete written tasks at times, and this reduces the continuity of their learning. Standards are lifted in lessons by well-structured tasks that enable students to build on their own experiences to understand new concepts. In response to supplementary questioning by teachers, students develop their own responses to issues, and demonstrate understanding of new concepts. Students research well, and are able to make judgements about the value of individual role models. They generally take pride in their work; however, the recall of a significant number is weak.

102. Standards in the GCSE groups in Year 11 are average. Although progress in lessons is very good, overall achievement is reduced by absence and the missing or incomplete work that results. Students have a clear understanding of the teachings of the Islamic and Christian faiths regarding moral issues, such as euthanasia, and present the different views held by religious and secular groups in well-organised writing. They are able to make simple judgements, but there is little evidence of original thought in their written work. Their oral work in class demonstrates more originality, however, and in group work they demonstrate good collaborative and listening skills.

103. The progress of students with special educational needs is very good; tasks are designed to be accessible to all, and learning support assistants enable them to maintain concentration and focus. Progress is reduced where there is no additional support and work is left uncompleted.

Teaching and learning

104. Teachers have high expectations of effort and behaviour, and students respond well. Very good subject expertise enables teachers to provide concise and clear explanations. Lessons are well structured to build on prior learning, and the brisk pace and prompt start ensure time is used well. Teachers use methods designed to involve students actively in lessons and to encourage them to learn from each other. Teachers are good role models and treat students' responses with respect. As a result their confidence increases and they listen to each other. Students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt and to respect the cultures they study. Teachers provide good support for the key assessment tasks set, but day-to-day marking is superficial and gives little indication of the progress of students, or support for improvement in literacy.

Leadership and management

105. The management of the subject within the school is unsatisfactory as some students are not taught sufficient religious education to meet the demands of the locally agreed syllabus after Year 9. The management of the religious education that does take place is very good. GCSE has been successfully introduced and the take-up by students is increasing. The subject is well organised, and activities are designed to interest boys and girls. Within the school students benefit from good resources, but they have little first-hand experience of people and places from the faiths they study.
106. Since the last inspection, good leadership has ensured that great strides have been made; GCSE has been successfully introduced. The quality of teaching and learning is now very good and students' attitudes are good. However, the key issue of the absence of the statutory requirement for religious education in Years 10 and 11 identified in the last report has not been addressed fully.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many students underachieve because the teaching of design skills is weak.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because the monitoring of the work of the department lacks rigour.
- The teaching of resistant materials is too old fashioned and the subject has a poor image amongst the majority of students.
- There have been recent improvements to lesson planning and delivery that are leading to more active, engaging experiences for the students.

Commentary

Examination results

107. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were below average.

Standards and achievement

108. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average; this represents satisfactory achievement overall. Students use a variety of tools and equipment competently in all material areas. The standard of making, particularly in resistant materials, is much better than designing. The standard of written work is well below average; students' work is frequently scruffy and incomplete and there is very limited analysis and evaluation. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average overall. This represents unsatisfactory achievement since Year 9 because middle and high ability students are not doing as well as they could. Making skills are much better than designing; this is particularly the case in resistant materials, where high quality traditionally-made furniture products are the norm. However, in resistant materials, students' portfolios are minimal and their designing skills are very weak. Whilst low ability students achieve satisfactorily, the lack of designing skills results in middle and high ability students doing worse than they should. Students rarely take care over the presentation of their

coursework and whilst students occasionally use ICT in their work, in general it is making very little impact upon standards.

Teaching and learning

109. In Years 7 to 9 the standard of teaching varies considerably. Lessons are usually well paced and have clear learning objectives and the best lessons are well planned using activities that engage the learners; new ways of teaching are leading to more active and engaging lessons for the students. However, some of the teaching is unsatisfactory because teachers do not have the skills to control the students' behaviour. Students experience a good range of practical activities and make interesting products although too little effort is made to prepare work that closely matches the needs of the individual students, and as a result the more able students find the work too easy. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is unsatisfactory largely because of a lack of rigour in the teaching of designing which leads to underachievement of middle and higher ability students. When challenged and engaged by teachers, students' attitudes are positive, they are interested and take pride in their work; however, this is not always the case. In general, teachers' expectations of students' written and design work are too low. In some lessons students are defiant, answer back and deface their own and others' exercise books. Where students' work is carefully monitored and assessed, as in graphics, students benefit from clear guidance on how to improve; however, this good practice is not consistent across the department. Many students use ICT within their coursework but computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are not being used sufficiently.

Leadership and management

110. The main weakness in the way the department is led is the lack of direction for the subject as a whole. Food technology works largely independently from resistant materials and graphics and as a result there is a lack of coherent planning. Individual subjects such as food technology are well managed and have developed good practices; unfortunately these are not being shared. The monitoring of all aspects of the department's work has not been thorough enough, and there is a lack of strategic planning for improvement. The department has introduced many new initiatives that focus on teaching and learning; these are having a positive impact but not all of the teachers have embraced the changes or are able to implement them effectively because of weak classroom management skills.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributes directly to good achievement.
- Students' good attitudes to the subject contribute to their success.
- There is not enough provision in ICT to fully extend students' learning.

Commentary***Examination results***

111. In 2004 GCSE results were above the national average. Results have been at or above the national average over the past three years.

Standards and achievement

112. Standards by Year 9 are above average, which represents good achievement given students' average standards in art on joining the school. By Year 9 students have a good knowledge and understanding of composition and all show confidence in the use of line. They acquire a good range of imaginative techniques for achieving tone and depth in their drawings and paintings. They can blend colours well, particularly to achieve textured effects. Where done, work in ceramics is of a good standard, but it is not extensive.
113. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11; standards and results fluctuate between average and above, according to the attainment of the students choosing to study to GCSE level. By Year 11 students are able to research themes in good depth and develop their ideas imaginatively and in highly individual ways. They show a good understanding of the impact of shape and space. All work is brought to a fine finish. However, in a minority of cases students spend too long on the details of one area at the expense of flair and exploration of ideas. There is a limited amount of three-dimensional work; it is curtailed by the very cramped accommodation. In all years the study of the work of major artists is done in good depth so that students gain ideas for their own work. Although students make good use of ICT for research in homework, there is little use of ICT within lessons as there is inadequate provision within the subject area.

Teaching and learning

114. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise. They give very lively and clear demonstrations of a range of skills and techniques that inspire and inform their students and contribute to raising standards. These demonstrations are particularly effective in supporting students who have English as an additional language or who have special educational needs; often such students will achieve better than others as a result. Assessment is good. It is ongoing in all lessons and students are involved in self and peer assessment and thus learn how to improve. They know the criteria on which they will be judged. All students get good individual guidance and support within lessons.

Leadership and management

115. There is good vision for improving standards, as well as good monitoring, teamwork and mutual support. Art is a popular subject with approximately double the national average proportion of students choosing it for GCSE. There is very good extra-curricular provision that extends students' learning experiences.
116. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards, teaching and learning have all improved.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
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Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge and good planning, but the pace of learning is occasionally slow.
- Assessment is inaccurate and has resulted in over-generous marking of work, particularly in Year 9.
- Higher attainers use computers well.
- The quality of singing is generally poor and lacks accuracy and tone.

Commentary

Examination results

117. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average.

Standards and achievement

118. Students enter the school with less musical experience than normally found. Standards are improving as a result of more focused teaching and clearer schemes of work. The quality of singing is poor; students rarely listen to the pitch of songs and consequently sing out of tune, with little attention to accuracy. By Year 9, students' skills have improved but are still below average overall. Higher attainers create simple pieces and perform them reasonably well with attention to dynamics and tempo. Lower attainers identify basic musical elements in the music they hear but they cannot compose music well or perform it with confidence and accuracy. Several students struggle to maintain their own simple part during group work. Students' listening skills are generally weak and few understand the need to listen in silence to music in order to appraise what they hear.
119. By Year 11 students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their standards on entry to the course. Their performance and composing skills show an adequate understanding of the examination requirements but theory and appraising work are well below average. Higher attaining students use computers and music software well to enhance and refine their work. However, few of the students are instrumentalists and this restricts them from gaining the highest standards of performance. Lower attainers struggle to develop their pieces beyond simple tunes based on elementary chord sequences and unimaginative musical ideas, producing pieces that lack structure and musical shape. Students are unable to describe their pieces using the correct technical vocabulary. Standards are improving as students begin to enter the course in Year 10 with more musical experience gained in Years 7 to 9.

Teaching and learning

120. Teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge, well-planned lessons and effective demonstrations. In the best lessons teachers are enthusiastic and choose the topics carefully to capture and sustain the interest of the students. For example, a whole-class performing the rap piece 'locked up' and the whole of Year 9 performing and recording their own symphony. In the weaker lessons the pace of learning drops because of unexciting teaching and low expectations of what students can do. Teachers occasionally devote too much time to one task; consequently, students do not always learn as well as they should because they become bored and uninterested.

Leadership and management

121. There is an appropriate vision for improving the subject but it has yet to have full effect. The improving range and quality of extracurricular activities and instrumental lessons are well organised. Day-to-day management is underpinned by improving documentation, systems and procedures. Lesson topics are now imaginative and fully focused on practical music making. The subject is increasing in popularity because management has rightly focused on improving opportunities to make music. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but

are unsatisfactory in Year 9 so students' standards have been incorrectly assessed. Systems to ensure all teaching is satisfactory are not working well enough. Music is now being taught in Years 10 and 11 and the subject is growing in popularity; this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has led to a dramatic improvement in examination results.
- Good teaching produces challenging lessons that move at a brisk pace and lead to students achieving well.
- Development planning does not yet include the detail of how it will be implemented and monitored.

Commentary

Examination results

122. The 2004 GCSE results were average. There has been a dramatic improvement in examination results over the last two years.

Standards and achievement

123. Standards in Year 9 are below average, but this represents good achievement in relation to students' well below average levels of skill on entering the school. All students achieve well in athletics, and there is good achievement by boys in volleyball, and girls in rounders.

124. In Year 11, standards are average overall, representing good achievement. Boys achieve well in cricket. Standards in girls' basketball are below average, but this can be accounted for by the constraints of poor indoor accommodation on their attainment in previous years. GCSE students show a sound knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. In practical work, standards are above average, and students achieve very well, as seen in netball and football. Standards in extra-curricular sport are often high, reflected in the success of talented students in district and some national competitions.

Teaching and learning

125. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well-planned teaching motivates students, and provides good levels of intellectual and physical challenge. Students' attitudes are good, and often very good, well illustrated by high levels of participation, standards of dress and good behaviour in lessons. A strength of all teaching is the effective focus on how students learn, through providing appropriate opportunities for students of all abilities to experience success. The best learning occurs when teachers make strong demands of students to do better, as seen in a netball lesson. It is this rigorous emphasis on quality and improvement that distinguishes the very good teaching from the good. Students' independent learning skills are slow to develop; they are not given sufficient opportunities to take a share of responsibility for their own learning. Although good, the marking of GCSE coursework does not give students sufficient guidance on the progress they are making against targets set.

Leadership and management

126. Dynamic leadership supported by a strong team is turning the department around after a period of decline. Clear vision and direction for the subject, based initially on improving examination results, have already produced significant improvement. The department is

continuing to move forward, confidently, with the enthusiasm and support of students and the benefit of new indoor accommodation. Management difficulties identified in the previous inspection have been resolved, and several exciting school and community developments are taking place. Documentation of the department's work has improved, but there is more to be done. Development planning is good, but requires detailed documentation to show how it is to be implemented. The school is close to achieving the national strategy for 85 per cent of students to receive at least two hours a week of quality physical education. Leadership, the quality of teaching and examination results have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

It was not possible to gather sufficient evidence on the provision in business studies during the inspection, because only one lesson was taught during the week and students needed their work for revision purposes. A Year 10 short course GCSE lesson was sampled. In this very good lesson the teacher ensured that the work was interesting and appropriate in order to encourage and engage students of differing abilities. The teaching was stimulating, enthusiastic and constantly challenging, stemming from the teacher's expert subject knowledge. The lesson engendered excellent attitudes to both the subject and to learning in general.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Commentary

127. The school has a good PSHE curriculum. Heads of year have responsibility for planning programmes of study and schemes of works for their year group. They co-operate successfully to provide a cohesive programme that meets statutory requirements concerning coverage of careers education, and sex education, health and drugs abuse. There is adequate time for the delivery of the programme: one discrete lesson in the subject per week, plus special events and work experience in Year 10. The morning registration makes only a small contribution. A minority of tutors use it effectively to promote students' personal and social development.
128. Lessons are taught by form tutors, with the support of heads of year. The quality of teaching in lessons observed during the inspection was good overall. At its best it was dynamic and imaginative, with tasks that met the needs of all students in the class. Students' attainment was average and their achievement was good.
129. The programme makes a good contribution to students' welfare and personal development. It contributes to their understanding of citizenship by raising their awareness of rights and responsibilities and helps them to make informed choices about life styles.
130. There is good provision for careers education. There is very close co-operation with the careers service, and this enhances the quality of the information and guidance that students receive. There is a sound programme of work experience placements for students in Year 10 who gain a good insight into the world of work from it.

Citizenship

Commentary

131. The citizenship course is mostly taught in the autumn term and on special days when the timetable is suspended. It was not possible to see any of these lessons during the inspection, and only one lesson in the PSHE programme focused on citizenship. It was therefore not possible to reach judgements on standards, achievement and teaching.
132. Students do not follow an examination course in citizenship. The scrutiny of students' files could not truly reflect the debate, small group skills and oral interaction needed for accurate judgements to be made about standards and achievement.
133. The subject is well led and managed. Schemes of work ensure consistency in planning by form tutors. The PSHE programme is well planned by heads of year to include modules of citizenship. Form tutors also receive good support and training from their head of year. On five occasions each year topics such as human rights, crime prevention and challenging racism are covered. This involves staff and outside agencies extending and enriching the citizenship programme for students. A strong citizenship influence is the RYG scheme. This scheme involves a large cohort of students from Years 8 to 11 and it motivates students to achieve all their school targets. Success allows them to take part in a very wide range of opportunities outside of school through activities with Manchester United FC, Blackburn Rovers FC, Radio Revolution and the Urban Arts. These experiences raise students' aspirations and self-esteem. Students work with positive role models, many of whom have a high local and national profile. The experiences engage them fully with the community. The school council is relatively new and provides opportunities for all students to take part in the democratic process.
134. Good progress has been made with the introduction of citizenship. However, no recent analysis has been made of citizenship to see the contributions being made across subjects; only a few subjects like mathematics, geography, ICT and religious education contribute well to citizenship. These contributions are not made explicit to students. The assessment and reporting systems, as yet, do not allow students and parents to see the progress made over all aspects.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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