

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SHEVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL**

Shevington

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106529

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Mackenzie

Lead inspector: Mr B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> October – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 268453

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).

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: 797

School address: Shevington Lane  
Shevington  
Wigan, Lancashire  
Postcode: WN6 8AB

Telephone number: 01257 400990  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of Mr D Campbell  
governors:

Date of previous 18/01/1999  
inspection:

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school with 797 students on roll. There are 394 boys and 403 girls. The school is nearly the same size as at the time of the previous inspection. Students are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. On entry to Year 7, students' standards are broadly average. There are a very small number of students whose first language is believed not to be English, but their English is very well developed and they do not need additional support. Around 10 per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is broadly average. The proportion of students with special needs, including those with statements, is above average. The school provides for a wide range of needs including moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Last year, 12 students entered the school other than in Year 7 and 13 left.

The school has Technology College status and has the special category of a Leading Edge school. It has been granted the Investors in People Award and a Healthy Schools Award. The school is involved in local community initiatives and teaches The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. It also is involved in Project Trident.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Lead inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
30690	G. Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
4926	T. Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics.
15079	A. Boys	Team inspector	Science.
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs, history, work-related learning (WRL).
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design.
27803	J. Clark	Team inspector	Religious education.
11508	C. Griffin	Team inspector	English, drama.
22046	J. Jolliffe	Team inspector	French.
20192	T. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education.
10392	D. Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Geography, citizenship.
31701	G. Rudland	Team inspector	Music, English as an additional language, (EAL).
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology, manufacturing.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** The school is led well. This is an inclusive school where the teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. The management of the school is good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body provide a clear direction to the school's development.
- The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is good and standards in Year 11 are well above average in ICT, art and design, drama, manufacturing and graphic products.
- Technology College status has been used very effectively to develop the skilful use of ICT for teaching and learning and for administration.
- The overall provision is poor in physical education and citizenship.
- Information about students' performance, progress and personal development is collected efficiently and used very effectively to improve their achievement.
- The school's innovative curriculum enhances the learning and achievement of all students.
- Links with the local community and primary schools are used very effectively to help the social development of students and aid transition from Year 6 to Year 7.
- Attendance is well above average. Students benefit from very good pastoral care and like coming to school and feel very involved in the school's development.
- In religious education the school does not fully meet the requirement to teach the locally agreed syllabus to all students in Years 10 and 11 and citizenship does not assess, record and report in line with requirements.

The school's improvement since the previous inspection in January 1999 and the response to the key issues of that report have been good overall. This is an improving school where in recent years results have risen at a rate above the national trend in Year 9.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	B	C	B	B

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

**Achievement is good.** The 2003 GCSE results show that this group of students performed better than those in similar schools. When account is taken of the starting point of these students in Year 7, their achievement was good and compared very favourably with students in similar schools. In work seen in the inspection, standards are above average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Students achieve well at both stages, when account is taken of their different standards at their starting points. Students with

special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groupings and gifted and talented students achieve as well as others. Students in Year 9 underachieve in citizenship. In Years 10 and 11, students do not achieve as well as they should in physical education and religious education.

**Students' personal qualities are good.** Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and staff are good. Behaviour is satisfactory, but exclusions are above average. Attendance is very good and punctuality is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good.** As a result, learning is good. Students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. The curriculum has some significant strengths, but is unsatisfactory overall because of some statutory omissions. Pastoral care in the school is very good. Students receive very good advice and guidance to choose subjects that best meet their needs and aspirations, based on very good tracking of their personal development. The school has very good links with parents, with other schools and colleges and with the local community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** Leadership by the new headteacher and other key staff is good, with a very good level of teamwork. Governors do a very good job in supporting and challenging senior staff, based on a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, overall governance is unsatisfactory because the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in a number of respects and there are some omissions in information to parents.

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

Parents are supportive of the school. Their children settle very well and like coming to school. They believe that teaching is good, expectations are high and as a result their children make good progress. A very small number of parents feel they are not well informed about how their children are getting on and are uncomfortable in approaching the school. They do not believe the school seeks their views and are unclear about how they can help their children at home. Students like the school. They feel they are taught well and expected to do their best. They believe expectations are high and a significant number like their teachers. A large proportion of students expressed concern about behaviour, bullying and racial abuse and unfair treatment by teachers, but most students are happy that incidents are sorted out well. In response to parents' concerns, inspectors did not find evidence of excessive amounts of bad behaviour or evidence of bullying or racial abuse.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- improve the overall provision in physical education and citizenship, which is poor;

and, to meet statutory requirements ensure that:

- all students in Years 10 and 11 receive their full entitlement in religious education;

- requirements to assess, record and report citizenship are met.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve well in both Years 9 and 11 and standards are above average in Year 11. Parents are pleased with the standards the school achieves, and students also express their satisfaction with the quality of education they receive.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in ICT across the school and students achieve very well.
- In Year 9 students achieve very well in drama and well in most other subjects.
- In Year 11, standards are well above average in art and design, drama, manufacturing and graphic products, where students achieve very well. They achieve well in most other subjects.
- In Year 11, in religious education and physical education, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Students underachieve in citizenship because provision is poor.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.4 (35.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.8 (36.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.3 (35.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 151 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

##### *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	56 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	37.5 (33.9)	34.7 (34.8)

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

1. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. Students achieved satisfactorily, and their rate of improvement was above the national trend over the past five years. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and were well above average in geography and media studies. The trend in results over the past five years was broadly in line with the trend nationally. This group of students did very well overall in relation to their starting points in Year 10.

2. In Year 9, standards are above average overall and students achieve well. Standards are above average in English and mathematics; they are average in science. This group of students entered Year 7 with standards in these subjects that were average. They achieve well in English and mathematics and satisfactorily in science. In ICT and drama, standards of work are well above average; in these two subjects, students achieve very well. Standards on entry to Year 7 were average in art and design and physical education. In other subjects, students started school with below average standards. In Year 9, students achieve well in design and technology, French, history, geography, art and design and religious education. In music and physical education, achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship.
3. In Year 11, students mainly attain above average standards. Taking account of their standards on starting Year 10, which were average overall, this reflects good achievement. Standards are well above average in ICT, art and design, drama, graphic products and manufacturing. They are above average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and history. In French and music, standards are average. They are below average in physical education, religious education and citizenship. Students achieve very well in ICT, art and design, geography and manufacturing, well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern languages, history, and music. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall in both GCSE and the core provision in physical education, and in religious education.
4. Overall, the level of students' achievement is closely linked to the good teaching they receive across Years 7 to 11. The very good attendance record that students have is also an important factor in their good achievement. Standards of literacy are above average by the end of Year 11. Students' good skill levels ensure that they have full access to the curriculum and that they are able to respond well to the demands made of them across the range of subjects. Standards of numeracy are above average in Years 7 to 11 and achievement is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. Standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11 in presenting, understanding and using data. Throughout the school the weaker element of numeracy is mental arithmetic and its use to solve simple problems. This occasionally impedes learning in mathematics lessons and in other subjects, for example in design and technology. Standards of ICT skills are well above average, and this helps students to learn well using modern methods throughout the school. The additional resources funded through Technology College status have been used very effectively to raise standards and improve teaching and learning.
5. The standards attained by girls are higher than those of boys but the difference is no more than that found nationally in most subjects. However, girls attain significantly higher standards than boys in English. The achievement of students with special needs is good and in line with their peers. Sixteen Year 11 students with special educational needs gained an average of eight GCSE passes in 2004. Nearly half of these passes were at grades A-C. Students who are gifted and talented achieve well, attaining standards that are higher than would normally be expected on the basis of their previous attainment. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition. Those students who come from minority ethnic groupings achieve well, in line with their peers. The school's arrangements for monitoring the progress of different groups of students are effective, based on very good use of data. All these different groups of students achieve well because teachers plan their work carefully to ensure that levels of challenge are appropriate to their particular needs. Many

students are given good additional challenges through extra-curricular work and opportunities for additional study outside the normal school day.

## Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to work are good. Behaviour is satisfactory, but exclusions are relatively high. Attendance is very good and well above national averages and unauthorised absence is in line with the average. Punctuality is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Overall, the school's ethos is good, ensuring a good level of commitment to work on the part of students and teachers.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good attitudes to learning enable them to achieve well.
- A significant amount of unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons disrupts the learning of others in the class. Exclusions are high for a school of this size.
- There are very good strategies for raising awareness of and dealing with bullying and harassment, which contribute to the good relationships that exist in the school.
- Students like coming to school and attendance is well above the national average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### Commentary

6. Students learn well as a result of their good attitudes. The vast majority are interested in their work and keen to achieve their best. Students are confident. In some lessons where they are not inspired or well motivated, attitudes are unsatisfactory. A minority of both boys and girls in all year groups, and especially in Year 8, do not listen to the teacher, call out inappropriately and distract others in the class from learning. Students work well on their own or with each other in pairs and groups. They are good at completing homework and researching information on the Internet. Students accept community responsibilities willingly, such as routine classroom duties, taking part in sports matches and charitable fund-raising activities. They know they are trusted to act sensibly.

### *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	775	60	4
White – any other White background	5	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	1	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	-	-

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

7. Behaviour is satisfactory overall in lessons and around the school but very variable. There are occasions when behaviour is exemplary. It is usually very good in design and technology, but in lessons where teachers fail to inspire and do not manage behaviour well, students do not listen and interrupt teachers inappropriately, thus disturbing learning and hampering the achievement of all present. Nearly half of the students stated that teachers do not treat them fairly and with respect, but this was not evident during inspection and most staff used the school's reward and discipline procedures well. Exclusions are higher than average for a school of this size but few students are excluded more than once. All the students excluded in 2003 were White British, reflecting the school's predominantly White British intake. As with the national pattern, more boys were excluded than girls. The majority of students who have had fixed-term exclusions from school are white boys. Exclusions are most often for persistent disruption, aggression towards other students or abuse. Behaviour in the corridors and at break times is often boisterous, but usually good-natured with much physical and harmless contact. Students are careless with their litter around the school and in the playground, but there is little vandalism or graffiti.
  
8. Relationships across the school are good and students work well together in mixed groups. Boys and girls and those of differing abilities are often deliberately seated together and this encourages productive working relationships. The small number of students from different ethnic groups are very well integrated and there are few incidents of racism. New students in Year 7 like the support they receive from senior students, who exercise their duties around the school very responsibly. There is a very high awareness of bullying and although a large proportion of students are concerned about harassment, the school has very good strategies for dealing with incidents and students and parents are pleased with the quick and effective action taken. Inspectors did not find evidence of excessive amounts of bad behaviour or evidence of bullying or racial abuse.
  
9. Provision for students' spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection; it is now good. The school has reviewed provision and teachers have received training and subject leaders have identified where students' spiritual education could be extended. Themes for assemblies are varied and appropriate and the views and values of people who worship in different ways are respected. Major world faiths are explored in religious education lessons. Provision for students' moral education is good. Teachers are good role models and make good efforts to treat students fairly, both in and out of the classroom, as they stress the value of respect for each other. The school helps students to understand right from wrong. Provision for students' social development is good. In many lessons, students are encouraged to work together harmoniously. In games, for example, they cooperate with each other for the good of the team and not necessarily just for individuals. In ICT, students often help each other willingly. In history, students compare their lives with those of the factory children and in art they appraise others work without prejudice. Most students in the school make good contributions to charity fundraising by donating money or creating boxes of gifts to send to the needy. Provision for students' cultural education is good. In addition to regular multi-cultural awareness weeks, many subjects provide good experiences for the students. They learn foreign languages and have opportunities to join in with school trips abroad. Students studying art often visit galleries and museums and students use the works of real artists and craftspeople from all over the world as inspiration for their own pieces. Other cultures are examined in English and in history students learn about ancient civilisations. Music features well in assemblies.

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	6.1
National data	7.2

School data	0.7
National data	1.1

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

10. Attendance is well above the national average and has a good impact on achievement. The improvement in attendance since the previous inspection reflects the wide range of strategies and rigorous efforts introduced since then. Parents support the school's continuing efforts to improve attendance. Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages. Punctuality is satisfactory. Registration procedures are good and the time is used well to enhance students' learning and personal development. Most lessons start promptly, but a significant number of students are late to school each morning and to some lessons. There are very good systems to monitor attendance and punctuality to both school and individual lessons; these enable the school to tackle problem areas and individuals effectively. There is good support from the Educational Welfare Service. The very good attendance, allied to students' positive attitudes, helps to promote the good ethos in the school where hard work and effort are valued.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education. The quality of teaching and use of assessment are good overall and pastoral care is very good. Learning is good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because there are statutory breaches. There are very good links with parents, and those with other schools and colleges and the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and leads to good learning throughout Years 7 to 11. The assessment of students' work is good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant element of very good teaching in the school, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and occasionally some that is excellent.
- Teachers structure their lessons well, making good use of the Key Stage 3 strategy to ensure that time and resources are used effectively.
- The contribution made by learning support teachers is very good.
- ICT is used very effectively to make lessons interesting and learning engaging.
- On occasions, teachers are not consistent in their use of the school's policy on managing unsatisfactory behaviour and learning is not good enough.
- There is no assessment of citizenship.
- There are inconsistencies in marking and in subject-specific short-term target-setting and their use to help students improve.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 126 lessons in Years 7 to 11*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (5%)	38 (30%)	47 (37%)	28 (22%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)	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

11. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in nearly all subjects. This consistency, along with some very good teaching, ensures that good learning takes place in most lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is also good and there is a higher proportion of very good teaching. Throughout Years 7 to 11 there is some teaching that is excellent and leads to learning of the highest order.
12. Teachers maintain a good level of expectation and demand, usually according with students' own expectations and those of their parents. The result is an orderly working atmosphere in classrooms where students want to learn and achievement is valued. Gifted and talented students are usually well catered for by teaching that stretches them appropriately. Where unsatisfactory teaching was observed, this was uncharacteristic of the teaching normally received by students. On most occasions it occurred where teachers did not follow the procedures laid out by the school for managing unsatisfactory behaviour.
13. Both teaching and learning benefit from the effective way teachers use the Key Stage 3 strategy. It has made a positive impact on teachers' planning. As a result, lessons are well focussed on what is to be learned and have a clear structure that students understand and come to expect. The technology status of the school has enabled teachers to develop their skills in the use of ICT, and the school is well resourced with computers as aids to learning. Learning is enhanced in many lessons by the very good use of ICT that engages students and encourages them to explore different ways of learning that they find exciting and rewarding.
14. Another feature that promotes the good learning that takes place is the way that students and teachers respect each other. Teachers are usually specialists in their subjects and have a good level of expertise about their subjects and the examination requirements in their areas. Students respond well to this and play their part by taking responsibility for their learning, for example in the way they respond to questioning and in their approach to completing homework.
15. Teachers have good relationships with their students and engender positive relationships between them. This enables teachers to maintain a firm, but friendly approach in their teaching. Typically, students work hard and the atmosphere in lessons is one where students can be trusted to work independently. The good library facility is a positive aid that is used effectively to encourage a greater independence in students' learning. Homework is used effectively to extend the work in the classroom.
16. Teaching of students with special educational needs by specialist staff is good and some is very good. The school makes great efforts to include all groups of students, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Measures to ensure equality of opportunity are good in most subjects and very good in English and modern languages. Withdrawal work is well planned with students following individual programmes matched well to their targets. Students with low self-esteem make good gains in confidence as well as in their literacy skills as a result of such intervention. Support staff are very effective in different roles. They are very active in lessons both in supporting particular individuals and in taking the initiative to support others when necessary. They work to detailed lesson plans because of good links with subject staff.

Reading clubs are well managed by support staff. Younger students have good opportunities to practise and develop their reading skills by reading to older students. Teaching by subject staff is good overall. Staff know students' needs well and adapt resources and methods as appropriate. In some lessons seen, the management of individual students with behavioural needs was not effective.

17. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. A recently appointed coordinator has a clear-sighted awareness of the need to use literacy-based activities more effectively in teaching to enhance learning. Good planning is in place to ensure this. Whole school initiatives such as awards for progress in literacy are innovative and effective features. There are good features in the teaching, and the support for the weakest readers is also good. In subjects other than English, there is some good practice, for example where teachers emphasise the use of key words in their subject, as in design and technology. There is a need for the school to establish a more consistent approach to the development of independent extended writing as a means of raising achievement further. The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics are not consistently identified in planning, but where required, skills are taught appropriately. However opportunities are lost in subjects such as science to challenge students with above average attainment to use and apply higher order mathematical skills in their experimental work. Most subjects use ICT as an integral part of their teaching as they have access to computers in many areas of the school. Most subjects use ICT well to enhance students' learning by developing in them the ability to communicate and research for information.
18. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment to help students learn are good. The quality of analysis and the accessibility of information about the progress of each student, both academically and socially, throughout their time in the school, are outstanding. Diagnostic testing is used well to plan provision for individuals and groups of students with special educational needs.
19. Assessment from testing is good within subjects. Students know their own examination targets and how well they are doing related to their targets. The one area where there is a weakness is in the assessment of citizenship. This has not yet been developed. Day-to-day assessment, although good overall, is inconsistent within departments. Marking, for example, is inconsistent in geography and history and not used sufficiently to help students improve. In some subjects, even where assessment is good, for example in design and technology, students are not given shorter-term, subject-specific targets to aim for and to help them improve. In ICT and French assessment is very good, in that it effectively involves the students themselves and gives them a real understanding of their own learning.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum has many strengths, but is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not fully met. Extra-curricular activities are good. Accommodation and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The range of courses in Years 10 and 11 is wide, highly innovative and enhances the students' achievements.
- There is a good range of enrichment opportunities.
- The library is a good resource and is used very well.
- The school does not fully meet the requirement to teach the locally agreed syllabus for religious education to all students in Years 10 and 11.
- Arrangements for citizenship are poor.
- Accommodation and resources are good.

### **Commentary**

20. At the previous inspection the school did not fully comply with the requirement to teach religious education during Years 10 and 11 to all students. This is still the case. Consequently the curriculum is not satisfactory overall. Other unsatisfactory areas of provision, which also have an adverse impact on standards, include the arrangements for the teaching and assessment of citizenship and the arrangements for physical education during Years 10 and 11. Most other shortcomings identified at the previous inspection, including the proportion of time allocated for art and design and history in Years 7 to 9, have been rectified.
21. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum provision is good. There is good breadth and balance. All students take ICT lessons and drama. ICT is also used well across all subjects. Curriculum coverage in all subjects is good.
22. Notwithstanding the statutory non-compliance already noted, the school provides a very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11. The school has responded in a highly innovative and imaginative way to the opportunities available to increase the range of courses in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, in Year 10, all but an extremely small number of students are taking applied vocational GCSE courses from a choice that includes ICT, manufacturing, leisure and tourism and art and design. Courses in ICT and manufacturing already exist in Year 11. In addition, all students take accredited courses in English (two subjects), mathematics, and either double award science or separate sciences. All students take design and technology courses. Other GCSE courses include a wide range of traditional academic subjects plus popular courses such as GCSE drama and a very popular and successful GCSE media studies course. For a small number of disaffected students there are further work-related opportunities in courses taken in local colleges of further education. For students not suited to a full load of GCSE subjects, a reduced GCSE timetable is available. These students receive additional support with their studies in the resulting free time. The curriculum is very well matched to the students' needs and this is confirmed by the well above average (and successful) examination entry rate.
23. Opportunities for enrichment and other support for learning are good. Students considered in need of additional support are very closely monitored and guided via a "Nurture" group. Subjects provide good support for examinations via additional clinics and through homework clubs. Students use the library/learning resource centre regularly at lunch times and after school to further support their learning. There is good provision for gifted and talented students. Year 10 students are taking GCSE media studies in their own time after school. A small number of media studies students take their GCSE examination in Year 10 and then take a GCE AS level media



course in Year 11. A small group of Year 8 and 9 students plus parents are taking a GCSE course in astronomy. Many students in Year 10 take a GCSE course in statistics in addition to mathematics. A good range of extra-curricular activities is developing in music. In drama students participate in local festivals and in whole school productions. Students follow a range of activities in design and technology and ICT on a "drop in" basis. The programme of personal and social education is satisfactory.

24. Provision for special needs is good. There is a wide range of support with sufficient specialist teaching and support staff, all of whom are appropriately qualified and experienced. The requirements of statements are fully met, including any requirement for specialist tuition. Provision overall has been well planned to match different needs and includes individual programmes for specific learning difficulties, small group work in literacy and numeracy to address weaknesses in those skills, and classroom support for individuals and groups. ICT is used well, with a rolling programme for Year 7 using appropriate software to support literacy and numeracy. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including reading club and breakfast club. A nurture group ("Diamonds") gives excellent support to younger students in the transition from primary school. Some older students receive additional support in place of one GCSE option. There are no students disapplied from the National Curriculum or national tests. Most students have full access to the National Curriculum although the provision for citizenship is poor for all students. Curricular programmes are effective in ensuring equality of opportunity. Attendance at activities that take place outside the school day is monitored to ensure that all groups of students are taking advantage of the opportunities on offer.
25. Overall, the match of teachers and their subject qualifications to the curriculum is good. The match of support staff to assist the delivery of the curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.
26. Resources to support learning are very good. The provision of ICT resources is excellent. Most teachers have computer facilities in their teaching rooms: these are making an increasing positive contribution to the students' learning. The library/learning resource centre is well resourced with books, ICT and other items for learning. It is used well and supported during lesson time, lunch times and after school. The good management effectively promotes its use and this helps students to have good access to the resources and to opportunities for independent research.
27. Accommodation is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. The buildings are well maintained. The school has benefited from a major capital project. The increased funding has allowed many departments to be refitted, and this has had a positive impact on students' attitudes and learning. The newly refurbished and extended library/learning resource centre is well situated in the centre of the school and the computer areas are easily accessible. There remain a few weaknesses in accommodation. The science laboratories are too small and the dining facilities are cramped. The accommodation for physical education is poor and the changing facilities are difficult to access, so lesson time is limited and has an adverse effect on standards.

## Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of students' welfare, health and safety. Staff provide very good pastoral support. The advice and guidance based on effective monitoring are very good and have a positive impact on achievement. The school takes very good account of students' views and involves them in its work and development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good health and safety procedures.
- Induction arrangements for new students are very good.
- Academic progress and personal development are very well tracked to provide students with good support and guidance, and improve achievement.
- Good advice is provided on post-14 and post-16 options.
- Registration time is used well by form tutors to promote learning and personal development.
- High quality support is given to individual students with special educational needs.

### Commentary

28. Procedures for dealing with students' welfare, health and safety are very good. First aid procedures are good and there is good support from the school nurse. Satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with child protection issues, but there has been no recent training for staff. Very good heed is paid to students' safety in lessons and on visits out of school. Risk assessments are completed routinely with the help of a specialist on the governing body. Internet service provision is safe and secure. The one-way system of flow on corridors is not enforced well enough. Supervision at break times is satisfactory and helped by the contribution of senior students. The canteen is able to offer a range of healthy foods but demand is greater for less healthy chips and pizza.
29. Pastoral procedures are very good and support the needs of individual students very well. Induction arrangements are very good because of the very good links with local primary schools. Students are already familiar with the school when they arrive and settle well with the help and guidance of senior students. Excellent extra support is given in the "Diamond" nurture group to students who are identified as being vulnerable before they start in the school. Most students can find an adult to turn to for help and advice if they have a problem. The school has very good systems to analyse and review the progress of different groups of students, such as students from different ethnic backgrounds, boys and girls, students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. This ensures that action can be taken to tackle any identified differences in achievement.

### Example of outstanding practice

**This exemplifies some excellent practice that works very effectively as a means of addressing the needs of young people who are likely to find the transition from primary to secondary school difficult. The group is called the "Diamonds" group.**

"Diamonds" is something special in the life of the school and, more particularly, for the "Diamonds" themselves. They feel special. Great care is taken over identifying students who may benefit from joining. They meet each week for some lessons together as well as for

lunch. In the words of one of last year's "Diamonds", "it helped me discover a new me". Its success is due to many factors including the strong support of parents and carers, the very active involvement of the local education authority and other agencies within the community, as well as to the school's own very strong commitment. The "Diamonds" were joined for their weekly lunch during the inspection by a variety of other people including older students, teaching and support staff, the headteacher, members of the local authority behaviour support team, a community police officer and the school nurse. Adults and students sat next to each other. The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming and one within which students, including some with low self-esteem and other significant needs, were relaxed and at ease. Part of a "Diamonds" lunch involves everyone present reporting on something good and something bad from the week. All students present had the confidence to say something. They shared news of significant events in their own lives, for example about family illness. Where appropriate those listening added comments of support.

30. There is a very good system to track students' personal development and academic progress and the pastoral team use this very well to support individual students in reaching their full potential. Students are well aware of their attainment and are involved in setting their own targets for improvement in each subject. Targets are also set for improved attendance or behaviour. Support for students with behavioural problems and for those at risk of exclusion is very good. The heads of key stages play an important role in monitoring students' development. Testing is very well used to identify students' special needs and measure progress so that appropriate support can be provided. However, students with special educational needs are not involved sufficiently in target setting and reviews of progress. Registration time is used well to promote learning and personal development. Pastoral care is very well supported by a team of outside agencies, including the behaviour support service and a counsellor.
31. A sound and comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) guides students through school choices and prepares them well for life after school. The careers programme is good and supported well by the Connexions service. Advice on the option choices for Year 10 is good. Students in Year 10 do two weeks of useful work experience. Good links with colleges successfully inform students of the range of post-16 options. Students' views are regularly sought and valued. Student consultation groups in each year group meet every half term to discuss issues related to school development, for example the assertive discipline policy and Year 10 options. Time is set aside for all students to have an input during form time. Senior students made an astute and valued contribution to the interview process for the new headteacher. The large majority of students feel the school is interested in their views.

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

The school has very good links with parents. There are very good links with other schools, colleges and with the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents like the school and support the very good attendance of their children.
- Very good information is provided to parents to help them support their children's learning at home.

- There are very good links with the local and wider community to widen students' experiences and enhance learning.
- Very good links with primary schools ease transition to secondary school, particularly for students with special educational needs.
- There are very good links with other schools to support the development of technology.

## Commentary

32. The school's very good links with parents enable parents to support their children's education well. Links with parents of students with special educational needs are very good. Parents are kept fully informed of the provision made. Parents consider this to be a good school, where teaching is good, expectations are high and their children make good progress. They are very pleased with the way their children settle in school. A very small number do not feel well informed about their child's progress and do not know how to help their child at home. They are not comfortable in approaching the school and feel the school does not seek their views or take account of their suggestions or complaints. These views were not upheld during the inspection.
33. The school values its links with parents. The prospectus describes the school as 'parent friendly'. The governing body's annual report to parents and prospectus are full of useful information. Recently introduced newsletters are informative. Students' planners are used very effectively to communicate with parents and are regularly checked by tutors or senior prefects. The use of homework is good in the way it is used to reinforce and extend the work in the classroom. The vast majority of parents support their children's learning well at home by providing computers and Internet access and ensuring that attendance is good. A very small number do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Termly screening sheets inform parents of students' progress towards their set targets and annual reports in Years 7 to 10 are very informative. In Year 11 the information given in annual reports is spread throughout the year, culminating in personal Records of Achievement last year or Progress Files this year. However, there is no report on PSHE in Years 10 and 11 and no report on citizenship. The school is quick to contact parents when there is a problem and likes to send letters of praise as well. Parental attendance at consultation meetings is high.
34. Parents are consulted on issues such as option choice in Year 10 and the school takes good account of their views. Parental attendance at governing body annual meetings is low but places as parent governors are hotly contested. There is no parents' association to support the work of the school or ease the communication between school and parents but the 200 Club is well supported and raises a good sum each year to enhance school resources such as lighting for the drama studio. The complaints procedure is published and all complaints are addressed correctly, but there is no central formalised log of parental complaints and concerns.
35. The school's leadership has worked hard and to very good effect to ensure that it has very good links with the local and wider community to enhance students' learning and personal development. A wide range of visits and visitors broaden students' knowledge and social development very effectively through, for example, visits to theatres, concerts and places of interest and residential trips to France and Italy. Very good use is made of outside agencies to support learning in PSHE, for example, and to help

raise students' confidence and self-esteem. A very good range of useful work experience placements is found locally for students in Year 10. Very good support and sponsorship was found from local business and industry for the school's technology status and they continue to support Industry Day. There are sound sporting links with community clubs, such as the Wigan Warriors. Members of the community make very good use of the school's facilities to promote lifelong learning. A family learning and adult education programme is held in the school. Students support local and national charities such as the Macmillan Nurses well. Very good links with the police promote good behaviour in school. A local shop runs the tuck shop in school and holds free raffles for students.

36. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges, which in turn are enhanced by its Technology College and Leading Edge status. Work on an innovation project with other secondary schools, primary schools and a special school has been very successful in easing transition between Year 6 and Year 7. There is excellent support for the development of technology in primary schools. Staff teach technology and French to Year 6 pupils and support the gifted and talented mathematics programme of some Year 5 pupils. Management arrangements for shared and linked provision are very good. The use of school facilities by primary schools helps younger pupils familiarise themselves with the school and very effective transfer mechanisms ensure that students settle well.
37. There is a satisfactory range of sporting fixtures with secondary schools. Technology College status helps the development of joint schemes of work in mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology as well as good classroom resources to enhance achievement in local secondary schools. The good links with colleges support transition to post-16 education and work-related learning well. The school makes a very good contribution to the training of teachers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is led well by the headteacher. The governors and senior managers give good support. The school is managed well. Governance is unsatisfactory because there are issues of non-compliance in the curriculum relating to provision in religious education and citizenship and some information missing for parents.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new headteacher and the team of senior staff provide strong leadership and a very clear vision for the school's development.
- The school's very good planning is clearly focused on raising achievement through improved teaching and learning.
- The school is managed effectively and ICT systems are used very efficiently to provide information to assist in management.
- The school sets itself highly ambitious targets based on careful analysis of national data and students' on-going performance.
- The additional resources that Technology College status brings are used well to improve teaching.

- The governing body makes a very good contribution to continued improvement of the school.
- Leadership is very successful at ensuring that all students are fully included and equally valued.
- There are statutory breaches in the curriculum, omissions in information to parents and unsatisfactory leadership and management in physical education and citizenship.

## Commentary

38. The headteacher, her strong team of senior managers and the governors share a clear vision for the school. Central to this vision is the raising of students' achievement through improved teaching and learning. Inclusion is high on the school's agenda and the school's efforts to ensure that all students are valued and given equal chances to succeed have played a key role in the process of raising achievement. The impact of the school's good leadership and management is seen in the rising standards and improved results at GCSE and in significantly improved attendance. To achieve its aims the school's leadership has successfully taken advantage of a number of initiatives and sources of funding. The continued Technology College status has brought improvements in resources as well as improving links with other local schools. In particular, the improved ICT and design and technology resources have led to improved standards. The status of being a Leading Edge school has helped the school to identify and spread the best practice that exists in the school, both within the school and further abroad. Very good work with primary schools has helped ease the process of integrating new students into the school. Above all, the school's continued focus on the improvement of teaching and learning, clearly mirrored in its good medium-term and strategic planning, is bearing fruit in the good progress students make by the time they leave the school.
39. The senior team and governors have a good level of awareness of the importance of curricular innovation. Students' good achievement testifies to the success of these initiatives, because students enjoy the breadth of opportunities offered in Years 10 and 11. Leaders provide very good role models for other staff and students, and parents and students are positive about the manner in which the school is led and managed. Teachers and students are consulted, listened to and their views respected. Students are happy and proud of their school. Parents share their satisfaction.
40. Senior managers also provide good leadership and whole-hearted support for the headteacher. They set a good example for both staff and students, and have a strong, approachable presence around the school. Close links between senior staff and middle managers are well established and encourage frequent dialogue and good communications. Heads of subject areas are held to account for their department's performance and are required to review their results to ensure that standards are constantly improved. Governors are fully involved in these processes. This rigorous approach, together with good training and support, has led to the development of good leadership in most of these middle managers, who have become more accountable and self-evaluating as a result. There are exceptions, however, and leadership and management are unsatisfactory in citizenship and physical education.
41. Governors take a very active role in the leadership of the school and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken that help to shape the vision and direction

of the school. Governors act very effectively as critical friends to the school, both challenging and supporting senior staff effectively. They have good quality information about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They draw upon this very well to put them in a good position to hold the school to account for the standards and quality produced. However, governance is unsatisfactory overall because there are some statutory breaches in the provision of the curriculum. Citizenship is not formally assessed and religious education provision does not have enough time to cover the locally agreed syllabus. Also there are omissions in the information given to parents regarding the reporting of citizenship.

42. The school is managed well. There are very good systems and strategies in place to guide its progress. Overall, the school has made a good response to tackling the key issues raised in the last report, other than in the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11. The effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards is monitored and evaluated very effectively. The school gathers data very efficiently and uses the information very well to analyse its performance and to compare with other like institutions to ensure that standards and the quality of its provision are as high as they should be. The information gained is also used very well to identify and tackle underachievement and to set ambitious targets for improvement. Assessment data collected from standardised tests, school and national examinations and students' personal and social records, together with a detailed analysis of national statistics, is used very effectively to set targets for students' performance in English, mathematics and science in Years 9 and 11. In addition, where national data is available, information is used innovatively and effectively to set target grades for all other subjects. However, there are a number of management issues that remain to be resolved. There is still some unsatisfactory teaching, usually where teachers do not apply agreed procedures for dealing with poor behaviour. Citizenship and physical education are not managed effectively. The number of exclusions is still too high.
43. The school has an equal opportunities policy and policies on dealing with racial discrimination and ensuring racial equality. The implementation of these policies is monitored to ensure that they are effective. Senior staff provide very good leadership in ensuring that teachers and students are aware of equality issues. This ensures good provision for equality of opportunity in most subjects, with very good provision in English and modern languages.
44. The whole school approach to special needs has many strong features. There has been, for example, a whole school commitment to making the "Diamonds" nurture group successful. The same example illustrates the school's strong commitment to a multi-agency approach to supporting students' needs, through close co-operation with the local authority and other support services in the community. The school uses funding well to purchase additional support services. The role of support staff has been widely developed and they work very effectively in a variety of roles. This in turn reinforces their links with teaching staff and enhances their impact on students' learning. Assessment is well managed. Improvement from the previous inspection has been good with higher levels of support now delivered and a wider range of provision made.
45. The school has taken a positive approach to performance management and procedures are very good. These are fully implemented and are having a positive

impact on the standards of teaching and learning. There are very good and effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Priority is given to the training needs associated with the school improvement plan, departmental plans and those identified as a result of performance management reviews. In addition all staff have an annual training needs analysis interview. The induction of staff new to the school is very good. All staff new to the school are invited to a programme of meetings on relevant whole-school topics. In addition, newly qualified teachers receive very good mentoring, support and guidance within departments and from senior managers. The school is also a very good provider of initial teacher training.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,902,845	Balance from previous year	75,925
Total expenditure	2,861,351	Balance carried forward to the next	117,420
Expenditure per pupil	3,590		

46. Financial planning and management are very good. The principles of best value are applied with great care and the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Planning procedures ensure that educational priorities are costed carefully. The school has been active and successful in attracting additional funding, for example through maintaining its Technology College status. At present, the school spends less than average on teachers' salaries, which is resulting in some larger than average classes.

**WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)**

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- WRL is led effectively, giving a clear direction for its further development.
- The range of applied GCSE courses now available has significantly strengthened the overall provision.
- The work experience programme offers a wide range of opportunities for all students, although links with vocational areas studied are not sufficiently well developed.
- The Connexions service makes a very effective contribution to provision overall.
- Good links have been developed with local business, although further development is needed to match the increase in the range and variety of courses now available.
- An audit of existing provision in curriculum areas is not yet complete and this limits planning.
- Current school links enhance WRL opportunities, although the identification of progression pathways from the school's new vocational courses are not clear enough.

**Commentary**

47. Provision meets statutory requirements. This judgement is based on discussions with the co-ordinator for WRL and with students. Lessons were seen in applied ICT,



manufacturing, applied art and leisure and tourism. In the two applied GCSE courses examined for the first time in 2004 (applied ICT and manufacturing), and as yet unvalidated, the proportion of A\*-C grades was above average in both cases. These results were similar to the former GNVQ course results in these subjects in 2003. In work seen standards are above average and achievement is good.

48. In a Year 11 applied ICT lesson, teaching and learning were very good. Students used case studies of two cinemas to gain a good understanding of contrasting business philosophies. In manufacturing, teaching and learning were very good in a Year 10 lesson and good in a Year 11 lesson. Year 10 students were able to evaluate existing food products and use the knowledge gained to help design new snack products for the fast food industry. Year 11 students learned about different stages in the production process, the relevance of ICT at different stages and the employment opportunities linked to each stage. Teaching and learning were good in a Year 10 applied art lesson. Teaching and learning were also good in a Year 10 leisure and tourism lesson, with students using a company's website to research information about its products and services.
49. Careers teaching is good and this is very effectively enhanced by the work of the Connexions service. The Connexions adviser spends two days in school each week. Year 11 students all have personal interviews and students in Years 9 and 10 receive tuition via the school's PSHE programme. Some students, for example those with special needs, receive individual support throughout Years 9 to 11. The very good careers library in school provides students with a valuable additional source of information. The quality of this information is enhanced by the fact that it is regularly updated.
50. There is a good programme of work experience opportunities for all students although links with vocational courses studied are less well developed. Students "apply" for positions in preparation for work experience and experience a "real" interview with, for example, the involvement of a local firm's personnel officer. Some students have good additional opportunities to experience courses at local colleges. The school has developed good links with local firms so that a small number of students with particular needs can experience one or two days of work experience each week.
51. The leadership of WRL is good. The innovative development of the curriculum has significantly enhanced WRL with almost all students now taking an applied GCSE course in Year 10. A further example of this innovative approach is the use of ICT to provide "virtual reality tours" of the workplace. Curriculum development has been enhanced further by links with the local education business partnership with, for example, students from different schools attending a manufacturing conference. Students benefit from events such as industry days when a year group spends a whole day looking at employment opportunities in different sectors. There are some strong business links although their development has not kept pace with the range of vocational courses now offered. Provision has been carefully planned, including consultation with students and parents. A thorough audit of WRL provision within the curriculum has started. This process has not kept pace with new course development and this limits future planning.

## **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**.

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

- GCSE results for English literature are well above average.
- The good teaching helps students to achieve well. Marking is very good.
- Subject leadership is good and its management very good.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to set targets and review how effective the subject is.
- In Years 7 to 9 there is not enough emphasis on extended writing, especially for average and below average attainers.
- The very challenging teaching of the higher sets needs to be extended to other groups via careful questioning and more opportunities for individual responses.

##### **Commentary**

52. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were broadly average. While these were consistent with the same students' results at the end of Year 6, evidence from other assessment data shows that some students, especially lower attainers, achieved well. Validated 2004 results are not yet available. At GCSE, results were broadly average for grades A\*-C in both English and English literature. However, the number of lower attaining students entered for both subjects is significantly higher than in most schools. This depresses the percentage at grades A\*-C. In contrast, results based on the average grade were above average in English and significantly above average in literature. In media studies, results were well above average. Results in both English subjects improved in 2004. Girls do better than boys in Year 9 and Year 11 examinations.
53. Standards are above average in the current Years 9 and 11. Achievement is good in relation to the students' earlier standards. In Year 9 grouping by ability is resulting in challenging teaching for higher attaining students. This helps them to secure standards that are above and in some cases well above average. Fewer than one in four students are working at below average standards. Other students are working at - or close to - the standards associated with the expected Level 5. Some of these have the potential to reach higher levels but require more challenging application of the skills of extended writing across a range of contexts. In particular they need to improve their use of standard English and their punctuation of complex syntax. Standards of reading, speaking and listening are above average overall. In Year 11 the course work of about six out of ten students is of the standard associated with a grade C or higher in English. This figure is higher in literature. Very few students are at the

very lowest grades in either subject. The work of the highest attainers is of a very high standard: powerfully and accurately expressed and cogently argued. The basis of the good achievement by students of all attainments is the considerable improvement they make in constructing well-organised and detailed essays about a range of literary and media texts. In both Years 9 and 11 girls tend to do better than boys; mainly because of better-written accuracy and more detailed responses by middle-attaining girls. Students with special educational needs achieve well. High expectations and very good heed paid to equality of opportunity help them make good progress.

54. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good command of their subject. Consequently students make good progress in the skills of writing and reading, especially when analysing a range of texts and supporting points of view through good use of evidence. Lesson planning is thorough. It is based upon clear learning outcomes. It ensures that students develop a secure knowledge and understanding of themes and how a writer uses language to convey them. Marking is strong. It gives clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers apply grade and level criteria accurately. Their comments make sure students are clear about strengths and weaknesses. Teaching reflects many of the methods encouraged by the Key Stage 3 Strategy, especially the use of demonstration so students understand how to improve. Most lessons include a good range of learning methods: pair work is used very effectively. Some lessons give too much time to starter tasks and also to other tasks that are too long for students with lower levels of concentration. Although questions tend to be focused and probing, opportunities for wider ranging and more open-ended discussions are missed. The challenging teaching of the higher attaining groups in Years 8, 9 and 10 is very good with some excellent features. However, within the broader ability middle sets, there is not always enough challenge. The students' attitudes are good overall but in some middle ability groups, behaviour is satisfactory rather than good.
55. Subject leadership is good. There is a good team identity: all members take responsibilities for the department's work. There is a clear sense of direction fixed on raising standards. The management of the department is very good: self-evaluation is strong. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are very good. The head of department makes very good use of performance data to set targets and evaluate the effectiveness of the department. She has taken effective action as a result of, for example, changing grouping arrangements. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection as evidenced by the improvement in GCSE literature results. English teachers also make a significant contribution to the success of GCSE media studies. Recruitment is between three to four times the national average and results are significantly above the average: typically three out of every four candidates gain grades A\*-C, some in Year 10.

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

56. Students typically enter the school with broadly average standards in literacy. Students in Years 10 and 11 entered with below average standards. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average. Students' overall reading skills are fluent and levels of comprehension secure. Speaking and listening are also good, though in some subjects - for example, science - students need to be more precise in their use of subject terminology. Students make good progress in writing skills, especially in Years 10 and 11 where they become more accomplished in organising the clarity of their extended writing. This improvement is particularly well supported in English.

57. The provision made by subjects other than English for the development of literacy is satisfactory overall. Good practice was observed in science; art and design; design and technology; geography; history; and French. It is satisfactory elsewhere. Where practice is better there tends to be a good expectation of the use of correct terminology: for example, this strand is continuously stressed in design and technology. Science teachers provide good guidance in the use of extended writing. However, expectations regarding writing appear to be less consistent. There are some weaknesses in written work in history and music and sloppiness in presentation in religious education. Students' work in English indicates they can write at a higher standard than this. There is a need for the school to establish a more consistent approach to the development of independent extended writing as a means of raising achievement further.
58. There are good features in the provision. The learning resource centre provides a good focus for independent research. The support for the weakest readers is also good. Whole school initiatives such as awards for progress in literacy are innovative and effective features. A recently appointed coordinator has a clear sighted awareness of the need to use literacy-based activities more effectively in teaching to enhance learning.

## **Modern foreign languages**

### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- ICT and other resources are used extremely effectively to motivate students and improve teaching and learning.
- Assessment is very well used to help teachers and students know where improvement is needed.
- Very clear leadership and management are moving the department rapidly in the right direction.
- Within the mixed ability groupings in Years 7-9, teaching does not always focus clearly enough on the needs of students of different levels of attainment.

### **Commentary**

59. The 2003 GCSE results were well below the national average. The 2004 results, as yet unvalidated, indicate that has been an improvement. Girls achieved higher results than boys, in line with the national trend, although the gap was greater in the school. These results followed a period of unsettled staffing, which has now been resolved, and the changeover from German to French.
60. Students' work seen during the inspection indicates that in Years 9 and 11 they are reaching broadly average standards. When account is taken of students' standards at their respective starting points in Year 7 and Year 10, their achievement is good. However, there is wide variation between students and between year groups. In Year 8, students are achieving particularly well because of the high challenge set by teachers and so most are already using the past tense. Higher attaining students are able to use it with great accuracy in simple but extended descriptions and letters and

lower attainers use it in simple sentence patterns. In Year 9, most students recognise the difference between the present and the past tense and answer oral questions confidently. Students in Year 10 are also achieving very well as a result of challenging work and their very good attitudes to learning. Higher attaining students are writing with a good degree of sophistication, for example when expressing opinion and preferences. In Year 11, a small number of gifted and talented students are responding well to the challenging tasks set and are producing work of high quality. Most students write and speak in more simple sentences although they are increasing well their range of vocabulary and expressions for speaking and writing.

61. Teaching is good overall, although sometimes the direct teaching is not matched closely enough to different levels of attainment in mixed ability groupings. Teachers provide very good opportunities for speaking and listening skills. Learning materials are very thoroughly prepared using a range of interesting methods, including the expert use of ICT to make language learning both real and interesting, as well as adding pace and challenge. Excellent lessons were very carefully crafted with attention paid to every aspect of learning, including very effective use of ICT where students used websites, selected for their suitability for either boys or girls, for research. Assessment is very thorough and marking explains extremely clearly how students can improve. In Years 7-9, some students, mainly boys, behave immaturely, limiting progress. However, most students behave well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, helping them to benefit from the good curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The very good accommodation and resources benefit learning.
62. Under relatively new leadership, the department is moving rapidly in the right direction. Very good management systems have been introduced and there is now the capacity for significant improvement. Overall, leadership and management are now very good. The impact has been seen in students' improved achievement, which in the recent past has been adversely affected by too many staff changes and consequent well below average results. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good, taking account of an unsettled period in the interim.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Standards in statistics in Year 10 are well above average.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
- Teachers work as a team and this has helped to raise standards in Year 9.
- Senior staff in the school who teach in the department set a very good example and compensate for the current lack of effective department leadership.
- Students with low attainment and special educational needs achieve very well.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching where unsatisfactory behaviour is not managed well enough and impedes the learning of others.

### **Commentary**

63. In 2003 results in the Year 9 tests were average when compared with all schools and those with a similar background. The ambitious targets based on attainment in earlier national tests were not quite achieved. The trend of improvement over five years up to and including 2003 was slightly higher than the national trend. Provisional test results for 2004, as yet unvalidated, are slightly lower than those in 2003; nevertheless results were close to targets based on prior attainment. In 2003 the proportion of students gaining A\* to C in their GCSE examination was well above average and the proportion of the students in the year group gaining A\* to G was above average. Provisional unvalidated results for 2004 suggest that the proportion of students gaining A\* to C has increased, while those gaining the higher grades of A\* to B has fallen. In 2003 a high proportion of more able students took GCSE statistics voluntarily in Year 10 as part of their mathematics course. Of these 82 per cent gained an A\* to C grade.
64. Students in Year 9 entered school with standards that were broadly average. In the current Year 9 standards are above average and achievement is good overall, and in all areas of mathematics except mental arithmetic. Students with all types of special educational need and low attainment achieve particularly well, especially in Years 8 and 10. Students in Year 11 entered school with standards that were just below average. In Year 11 standards are above average, but well above average in the statistics element of the course. Achievement is good; in statistics it is very good. In other aspects of mathematics the achievement of those with the highest attainment is satisfactory and very good for those with special educational needs. It is good overall for all other students although there are differences in provision across classes due to variations in teaching.
65. Teaching is good overall, leading to good learning, although there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. About a quarter of teaching is very good or excellent. The weakest element of teaching is planning for the differing needs of students within sets, particularly those with the highest attainment. Assessment is used satisfactorily. Where teaching is most effective, class routines are well established and teachers have secure subject knowledge and the expertise to transfer that knowledge to students. In these lessons there is sufficient challenge for all students in the class. Teachers set a good example in the way they present work, insist on the correct use of notation by the students to develop good work routines and provide a sound basis for further learning. In many lessons teachers convey to the students an enthusiasm for the subject. This keeps students interested and involved and leads to good attitudes to learning. Teachers usually explain subject-specific vocabulary although key words are not always identified in planning or displayed to ensure that students learn to spell them correctly. In the least effective lessons, class management is unsatisfactory, leading to wasted time and behaviour that restricts learning. There is also some weakness in subject expertise. ICT is used effectively by teachers and students to support learning. In one excellent lesson, for example, the opportunity given to students to research their own data for a statistics project stimulated disaffected students and those with low attainment to develop well their mathematical skills.
66. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. This masks an unsatisfactory situation in the department. The subject has experienced several changes in leadership in a short time and the current leadership is has a number of weaknesses. However, the contribution of two senior staff of the school, who both teach within the faculty, allied to the teamwork of an enthusiastic and cohesive group of teachers, has held the department together and ensured satisfactory leadership and management of the department as a whole. This has helped to raise standards in Year 9 and improve

provision generally. Documentation and good quality, useful teaching materials to support teachers are being developed. However policies are not always clear and securely embedded in practice and agreed changes not consistently implemented. Schemes of work are improving but do not yet give teachers sufficient help in planning for differing needs of students within sets, particularly those with high attainment. Standards are similar to those in the previous inspection and improvement is satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

67. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills in other subjects are not consistently identified in planning, but where required, skills are taught appropriately. However opportunities are lost in subjects such as science to challenge students with above average attainment to use and apply higher order mathematical skills in their experimental work. The coordination of numeracy across the school is in the early stages of development, and little has been done to raise awareness of teachers about how best to improve numeracy skills through different subjects. It has not been identified as a priority due to the above average standards in mathematics attained by students in the school.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Standards have improved steadily and by Year 11 they are above average and well above those in similar schools.
- Teaching is good overall and in Years 10 and 11; there are robust systems for assessment and target setting, ensuring that students achieve well by Year 11.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use varied methods to engage the students, although the students' lack of concentration reduces the quality of learning in some lessons.
- Computer equipment is used very well to enhance learning.
- The time allocated for the triple science course is inadequate.

#### **Commentary**

68. Standards in the 2003 national tests for Year 9 students were average and in line with those in similar schools. This continued a rising trend and reflected satisfactory achievement by this group of students. These results exceeded the school's target for science. The 2004 results were below those of 2003 and the statutory target was not met. This reflected a fall in results across the LEA. Boys achieved slightly better results than girls in 2003 but the results are similar on average over the last few years. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average overall and well above average compared with in similar schools. The double award science results were below average because the highest attaining pupils were not entered for this examination. Boys' and girls' results were similar in biology and chemistry but boys did better in physics and double science. A below average number of pupils achieved the highest grades (A\* and A) in all subjects. All the students entered for the 2004 examinations achieved a pass.

69. Students of all abilities achieve well by Year 11. They make steady progress in Years 7 to 9, with satisfactory achievement, but their progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11, where they reach above average standards. This represents good achievement compared to their standards on entry to the school. There are no significant differences in the achievements of students in different groups such as the gifted and talented and those with special needs. In Years 7 to 9, students' understanding of basic ideas in physics, chemistry and biology is average and they carry out experiments competently and safely. Work in Years 10 and 11 builds on this foundation, with students achieving well.
70. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. One lesson seen on the inspection was unsatisfactory because a significant number of pupils were not fully engaged in their work, reducing the quality of learning for others. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and use a good variety of methods to deliver the subject matter. Practical work features regularly and the students have good opportunities to use laptop computers to aid their learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make very good use of the computer equipment available in the department, which often results in very good learning and achievement. In most lessons time is used well and work is set that stretches the students appropriately. Good opportunities are given in lessons for students to develop their communication skills and this is partly responsible for the higher achievement of older students. For example, a Year 11 lesson on pollution was delivered at a brisk pace and students were set challenging tasks that encouraged them to discuss and think more deeply about science ideas. This resulted in very good learning and achievement for this group. Teachers assess the students' progress regularly and these assessments are used well to set targets for improvement. Homework is set and marked regularly although marking varies in style and does not always give enough constructive advice. Preparation for GCSE examinations is good and this has a positive effect on standards. Despite the best efforts of their teachers, the quality of learning is reduced in some lessons because some students do not concentrate well and lack motivation to learn.
71. The department is led well and management is good. Teaching is supported by good schemes of work and effective technicians. The science team work well together and clear development plans focus on improving standards and quality. Assessment and analysis of data are strengths of the department and this has a positive effect on standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place with good effect and good use is being made of national strategies to raise standards by broadening the range of teaching methods. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with standards continuing to rise. The quality of education has also been enhanced through major improvement of computer facilities.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Excellent leadership provides the subject with clear vision and direction.
- Technology College status is used very effectively to develop students' ICT skills and capability throughout the curriculum.



- There is an excellent range of ICT equipment available to enhance learning and this has helped in the excellent improvement in ICT since the previous inspection.

## Commentary

72. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and amongst the best in the school. The 2004 results, as yet unvalidated, show a similar pattern. Results have improved markedly over the past four years.
73. In Year 9 attainment is well above average. This represents very good achievement as students enter the school with average ICT standards. Teachers consistently encourage students to develop higher-level ICT capability. As a result most students evaluate their work very well, for example to refine and improve their design of logos. Most students have well above average ICT skills and are confident enough to experiment when faced by a new piece of software. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. Many use ICT skilfully and are able to explain why a piece of software is suitable for a specific task. Teachers emphasise the accurate use of English, so students draft and redraft their work to make it more fit for purpose. Teachers encourage students to seek their own solutions by using ICT and, as a result, they use the Internet well for research. Higher attaining students develop accurate and concise questionnaires because of the well-structured discussion led by their teachers. In Year 11, standards are also well above average and students achieve very well. Students' evaluative and presentational skills develop very well. For example, students write in critical detail of the various ways in which ICT can be used to enhance community life.
74. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and know their subject very well. As a result students are motivated and want to learn. These very positive attitudes help students to make very good progress. Tasks are challenging and lessons move on at a very good pace so that all students are constantly made to think. Lessons are very well planned, often in specific short sections that maintain students' interest. Teachers and students use interactive whiteboards very well for demonstrations and discussion. Teachers are constantly on the move, checking and supporting students to very good effect upon learning. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because of the good support from teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers use appropriate written materials with these students to successfully help them understand the tasks. Good extension work is also provided for higher attaining students. The marking of students' work is very good and gives clear pointers for improvement. Teachers monitor each student carefully and it is this emphasis on the individual that enables students to make very good progress. Homework is used well as an integral part of teaching; therefore lessons make very good use of the time available. Teachers insist on good behaviour so learning proceeds without interruption. Many students use the excellent resources independently outside lesson time to further develop their ICT skills.
75. The leadership of the department is excellent. There is a very clear sense of direction with the main focus being on improving standards, a vision that is shared by all members of the ICT team. The department is very well managed. Assessment data is used very effectively to analyse performance. The excellent range of ICT equipment is very well monitored and maintained by a skilled technical team. However sharing of very good practice is not systematically structured to enable the non-specialist teachers to improve their ICT teaching skills through regular classroom observations. The contribution that ICT can make to students' understanding of citizenship is not explicit enough. There has been excellent improvement

since the previous inspection in terms of resources, teaching and a curriculum that enables students to fully develop their skills and capability.

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

76. Technology College status has been developed with vision and realism to provide an environment for students to become skilled and discriminating users of ICT. Because of this excellent leadership, most subjects use ICT as an integral part of their teaching as they have access to computers in many areas of the school. A particular strength is the very good use of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate and to involve students actively in lessons. Most subjects use ICT well to develop students' ability to communicate and research for information. For example, students use the Internet very well to explore current French usage. Word processing software is used very well for course work in Years 10 and 11. ICT is used in most geography lessons as a matter of course. Science uses ICT very effectively for data logging and research. Its use in manufacturing is very strong, with students using ICT to graph outcomes and to design and make items.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership contributes to high standards and very good achievement.
- The good teaching extends and consolidates learning and builds confidence.
- ICT is an integral part of every lesson and is used very effectively to enhance learning.
- Lesson activities are sometimes insufficiently challenging in Years 7 to 9.
- Resources do not always meet the needs of higher and lower attaining students.

### **Commentary**

77. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and the best in the school. Girls and boys both outperformed their peers nationally and, contrary to the national trend, boys outperformed the girls. The most recent examinations of 2004, as yet unvalidated, show a further rise in standards and the gap closed between the boys and the girls.

78. In Year 9, standards are average and achievement is good in relation to the variable standards on entry. The written work and oral responses of most students reflect satisfactory knowledge and understanding of physical factors and human activities and confidence in the use of maps, photographs and other resources including use of ICT. However, the learning of students with literacy difficulties slows down on the occasions when they are not provided with modified resources. In Year 11 standards are above average and achievement is very good. Most students are well motivated and diligently follow instructions. They confidently apply a range of skills, including ICT, to produce good oral and written coursework. The quality of work of higher attaining students is very good. However, the work produced by a minority of other students is insufficient for revision purposes.

79. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11 and is particularly effective in guiding students towards examination success in Years 10 and 11; this is why students achieve very well in this subject in Year 11. Teachers are knowledgeable, experienced and their thorough planning ensures the consolidation and extension of learning. They are advanced in their use of ICT as a tool to enhance teaching and stimulate learning. Very good guidance for older students builds confidence and establishes good relationships. Expectations of younger students about behaviour and the quality of their work are not high enough. Not all students behave well in lessons, but teachers usually manage such situations well to ensure that the learning of others is not adversely affected. Teachers' explanations and instructions are always clear and students know what they have to do and how to do it. Assessment tests are challenging but some lesson activities are not, especially for higher attaining students. Marking does not inform students about improvement. Attention is paid to literacy and numeracy but not to citizenship.
80. Leadership is very good with a clear focus on raising standards and promoting the subject. Standards continue to rise, as does achievement, making the subject one of the most successful in the school. Management is efficient despite teaching rooms being dispersed throughout the school. Resources are good. The use of ICT for teaching, for learning, for tracking of students' progress, and for administration is very good and is a major improvement since the previous inspection. Students' self-assessment procedures are inconsistently applied across the department and opportunities are thus lost to make best use of this approach to further students' learning. Data is used very well for departmental review and to inform planning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong rapport between staff and students and this produces good attitudes towards learning.
- Skills in history develop well because of the wide range of activities in lessons, supported by stimulating resources.
- Students are effectively involved in their own learning through their involvement in target-setting and review procedures.
- Marking does not contain enough information on how to improve.
- There is insufficient emphasis on subject-specific targets in planning.

### Commentary

81. Results in 2003 were above average with no significant difference between girls' and boys' performance. Results in 2004, as yet unvalidated, were similar to those in the previous year. Year 9 teachers' assessment results in 2003 were broadly average but results were not as high in 2004.

82. In Year 9, standards are average. This represents good achievement because standards on entry are below average and students lack sufficient skills in interpreting historical sources at the start of Year 7. Students develop good source analysis skills. All students, including lower attainers, develop confidence in combining information from sources in an investigation of factory conditions. Higher attainers draw conclusions about the dangerous environment in which children worked. Students write in an appropriate style such as newspaper reports on the Romans defeating the Britons in battle. They confidently use key terminology, including heresy and indulgence, in their study of the Reformation. There is often greater depth in students' oral responses than in their writing. In Year 11 the attainment of students choosing the subject is above average. This also shows good achievement from their starting points in Year 10. Lower attainers write analytically about recruitment issues in World War One. Higher attainers argue convincingly that "Women should vote as their husbands". In coursework, higher attainers display good skills in analysis and evaluation, although lower attainers' work is sometimes too descriptive. Students are able to grasp the "big picture", for example by linking together the key events and people in the Cuban missile crisis. They apply knowledge well, for example in considering the problems created by guerrilla warfare tactics in Vietnam. Again, there is sometimes less depth in written responses following discussion.
83. Teaching and learning are good overall and there is some very good teaching. Class discussion is very effective because all staff have very good subject knowledge and this results in a high level of challenge. Students quickly gain an overview of events and issues through the challenging pace of discussion. They respond well to challenging questions because of the positive relationships established. Resources, including historical artefacts, are used well to stimulate discussion. Powerful video sequences illustrate military tactics and provoke much interest amongst both younger and older students. Activities focus on building students' skills and confidence through applying their knowledge to problems and issues. The depth of response from students in discussion is not always matched by written responses of equal quality. In-class assessment lacks consistency in monitoring the quality of written responses. Marking does not give sufficient advice on how to improve although assessment procedures are thorough, including the involvement of students in target setting and reviews of progress.
84. Leadership and management are good. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and there is a consistency of good teaching in the department. Relationships between staff and students are strong and students respond with positive attitudes to the subject. Assessment procedures have been developed well to involve students in their learning. Subject-specific targets for development do not receive sufficient emphasis within the faculty planning process. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, with an improvement in examination results and in the time allocation to the subject that was criticised in the previous inspection.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education (RE) is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In Years 7 to 9 students achieve well and learn well because of the good teaching they receive.
- The locally agreed syllabus is not being adequately covered in Years 10 and 11 because there is not enough time allocated to the subject.
- The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 have a very limited knowledge and understanding of the major world religions and are underachieving.
- The whole-school leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory because the weaknesses identified above were reported at the time of the previous inspection.
- In lessons, students work hard and have good attitudes to teachers and each other.

## **Commentary**

85. The first set of examination results in the GCSE short course were reported in 2004. No national comparisons are available yet, but girls' results were very impressive with over three quarters of girls entered gaining an A\*-C grade. Boys' results were not as good. Only one in three boys gained an A\*-C because they did not do as well as the girls in their coursework.
86. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement in relation to their starting points in Year 7. Students know about the principal religious beliefs and practices of the main world religions, particularly Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. They are able to recognise religious symbols such as the cross for Christians and the wheel for Buddhists and talk about their significance. However, only a minority of students are able to draw out similarities and differences between religions. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall. For the minority of students who take the GCSE short course, standards are average. Students can express and argue a position on moral issues such as racism and abortion and have a good understanding of what perspective different religions bring to such issues. Knowledge and understanding of what is distinctive about each of the religions studied is weaker and students have difficulty explaining in depth what it means to be a member of a religious faith. For the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 standards are well below average because students are not taught religious education except as part of their PSHE programme. This is not enough to cover the main elements of the locally agreed syllabus. Students lack a depth of knowledge and understanding of any of the major world religions, including Christianity. Their achievement is unsatisfactory and they have regressed from where they were at the end of Year 9.
87. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 are not taught religious education as much as they should be. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE short course is good. In these lessons, all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are able, gifted and talented, achieve well and learn well not only because their teachers make the subject interesting and teach them effectively, but also because of the good attitudes they themselves bring to their work. Thorough planning and preparation by teachers ensure lessons go according to plan and time is rarely wasted through students' inactivity. Relationships with students are positive and encouraging and teachers try to ensure the methods they use, often combining musical and visual stimuli, interest students and make them want to learn. Good use is made of new technology in presenting lessons, for example, through the use of multi-media projectors. Teachers are good role models. They treat students with respect but

ensure, through effective management, that lessons proceed according to plan and without disruption. In Years 7 to 9, marking does not always show students what they have to do to improve their work to a higher standard. Good and regular use is made of homework to support learning. Although there are good links with local faith leaders, there are not enough opportunities to enhance students' learning through visits to places of worship or prayer, particularly mosques and temples.

88. Because of the unsatisfactory arrangements for the provision in the subject, leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall. However, this masks some very positive aspects of both leadership and management that the teachers display within the time constraints they have to deal with. A good team ethos has been established and the head of department offers very good support to other colleagues. New GCSE courses have been successfully introduced. Up-to-date teaching methods have been adopted which have helped students learn more effectively. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development particularly through the promotion of students' spiritual and moral values. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because the major issue of too little teaching time for students in Years 10 and 11 has not been successfully tackled and standards have not improved for these students.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Standards in the GCSE graphic products course are well above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject, which contribute to their good level of achievement in all years.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- The curriculum is very good and offers a wide choice to students in Years 10 and 11.
- Accommodation and resources, including those for ICT, are very good.
- Not enough attention is given to reviewing and revising students' targets for improvement as projects develop.

#### **Commentary**

89. In 2003, students gained results in their GCSE examinations that were above average at the higher A\*-C grades. The results in graphic products were well above average, above average in systems and control and broadly average in food and resistant materials. In 2004, provisional results were similar overall.
90. In Year 9, standards are average and achievement is good as the starting point in Year 7 for the majority of these students was below average. The standards of the girls are slightly above those of the boys. Making and constructional skills are more highly developed than design skills for many students, particularly the lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs. In general, the girls have better developed design skills than the boys. Higher-attaining students have a more secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary. Graphical skills for

the middle and higher attaining students are at expected levels. Students use their ICT skills effectively to develop their work, especially for research.

91. In Year 11, standards are above average and at this stage students are well on course to repeat the above average GCSE results of recent years. Standards are average on the systems and control and resistant materials courses, above average in food and textiles and well above average in graphic products, where students achieve very well. The standards achieved by the girls continue to be higher than those of the boys on most GCSE courses. The girls' design skills continue to be better developed than those of the boys, especially the boys at the middle to lower levels of attainment. The girls' work usually shows more rigorous evaluation of their work and analysis of research when developing their designs. Graphical skills are average for most students except those on the graphic products course, where they are above the average. The strength of the boys' work continues to be their practical making skills. On all courses students make good and appropriate use of ICT in their work.
92. Teaching and learning are good in all years, with many lessons that are very good. The teachers use challenging projects and tasks in a variety of materials that make increasing demands on students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. As a consequence all students make good progress from a below average starting point in terms of experience and attainment. Very good behaviour, high levels of concentration and the very positive attitudes of the students add to the effect of the consistently good and better teaching, and ensure that achievement is good in all years. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a range of stimulating projects and tasks that challenge the students and this leads to good achievement and progress. Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives. However, the teachers did not always share these with the students at the start of the lessons or review the progress made at the end. Where this happened, lessons lacked the sharper focus usually found. Learning resources of good quality are provided to support the learning. The teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to engage the students with the learning, and questioning, explanations and demonstrations are particularly effective in developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills. In all lessons the teachers give high levels of individual support and well-informed feedback, which encourages the students and raises their level of motivation. There was a loss of pace in the learning in some lessons where the teachers did not set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks.
93. The leadership of the department is good and it is very well managed. The school's Technology College status has provided the department with very good accommodation and resources, including those for ICT, and this is having an increasing impact on the standards achieved. The department offers a broad curriculum in all years and a wide choice of options in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are monitored to good effect and data used very effectively to set targets and review the progress of the department. The assessment system is effective and includes target setting for all students in all years. However, not enough attention is given to the targets being reviewed and revised as the students' work develops through each project. Students do not have sufficient detail of intermediate targets for improvement in order to further their rate of progress and achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. A specialist teacher of design and technology now leads the department. The assessment system has been improved and resources and accommodation are now very good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

*Art and design and music were inspected in full and are reported in detail below. Drama was sampled.*

94. Results in the GCSE 2003 **drama** examination were well above average. The proportion at grade C or higher was lower in 2004 in the as yet unvalidated examination results. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. When working on their performances from "The Crucible", students showed well above average capabilities. They used a wide range of dramatic conventions with assurance, insight and awareness of audience impact. A notable strength was the students' enthusiasm – even passion – for both their work and the work of others. Self-critical but constructive evaluations typified both preparation and review. The teaching is very good and sets the highest expectations. The teaching is flexible, ranging from direct instruction to subtle probing and suggestions. Students leave their lessons with a real and justified sense of achievement. Drama facilities are good and about to be enhanced by new lighting. The subject makes a vibrant contribution to the extra-curricular life of the school through public productions and visits to performances.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11 owing to the good teaching, students' very positive attitudes and the breadth of the curriculum.
- Achievement is good, as students enter school with average skills and knowledge in art.
- Leadership and management are good and the department has made good progress since the previous inspection.
- There are no significant weaknesses in the department.

### **Commentary**

95. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average for grades A\* to C and, for most students, their art and design result was the best they attained. Girls' results were better than those of the boys, which is in line with the national trend. Most students gained at least a G grade. Results have improved steadily over the past four years and in 2004, more students gained A\* to C than others did in 2003.

96. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average, which represents good achievement, as students enter college with only limited skills and experiences in art and design. Drawing skills are good; students observe closely, conduct thorough research, often using ICT, and draw carefully. Painting is not so well developed as drawing, but some of the higher attaining students produce good work when painting. Work with batik is good and students cope well with the wax and select vibrant colours to enhance their compositions. Knowledge of artists' work is good and many students are influenced strongly by art from other countries and cultures. Sketchbook work is developing, but students need to use them more often than just for homework. In Year 11, standards are well above average, which represents very good achievement as students make very good progress, particularly in drawing and painting and sculpture. Students use their previously learned skills and develop good powers of thinking and working in three dimensions. Work on an architectural project is particularly good, as students



are producing ingenious results. They use sketchbooks as starting points and develop their drawings into models on a large scale. Students select appropriate media to get the best effects and know how to rectify mistakes. Most students speak confidently about their work and the way in which it will develop. They assess their own work alongside that of others although critical appraisal of real artists' work is less secure. The students themselves often create sketchbooks by selecting and binding their own papers, showing individuality in ideas.

97. Teaching is good overall. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good and secures very good learning. The overall provision is enhanced in Years 10 and 11 because of the very positive approach that students bring to their work. This enables them to achieve very well. The teachers have wide subject knowledge, so the taught curriculum is broader than average, which means students can develop skills using a good range of media. Planning and preparation are very thorough and lessons are well balanced with time for instruction, practical work and appraisal. The scheme of work is designed to motivate the students, and the teachers select and use resources very effectively to show students what is expected. One-to-one help is good, and is particularly helpful to the lower attaining students and those who lack confidence. Students show very positive attitudes and are encouraged by thoughtful assessment of their work and effort. Relationships are very good, and all students feel valued. Teachers establish very impressive displays in and around college and students are very proud to see their work on display.
98. Leadership and management are good and the department runs smoothly. The teachers form a good team. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. The development plan outlined the need to target underachievement, improve deadlines and increase the use of ICT. These aims have all been realised. Standards are rising and the quality of work is now well above average. Teaching is better, and is undertaken by specialists in the subject. The curriculum is much wider, a new pilot GCSE course has started, and the accommodation is very much improved.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the development of students' musical skills in Years 7 to 9, and this limits achievement.
- The department is effectively organised and runs smoothly.
- The time allocated to music in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate.

## **Commentary**

99. Results in 2003 were below average with no significant difference between girls' and boys' performance. Results in 2004, as yet unvalidated, were much higher, with 83 per cent of candidates attaining grades A\* - C.
100. Standards in Year 9 are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement because when students enter the school, their standards are also below average. They learn about compositional techniques but do not always apply them effectively to their work. Performing skills are underdeveloped. Students are able to make simple appraisals of their own and others' work. Students' attainment on entry to the GCSE

course is below average, and standards in Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement. Students benefit from being taught in small classes. They receive good individual support from the teacher. Less able students achieve less well because there are currently no computers available to help them to compose. Boys are particularly enthusiastic towards the subject.

101. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The short lessons are very well organised, and delivered assertively. This has a positive impact on behaviour in whole-class sessions. Good use is made of an interactive whiteboard to support teaching, and this enables whole-class sessions to proceed at a good pace. Group tasks are not sufficiently well structured and focused to enable students to develop their work as effectively. Students do not know what they are aiming to achieve because of a lack of musical demonstration. As a result, they are slow to get on with the tasks, and some misbehave. More able students, who can apply their instrumental skills to the tasks set, achieve better than others in the class. There is good use of homework to extend and revise learning. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 there is a strong focus on the requirements of the examination, and this has a positive effect on achievement. Good processes are in place for the assessment of students' work, and marking is thorough.

102. The leadership and management of music are satisfactory. Changes in faculty leadership have impeded the effectiveness of support for the subject over the past year, but the subject is now being led and managed very well. However, the full impact has not been felt because the appointment is relatively recent. There is a clear vision for the development of music in the school. Insufficient time is allocated in Years 7 to 9 to enable students to make good progress with the full range of activities required by the National Curriculum. Instrumental tuition is very well managed and the department is establishing good links with local primary schools. The work of the department is monitored and this has impacted positively on general class management, but it has not recognised weaknesses in music teaching methods. The accommodation is good, but a lack of soundproofing makes concentration difficult when instrumental and class lessons are being taught at the same time. Extra-curricular activities are being developed and a growing number of students are becoming involved in the performing opportunities that the department offers. Activities are well led, and relationships are excellent. Progress since the time of the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. GCSE results have improved, but the time allocated to teaching music has not been extended and this is a barrier to further improvement.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **poor**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is unsatisfactory and does not secure good enough learning.
- Students do not behave well in lessons, and too many do not participate.
- Students do not achieve well enough overall.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

103. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were broadly average. No students were entered for GCSE examinations in 2004.

104. In Year 9, standards are average. For this group of students, this represents satisfactory achievement. In Year 11, standards in the physical education core course taken by all students are below average. In GCSE groups they are broadly average. Based on the prior attainment of these students, this represents unsatisfactory achievement by the large majority of students. There are no significant differences between the progress of boys and girls, or other groups of students.
105. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Poor and unsatisfactory teaching takes place. One very good lesson was seen. The specialist physical education teachers have sound subject knowledge. Too many non-specialists take classes in Years 10 and 11. Internal organisation makes some classes too large to manage effectively. When teaching is unsatisfactory or worse, so is learning. This directly results in unsatisfactory achievement. Weaker teaching is characterised by slow pace, tasks which do not meet the needs of all students, and low expectation in terms of the work rate and attitudes of students. The best teaching sets challenging work, is brisk, and places high demands on students. Students' attitudes are unsatisfactory overall. In many instances, and particularly in Years 7 to 9, students are not well behaved and teachers do not tackle this effectively enough. As a result, learning overall is impeded. There is a constant undercurrent of unchallenged idle chatting. Too many students, both boys and girls, do not participate in lessons. Students who participate are well turned out. Students in Year 11 are able to work independently, and they take responsibility in badminton and basketball. Students in Years 7 to 9 have too many opportunities to misbehave as they walk by circuitous routes to netball, hockey, soccer and rugby lessons and too often arrive late.
106. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. There are too few specialist staff to meet the demands of the curriculum, and the team is not well balanced in terms of gender, experience, focus or time commitment. They are not best deployed to ensure that students will learn well. Extra-curricular sport is satisfactory. Schemes of work are based on recognised national models. Assessment information on students' progress and their level of attainment is accurate. It is used to set overly ambitious general targets for improvement. The necessary skills and knowledge of teachers to secure improvement are not to hand. Assessment information is not used to inform curriculum development or the planning of teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has diminished, and standards have fallen.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Manufacturing**

Provision in manufacturing is **very good**.

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

- Standards in all aspects of the course are well above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and these contribute to their very good achievement.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students make very good use of ICT in their work.
- The very good industry links provide a very effective focus and context for students' work in school.

## Commentary

107. In 2003, students gained results in the GNVQ examination that were well above the average at the higher grades. In 2004, the course was changed to a GCSE examined subject, the results of which are not yet validated. However, the results of the thirty-four students entered for the GCSE manufacturing syllabus were at similar high levels, and they achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment.
108. In the work seen in the inspection, students are achieving very well and attaining well above average standards. They have very good knowledge and understanding of production methods and the stages of product development and manufacture. They also understand how industry uses and relies upon ICT at each stage of the manufacturing process. The students have an increasing understanding of the variety of worker roles that are involved, from designers through to production management and on to advertising and marketing. Their practical making skills are at expected levels and they have well-developed product evaluation skills. They are using ICT very effectively in developing their work, as well as for recording information and for research.
109. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan tasks and projects which stimulate, interest and challenge the students. Very appropriate teaching methods are used to engage the students with the learning and very good use is made of small group work that simulates industrial working practice. The use of ICT is well integrated into the work and teachers provide very good resources to support the learning. The knowledge and understanding of the students are being enhanced and enriched by the strong links the teachers have established with industry and commerce, which supports well their learning. The links provide a real context and focus for the work undertaken in school. The students have very positive attitudes to their work and these contribute to their very good achievement. They work very effectively in teams and they support each other very well. Behaviour is very good and contributes very positively to the working atmosphere in lessons to ensure the very good learning that takes place.
110. The course is very well led and managed. Accommodation and resources, especially those for ICT, are very good. The strong links formed with local industry are well used to provide relevance to the curriculum. The assessment system, marking and target setting are used very effectively to keep students informed of their progress and how to improve.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Citizenship is organised as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) course and was inspected in detail and is reported below. PSHE was sampled.*

111. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the teaching of **PSHE**, which is normally taught by a specialist team of teachers. The PSHE co-ordinator is currently on long-term absence and her teaching responsibilities are being covered by a member of the senior management team and a supply teacher. Lessons were sampled in all Years 7 to 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but ranged from unsatisfactory to good. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are usually satisfactory, but not all students value this subject and their inattentiveness on occasion gives rise to unsatisfactory behaviour, which adversely affects the learning and achievement of all. PSHE is

effective in increasing students' knowledge and awareness of health and personal safety, and includes useful contributions from visiting specialists such as theatre groups and the school nurse. Year 7 students are working on a useful project to provide advice for new students. In Year 8, good learning took place as students researched the background of different charities. Learning in a Year 9 lesson on decision-making was hampered by a lack of challenge and pace and the poor management of unsatisfactory behaviour. Year 10 students received useful advice on how to organise their homework to maximise their learning and achievement. Careers education in Year 11 on the preparation of a CV was enhanced in registration time with advice from form tutors. Other subjects enhance PSHE, for example Year 11 students complete a project on healthy living in French.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **poor**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The statutory requirement for assessment in citizenship is not met.
- Teachers delivering the discrete units of citizenship show commitment to the subject despite being without guidance or resources.
- Instances and examples of citizenship are not explicitly identified to students.
- Deficiencies in teaching, learning and students' behaviour are not addressed because of a lack of monitoring.

## Commentary

112. Standards are below average in Year 9 and students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Students' negative attitudes and behaviour in some lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9, impact on both standards and achievement. Standards are further depressed by unsatisfactory learning in some lessons, by the failure of other subjects and the school as a whole to establish through assessment their contribution to standards, and by insufficient written work that does not represent a record of students' learning. The citizenship component both across the school and in lessons is implicit rather than explicit. Therefore communication skills, recognising the rights of individuals to different opinions, the importance of responsible behaviour in relation to juvenile crime and participation in charity fund raising are taught, but are not recognised by students as citizenship in action. In Year 11 standards remain below average but achievement is satisfactory. This group of students started Year 10 with low levels of attainment. Students participate more positively in lessons. Most see the relevance of self-evaluation, decision-making, money and finance to their future careers. Many are willing to assume responsibility as senior students but again do not fully recognise this or other aspects of their learning as citizenship in action.

113. Where citizenship is taught separately, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are committed to the subject despite being without guidance, training and resources. Their lesson planning is satisfactory and individuals do make an attempt to link lesson content to attainment targets and skills. Teachers make very good use of ICT in lessons. Because much of the teaching involves discussion, written work is limited. Homework is rarely given and although work is marked, comments do not refer to levels or targets. The negative and often ambivalent attitude of students toward

lessons makes teaching hard work. Teachers are insufficiently rigorous in their class management. Although good use is made of visiting speakers including the community police officer, teachers do not always brief them fully on their part in lessons. Although individual teachers devise some form of self-assessment this good practice is not consistent and overall there is no formal or informal assessment of citizenship in any area of provision. There is no monitoring of teaching and learning.

114. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The subject is without leadership and management due to the long-term absence of the co-ordinator. Several individuals who have ensured that all lessons are taught and the programme implemented have assumed temporary responsibility for managing the subject. However, citizenship is currently strongly disadvantaged by a lack of leadership. As a result, issues concerning the lack of assessment and recording of students' progress that were not tackled last year have still not been resolved and this is unsatisfactory. The PSHE development plan includes plans for assessment and the review of citizenship education and training for teachers. However all this is in abeyance and to date there is no monitoring to ensure quality provision. The statutory requirement to assess citizenship is not met. Citizenship is not reported separately to parents. There is no co-ordination to bring together the whole school contribution to citizenship. There are few resources to support the discrete provision. Citizenship is not written into the schemes of work of several subjects and, while the links with citizenship are implicit, students and some teachers remain unaware of the links. There is insufficient time given to the citizenship component within personal and social education.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
<b>The quality of assessment</b>	<b>3</b>
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
<b>How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views</b>	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

