

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE RADCLYFFE SCHOOL**

Chadderton

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105738

Headteacher: Mr H S Hayer

Lead inspector: Mr J Ashton

Dates of inspection: 9 – 12 May 2005

Inspection number: 268494

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of students: 11 - 16  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1387

School address: Broadway  
Chadderton  
Oldham  
Lancashire  
Postcode: OL9 9QZ

Telephone number: 0161 624 2594  
Fax number: 0161 652 8006

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Councillor Jim Greenwood  
Date of previous inspection: 28 September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Radclyffe is a larger than average community school catering for students aged 11-16. It is co-educational but with a significant preponderance of boys, 239 more overall. The school operates on two sites about one mile apart but is due in 2007 to be on the one site in a completely new building. The proportion of students on the special educational needs (SEN) register is about average. The main areas of need are emotional and behavioural and moderate learning difficulties. Just over half the students are White British. The next largest groups are of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Kashmiri or African Caribbean heritages. The three most common home languages (other than English) are Bengali, Urdu, and Panjabi. The number of students for whom English is an additional language and are at an early stage of English language acquisition is 38 (all but seven of whom are in Years 7 and 8). There are a few refugee asylum seekers and a smaller number of fostered students. The intake is a disadvantaged one overall with an above average proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Student turnover is relatively high: 63 students joined and 47 left in the last school year, other than at the usual time. Attainment on entry is well below average and varies from year to year. The school has specialist Technology College status. It is a harmonious multicultural community in the forefront, as a 'pathfinder' school, of workforce reform.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |             |                | Subject responsibilities                                 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--|
| 4492                           | J Ashton    | Lead inspector |  |
| 9843                           | S Drake     | Lay inspector  |  |
| 30576                          | P Bannon    | Team inspector | Mathematics  |
| 10361                          | F Evans     | Team inspector | English  |
| 21866                          | D Tracey    | Team inspector | Science  |
| 12356                          | R Dickason  | Team inspector | Information and communication technology                 |
| 31129                          | J Pickering | Team inspector | Art and design<br>Design technology                      |
| 30215                          | H Feasey    | Team inspector | Geography<br>Work related learning                       |
| 30794                          | G Murray    | Team inspector | History<br>Citizenship                                   |
| 28178                          | J Connor    | Team inspector | Modern languages   |
| 4697                           | R Black     | Team inspector | Music  |
| 31821                          | B McCann    | Team inspector | Physical education                                       |
| 27803                          | J Clark     | Team inspector | Religious education                                      |
| 33235                          | P Pitman    | Team inspector | Special educational needs                                |
| 2626                           | M Thompson  | Team inspector | Community languages<br>English as an additional language |

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
 Anglia House  
 Carrs Road  
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a school with significant strengths: an improving school with many good features and fewer weaknesses.** It is well led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is good, a key factor in the school's continuing development. Students are very well cared for and well taught on the whole. This has led to effective learning and good progress in Years 7 to 9 and is beginning to bring improvements into Years 10 and 11. The school gives good value for money and serves its students well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results, though below average overall, are average compared to similar schools.
- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 for both boys and girls, but boys in particular are not doing as well as they should at GCSE level.
- Overall provision is good in English, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and design and technology (apart from resistant materials), and very good in art and design.
- The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning and behave well, but literacy weaknesses overall, and some boys' unsatisfactory attitudes to learning, are hindering achievement in some subjects.
- Levels of care for students are very good. The racial harmony and very positive relationships evident throughout the school create a good environment for learning.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with many strengths and just a few weaknesses, but the best practice is not disseminated widely enough across the school.
- The quality of the curriculum is good, and there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.
- A particular management strength is that a larger than average proportion of key management tasks is carried out very effectively by support staff rather than teaching staff.
- Financial management is very good at both a strategic and a day-to-day level.
- Attendance, though much improved in recent years, is still below average, and punctuality needs improving further.

Improvement since the last inspection in October 1998 has been good. Of the issues for improvement left for the school last time, attendance has improved significantly, the range of responsibilities available to students has increased and there are more opportunities to strengthen students' spiritual development, which is now satisfactory overall. Students still do not experience a daily act of collective worship. Numeracy remains one of the school's areas for further improvement but has improved since last time. The quality of teaching has also improved significantly. Standards are much higher by the end of Year 9, particularly in English. There are more and better learning resources, particularly electronic whiteboards and lap top computers for teachers. Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN), and for students whose home language is not English are much better than they were. Many important management roles are now carried out effectively by support staff, releasing more time and energy for teaching staff to teach.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

|                            |             |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Performance compared with: | all schools | Similar schools** |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|

|         |                        | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
|---------|------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Year 11 | GCSE/GNVQ examinations | E    | E    | D    | C    |

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average*

*\*\* For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9.** Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average overall, closer to average in English than in mathematics and science. In 2004, overall GCSE results were below average compared to all schools nationally but average when compared to similar schools. Current standards are best in art and design, ICT, physical education and design and technology (apart from resistant materials). Girls are outperforming boys in GCSE examinations, particularly in the three core subjects English, mathematics and science.

**Students' personal development is good. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.** Their spiritual development is satisfactory, moral and cultural development is good and their social development is very good. The vast majority of students have good attitudes and behave well. Some students, mainly boys, however, do not take work seriously enough, demanding an unfair amount of teacher time to keep them on task. Students' attendance, though recently much improved, is still unsatisfactory and punctuality is also unsatisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides students with a good quality education. Teaching and learning are good overall.** Assessment of students' progress is satisfactory. The quality of the curriculum is good and there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation is satisfactory and learning resources are good. The school provides very good care for students, offering them good guidance and support. Students have a good say in school developments. The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community are good; those with other schools and colleges are very strong.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** The good leadership of the headteacher has improved the school by involving it successfully in a good number of national and local initiatives. The well informed governing body is strongly supportive of the school's leadership and management and actively involved as an effective 'critical friend' of the school. A larger than average number of key management tasks is carried out very effectively by support rather than by teaching staff. Financial management is very good at both a strategic and a day-to-day level. Curriculum leadership, though at least satisfactory in every case, needs to be better than this to bring about improved standards in some subjects.

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

Parents expressed satisfaction with the school in general although there were concerns about some students' behaviour. Students are supportive of their school. Younger students praised their teachers and the learning mentors. They also were unhappy about some of the behaviour, evidence of which was seen in a small minority of classrooms. Older students praised the sports and ICT facilities but criticised the small canteen and not being allowed out at lunchtime.



## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do are:

- Improve the attainment of all students, but especially that of boys in Years 10 and 11.
- Concentrate even more upon improving literacy skills, in every subject, not just in English.
- Improve the attitudes to learning of some students, especially boys.
- Improve the few weaknesses in teaching, especially the classroom management skills of some teachers.
- Share the better teaching and learning practice more effectively across the school.
- Improve students' attendance and punctuality still further.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that students experience a daily act of collective worship.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Standards are below average overall, but average when compared to those of similar schools.

Students achieve well in Years 7 – 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Boys, in particular, are not doing well enough at GCSE.

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

- Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects throughout Years 7 to 11. It is good in ICT, design and technology (apart from resistant materials) and physical education, and very good in art and design.
- Standards, though below average overall, match those of similar schools in Year 11.
- Standards are well above average in art and design and average in ICT and physical education.
- The improving trend in national test results in Year 9 is not yet matched by improvement in the higher grades at GCSE in Year 11. Boys especially are not yet doing well enough.
- Students with special educational needs, students whose home language is other than English and gifted and talented students are all making good progress.
- Weak literacy skills, along with the poor attitudes to learning of some boys, adversely affect the overall quality of the students' work, especially in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Commentary**

1. Overall standards at the end of Year 9, though below the national average, have in recent years crept closer to this average, improving at a rate greater than the national rate. All three of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science have improved results in the national tests over the past three or four years but the greatest improvement has been in English. When national differences are allowed for, girls and boys attain fairly equally in Mathematics and science but there is more variation from year to year in English and girls usually out-perform boys in that subject.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | n/a (32.3)     | n/a (33.4)       |
| Mathematics   | n/a (32.9)     | n/a (35.4)       |
| Science       | n/a (31.7)     | n/a (33.6)       |

*There were 289 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- In 2004, overall GCSE results (in terms of average point scores) were below the national average for all schools but matched the national average for similar schools (those with similar attainment at the end of Year 9). The school fell short of its target proportions of students achieving at least five GCSE grades A\* to C and average GCSE point scores but exceeded its target for the proportion of students achieving at least one GCSE grade G. Girls in the school have consistently outperformed boys at GCSE in recent years, and often by more than the national difference between girls' and boys' results. This is particularly noticeable in the subjects where literacy skills are so important for success. It has a significant effect upon overall GCSE results in this school since it has such a preponderance of boys.

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

|   | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 28 (31)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 85 (87)        | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 98 (97)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 29.3 (28.5)    | 41.4 (40.6)      |

*There were 248 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Standards observed during the inspection are mainly below average but there are three notable exceptions. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education match the national average, and in art and design they are well above average. The difference between inspection findings and the low GCSE results in ICT is due to the appointment of new and specialist staff, as well as new leadership, and the rapid introduction of new and more suitable ICT courses, all of which are bringing about rapid improvements in standards.
- The well below average standards of attainment of students on entry to the school are the most significant reason for the below average standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The school has also had a steadily increasing proportion of EAL students (those for whom English is an additional language) since the last inspection, many of whom are at a relatively early stage of learning English. Students generally have below average literacy skills (particularly in writing) which hinder their effective access to much of the curriculum.
- Achievement is good overall and in most subjects throughout Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9). It is satisfactory overall and in most subjects at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). In both key stages, achievement is always at least satisfactory in every subject. Achievement is good at both key stages in ICT, design and technology (except in resistant materials) and physical education. It is very good in art and design. Students make more progress in art and design than they do in any other subject in the school.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, students with special educational needs make good progress in small group literacy lessons. A consistently high percentage of students at the school

achieve at least one grade A\*-G at GCSE. This is due in part to good teaching across the curriculum but also to the care and support offered in the supported study centre for students with special educational needs and those at risk of exclusion.

7. Gifted and talented students generally achieve well. For example, Year 9 students have lessons that are suitably challenging, are encouraged to complete extension work and are given homework which is appropriate to their abilities.
8. The achievement of students who are at the early stage of learning English is good. Most of these students are in Years 7 to 9, with only a few in Years 10 and 11. In lessons where they are withdrawn for extra help, they quickly develop skills in spoken and written language as a result of well-organised teaching designed to meet their specific needs. A carefully designed programme enables gifted and talented students at the very early stages of learning English to reach the highest standards in subjects such as mathematics and science. However a few students, whilst acquiring spoken English rapidly, make slower gains in learning to read and write, because they receive insufficient expert guidance. In mainstream lessons, students of all abilities achieve as well as their peers, in part as a result of the contribution of the study support centre in the preparation of course work and homework.
9. The school monitors well the relative performance of its various groups of students and concludes that, for instance, boys of Bangladeshi heritage perform less well than girls of the same heritage, and minority ethnic girls in the school outperform the white girls overall. But this is outweighed by the relative difference in performance of boys and girls in general, whatever their heritage, particularly by the relative difference in the proportion achieving the higher GCSE grades A\* to C in 2004 (girls 36% and boys 22%). The school has taken steps to ensure that this is less likely to happen again by making use of a 'traffic light' system of targeting students for special attention, and by its changes to the curriculum structure for next year.

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

The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is satisfactory, moral and cultural development is good and their social development is very good. Students' attendance and punctuality are both unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The racial harmony and very positive relationships evident throughout the school create a good environment for learning.
- The school's efforts to ensure good behaviour have established an orderly community and have led to a reduction in exclusions.
- Most students enjoy school and learning but in all year groups some, predominantly boys, are slow to settle to work and demand too much teacher attention.
- Although improved over recent years, students' unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality impinge on their achievement.

### **Commentary**

10. The very great majority of Radclyffe students are friendly, helpful and sensible young people who like their school and are willing to work hard during their time there. Staff

act as very good role models, treating students with respect whilst ensuring that they maintain high standards of uniform and behaviour, to which students respond well, developing very good relationships with staff and each other. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for them to work in pairs or small groups, which are often carefully chosen to ensure mixed gender and ethnicity, with the result that the school operates as a truly harmonious community. Bullying and racism are very rare and most students agree that the school deals well with any such incidents. Students feel comfortable in school and this means that they can concentrate well on their learning. They are generally interested in the activities that teachers prepare for them to do, follow instructions suitably and are prepared to think about their work, often helping each other and showing appreciation for each other's efforts. However, across the school there are a small number of students, mainly but not exclusively boys, who do not take work seriously enough, demanding an unfair amount of teacher time to keep them on task, and this has an impact on both their own and others' learning.

**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                                     | 774                    | 38                                | 3                              |
| White – any other White background                  | 8                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 38                     | 2                                 | 1                              |
| Mixed – White and Black African                     | 5                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 21                     | 2                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 5                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 15                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 237                    | 8                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                | 260                    | 2                                 | 1                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 2                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 6                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 3                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 2                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese   | 5                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 3                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| No ethnic group recorded                            | 3                      | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

- Since the previous inspection, the number of exclusions from school has reduced significantly, with the sanction only being used as a final resort and generally proving effective, in that very few students are excluded on more than one occasion. The number of fixed period exclusions is about average for the size and type of school. Most students behave well both in and out of the classroom, and staff work very hard to maintain these high standards of discipline. The great majority of staff are skilled at classroom management and they all, including those involved in an administrative or caretaking capacity, are expected to bear the responsibility of promoting good behaviour in a consistent manner.

12. Students generally show good respect for others' feelings, are very happy to take on responsibilities such as mentoring or year council representation and they carry out these tasks well. The split site means that Year 9 students as well as Year 11 have the opportunity to act as prefects. A variety of subjects make a good contribution to students' personal development through, for example, requiring them to consider different beliefs in religious education, put arguments for and against a proposition in history or create politically inspired collages in art. Through involvement in the Comenius project, the school has developed links in Poland, Spain and Romania and many subjects have a strong multi-cultural aspect in their provision. Assemblies provide suitable food for thought to promote students' personal development and some opportunity for reflection but not all teachers follow the thought for the day programme and, as at the time of the last inspection, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. In some lessons, opportunities for reflection are missed but in others, such as geography where they are encouraged to appreciate the beauty of landscapes, opportunities are well provided. In an outstanding drama lesson, everyone in the room was stunned to silence by the very high quality of reflection and empathy with others' situations displayed by the students' inspired presentations on the theme of adoption.
13. The school has worked hard and effectively over the past seven years to bring about improvements in students' attendance. With a relatively high percentage of student absence for religious reasons, some of whom are also taken by their parents on extended holidays, it will always be a struggle to match the national average, but it is not only these students whose attendance is not good enough. Although four in ten students attend for more than ninety-five percent of possible time, more than a third have the equivalent of one day a fortnight away from school, leading to gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Attendance is weakest in Years 10 and 11 but no year group reaches the national average. Students' punctuality is also unsatisfactory which leads to a ragged start to the first lesson of the day, particularly those for older students. Parents commend the school's doggedness in pursuing absentees and latecomers but the school acknowledges there is still more work to do in this area.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (90.8%)**

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 8.1 | School data          | 1.0 |
| National data      | 6.9 | National data        | 1.1 |

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides students with a good quality education. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment of students' progress is satisfactory. The quality of the curriculum is good and there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation is satisfactory and learning resources are good. The school provides very good care for students, offering them good guidance and support. Students have a good say in school developments. The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community are good; those with other schools and colleges are very strong.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good overall, especially in Years 7 to 9. They are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good across the school in ICT, design and technology, geography and physical education, and very good in art and design.
- Examples of teaching and learning of at least very good quality were observed in most subjects inspected, but especially in art and design, physical education, ICT and textiles.
- Students with special educational needs, and those whose home languages are other than English, are well taught overall.
- There is some weak teaching in religious education, mathematics, resistant materials, food technology and Urdu.
- Assessment for learning is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects, particularly in English, but mistakes due to literacy weaknesses are not picked up and dealt with well enough in subjects other than English.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 149 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 7 (5%)    | 26 (17%)  | 66 (44%) | 44 (30%)     | 5 (3%)         | 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.*

14. The quality of teaching is good overall, but more effective in bringing about good achievement in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching takes place in most subjects, but especially in mathematics, art and design, textiles, ICT, physical education and religious education. Teaching was excellent in seven lessons, one more than the number deemed less than satisfactory. This excellent teaching is spread across a number of different subjects: mathematics, art and design, food technology, physical education and drama. This is an improvement from the last inspection and is the main reason for the good learning, good achievement and improving standards in many subjects in the school, especially in Years 7 to 9.
15. Teachers at The Radclyffe School know their subjects well and the large majority prepare and plan their lessons thoroughly, making good use of 'The Radclyffe Lesson' with its crisp starter activities, meaty middle sections and efficient plenary endings. They create a suitable climate for learning, set their students a fast pace and make especially good use of the laptop computers issued to each of them, especially when presenting information to their classes via the digital projectors in the ceilings of most classrooms.
16. The result of this good teaching in most areas and most year groups is good learning and good progress. The very best teaching is notable for its very high expectations and, for example,
  - In mathematics, for the way it succeeds in generating high levels of students' interest in some difficult concepts;
  - In art and design, for the way it brings about students' pride in their work;
  - In food technology, for the excellent innovation and exceptional use of basic food materials;

- In physical education, for the willingness it generates in students to work constructively with their teachers in all lessons;
  - In drama, for the way the specialist drama teachers produce spine tingling performances from their students.
17. In some lessons, however, the teaching was less than satisfactory and this resulted in unsatisfactory learning and a slower rate of progress than ought to be taking place. In some other lessons, the teaching, though satisfactory overall, had areas of weakness, reasons for it not being judged good. The less than satisfactory teaching was in a few religious education, mathematics, design and technology and Urdu lessons; the less than good teaching was mainly in some lessons in mathematics, science and Spanish. Weak classroom management was the most common problem, failing to capture and hold the complete attention of particular groups of students (most often boys). In Urdu, the problem was the use of too narrow a range of teaching and learning strategies, which does not motivate all students. In design and technology the issues are to do with teacher expectations of students and inaccurate use of tools and equipment in resistant materials.
18. Students with special educational needs (SEN) are well taught and make good progress in their time at the school. Programmes of study for small group special needs teaching in Years 7 to 9 are well organised, planned and monitored and delivered by experienced, well qualified teachers and support assistants. Students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are also well taught in Years 7 to 9 but there is insufficient guidance on the processes of reading and writing for the few students in Years 10 and 11 who are at the early stages of learning English.
19. Learning overall is better than it otherwise might be because of the school's pioneering use of 'learning managers' (carefully selected and well-trained support staff) who mostly do a sterling job covering for teachers on short-term absence. Some learning managers are undoubtedly more effective than others in classroom control and in having the necessary flexibility to exercise their initiative when it is called for.
20. The school needs to reduce the variability of the quality of teaching and learning (presently ranging from excellent to poor) by:
- sharing the best practice within and across departments more effectively;
  - simplifying 'The Radclyffe' lesson plans to make them easier to complete and to allow more room for individual teachers' initiative;
  - concentrating more on what students can be expected to learn than upon teachers' organisation and what they are trying to teach.
21. As part of this overall picture of teaching and learning, assessment and its use to improve standards are satisfactory overall. Assessment is used well in most lessons because teachers judge accurately whether or not students are ready to move on. It is good in modern foreign languages, mathematics, ICT and geography. In modern foreign languages, students receive particularly good advice on how to improve from one level to the next. The collection and use of data to track student progress in English is outstanding, as are the comprehensive analysis of the department's examination results for the past year and the English GCSE revision website. Good use is made of individualised plans to help students with special educational needs to learn well. It is satisfactory in all other subjects, apart from religious education, where some teachers have insufficient grasp of GCSE standards in this subject and in citizenship where it is not yet fully established. Whilst assessment is satisfactory in



physical education and art and design, there are some inaccuracies in Year 9 because of a lack of moderation. In all subjects, students know their levels of working. Targets are set that promote challenge and these are tracked effectively. However, in music, students would benefit from more specific advice on how to improve. An area of improvement in most subjects is in the correction of spelling and other faults of written work. Too many subject teachers are focusing just on factual errors in their own subjects.

## **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is good, and there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation is satisfactory and learning resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- ICT is used well to improve learning in many subjects.
- Vocational courses provided by a local college serve less able students well.
- Physical education, ICT and design and technology offer a good range of optional courses.
- Provision for careers education and guidance is very good.
- A very good programme of activities enriches and extends the school day.
- The curriculum provided for students at the early stages of learning English is good.

### **Commentary**

22. The curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities that meet students' individual needs and enables them to achieve. All the main subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and all students have equal access to them. The well-organised personal and social development programme includes opportunities for teaching religious education, work-related learning and citizenship as well as covering all the required subject matter, including drugs and sex education. The school has maintained and developed its very good provision for careers education and guidance which was praised at the time of the previous inspection.
23. A good range of option choices are available in Years 10 and 11, especially in design and technology and physical education, and all students follow a short course in religious education. In ICT courses, and design and technology, good planning engages the interest of students of all abilities. ICT is used well in many subjects of the curriculum to motivate students and to improve their learning, especially in English and ICT, though not in art and design, science and religious education. In modern foreign languages there is a range of GCSE courses in their mother tongue for students from the ethnic minorities. A local college offers a good range of foundation and pre-apprenticeship courses which less able students can continue after leaving school.
24. ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 have a strong vocational content that makes a good contribution to the work-related learning curriculum. An aspect of curriculum development that is very well managed is the use by teachers of projectors and interactive white boards. They are used skilfully to improve learning, raise standards and interest students especially in English, geography and mathematics.
25. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and good in earlier years. Gifted and talented students reach high standards across the

curriculum and students with special educational needs achieve well. To deploy support staff more effectively the school has recently reorganised setting arrangements in Year 7 by placing a number of boys with additional language and special educational needs within one group. Evaluation of the effectiveness of such grouping is needed to determine whether the reduction in pressure on support is outweighed by the potential for increased challenging behaviour, poor role models and potential underachievement.

26. Students at the early stages of learning English are well provided for. They have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their needs effectively. Home-school liaison and work with other agencies helps students to settle into school well and to maintain good progress.
27. The programme offered to enrich and extend learning beyond the taught curriculum is of a high quality. At lunch-time and at the end of the school day, students can join in a range of activities, for example, using computers in the ICT rooms, and educational visits in this country and abroad are undertaken regularly. There is good support for SEN students, for example, through lunch-time study groups and after-school mentoring opportunities. The range of sporting activities is very good. Students participate fully in the many clubs and activities the school provides, covering a wide range of major school sports. In addition there are good links with local sports and community groups.
28. Overall the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. There are sufficient numbers of well-qualified and committed teachers to teach all subjects of the national curriculum. With one exception, they are sensibly deployed and have an appropriate range of skills and experience. The exception is in the GCSE short course in religious education where continuity and student achievement suffer from an over-complicated staff deployment – each teacher teaches one topic to each of ten groups over the year. Difficulties with recruitment and retention of teachers have been largely resolved although temporary teachers are employed in some areas. The provision of support staff is very good overall. The school has adopted an innovative strategy with the deployment of learning managers to ensure that the work load agreement is fully implemented.
29. Accommodation is satisfactory. The majority of rooms and other spaces make adequate provision for the subjects and activities undertaken. Whilst some of the science accommodation is of poor quality, particularly in the upper school, and one of the music rooms at the lower school is unsuitable, there have also been improvements since the last inspection. The number of ICT suites across both sites has increased significantly. Impressive new sports facilities, including a sports hall and athletics track have been built on the upper school site and in two years time the whole school is to be completely rebuilt onto this one site.
30. Almost all subjects are supported by good resources for learning which, in general, meet curriculum needs well. Many teachers make regular use of laptop computers in their teaching preparation and delivery. Design technology is particularly well equipped for computer aided design and manufacture, and learning in music is enhanced by good access to computer linked keyboards. However, resources are inadequate for music and art and design with no immediate access to computer facilities. In English there is a very good inter-active web site which is accessible to students from home. The library/resource centre is very well used and provides good reference and careers sections together with much fiction.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good care for students, offering them good guidance and support. Students have a good say in school developments.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The large numbers of personnel involved in supporting students share good lines of communication and provide a very coherent pastoral system.
- The arrangements to ensure the welfare of particularly vulnerable students are exceptionally good.
- The links between pastoral and academic monitoring and support are not yet strong enough.

### Commentary

31. The school takes the care and support of students extremely seriously and, rightly, commits much staff time to this area of its work. Initiatives such as small group work and support sessions in the Behaviour and Education Support Team (BEST) building, underpinned by the work of the pastoral support team, are helping to keep students in education and gaining some recognised qualification before they leave. In the past, these students might well have been forced, or chosen, to leave before they reached age 16. The individual roles of this large team, which involves teachers, non-teachers and family support workers, are clearly defined and very well over-seen by an assistant headteacher. The staff hold regular, focused meetings which ensure that all are aware of those students causing concern and all can contribute to the decisions about what action to take. Once decided upon, that action is taken very quickly. Students and parents greatly appreciate the ready availability of year managers who, as support staff, have the time to pursue pastoral issues which those with a teaching commitment struggle to find. Support is not only directed to misbehaving or lower-attaining students; for example, swift intervention with a group of able students who had fallen out has helped to mend relationships and improve the working atmosphere. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very well monitored and supported: the next step, as recognised by the school, is to link the support more closely to tracking and taking action related to students' academic progress. This has started, to good effect, for students in Years 10 and 11.
32. The highly-structured pastoral system gives students the confidence to approach staff with concerns, knowing that help is available. The learning mentors each have specific roles but also operate daily drop-in sessions on both sites for those who need an area of calm in a busy community. 'Matron' is available to support those who have accidents or feel unwell. Students and parents greatly appreciate the very good arrangements that help new students settle into Year 7 and also into other year groups, for the school receives a number of students throughout the year. Child protection procedures are comprehensive, with very good guidance, training and support for all members of staff, leading to good awareness of individuals' needs. There are very good arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all who use the school; concerns raised at the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. Good advice and guidance is available for those deciding which subjects to study in Years 10 and 11, and there is very comprehensive careers guidance. Students feel well

supported and consider that their voice is heard by school staff, both as individuals and through their year councils.

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

The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community are good; those with other schools and colleges are very strong.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works particularly closely with parents over pastoral issues.
- There are a good number of subject links with other schools.
- Close working with outside agencies enhances the provision for students.

### **Commentary**

33. Most parents hold positive views of the school and they are particularly appreciative that their children are offered good support to settle when they arrive, expected to work hard and, therefore, make good progress. The prospectus, annual report and regular newsletters all keep parents suitably up to date with school events. The quality of students' progress reports has improved since the last inspection so that there is more room for teacher, as well as student, appraisal, and the level at which students are working in each subject and how this relates to national expectations is made clear. However, teachers' comments vary in their usefulness, with some still relating more to students' application rather than giving subject specific guidance about areas for improvement. Although parents' attendance at meetings to discuss their children's work is relatively low, staff work very closely with parents over pastoral issues, responding swiftly to their queries and engaging them at an early stage if there are concerns. Teaching and non-teaching staff make home visits if parents feel more comfortable meeting them in familiar surroundings, and there is ready access to an interpreter when this is necessary.
34. The school mounts a popular, annual family learning day which attracts many members of the local community as well as parents of those in school. It also has some long-standing arrangements to involve the community, such as Year 8 students' successful meetings with local residents, arranged through good relationships with Age Concern. Work experience placements and close liaison with the school-based police officer are other ways in which school and community work well together. Many subject teachers, for instance those from the physical education, modern languages, music, science, mathematics and technology departments, work on a regular basis in primary schools while students who are training to be sports leaders organise a variety of events for primary students. There is close working with the local college over placements for a few students, guidance about courses post-16 and development of the vocational courses due to start in the coming academic year. Staff members 'excellence' visits to other schools as far afield as London and Northumbria have led to innovations in teaching and management arrangements. The school's outward looking approach significantly strengthens its provision for students.
35. The school works well with parents and members of the community to support the learning of students with EAL. Mother tongue speakers frequently contribute to the assessment of students on entry to the school. They also assist in preparing students

for GCSE examinations in heritage languages and occasionally, for example, in Russian, in conducting oral examinations. Home school liaison is good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Governance and the leadership and management of other key staff are good overall but curricular leadership and management are satisfactory rather than good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision is a very forward looking and proactive one; the school in consequence benefits from being involved in a good number of national and local initiatives.
- The governing body is well informed, strongly supportive of the school's leadership and management and actively involved as an effective 'critical friend' of the school.
- A larger than average proportion of key management tasks is carried out very effectively by non-teaching rather than by teaching staff.
- Financial management is very good at both a strategic and a day-to-day level.
- Curriculum leadership, though at least satisfactory in every case, needs to be better than this to bring about improved standards in some subjects.

### Commentary

36. Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good. His enthusiasm, hard work and positive vision are key factors in the continuing development of the school. He is assisted well by an effective senior team with complementary strengths and which includes two senior members of the support staff, reflecting the much greater proportion of leadership and management roles successfully undertaken by such staff in this school. The senior leadership and management team deals well with the main barriers to learning in the school. The disadvantages of the split site are minimised. The weak literacy skills of the annual student intake are a major focus of the school's efforts and are beginning to be successfully tackled in Years 7 to 9. The (BEST) Behaviour and Education Support Team initiative is helping with, amongst other things, the challenge the school faces of having a majority of boys, some of whom are less positive than they should be towards their learning. School development planning and self evaluation are both very good, although the latter is backed up with an excessive amount of documented evidence, expensive of staff time to collect and collate.
37. Governance is good. Governors are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They both support and challenge its leadership appropriately and fulfil their statutory duties, except for ensuring that the students experience a daily act of collective worship.
38. That many more key management roles are now effectively carried out by non-teaching rather than teaching staff, is the result of the school being at the forefront of workforce reform nationally. The year managers, support staff who replaced the heads of year, are popular with parents and are working well. They are responsible for much of the improved effectiveness of pastoral care. The school has recognised that involving them more in the monitoring of the students' academic progress is an area for further development, and a good start in this has been made. The effectiveness of the 'learning managers' who cover short term teacher absences, is more variable, and is dependent upon a range of factors, including the quality of the work left for them by teachers and the effectiveness of their training. The positive effect of freeing teachers from almost all the usual cover periods, and the advantage of the students having members of staff they know is carefully weighed by senior management against the expensive cost of supply teachers who are often strangers to the students.

39. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory overall and in English, ICT, art and design, physical education and design and technology they are good. This has led, for example, to a more vigorous and committed approach by the rejuvenated English department, involving students much more in their learning, the benefits of which are already apparent in Years 7 to 9 where standards are improving significantly. Curriculum leadership elsewhere, in mathematics and science, for instance, will need to be better than the present satisfactory if it is to bring about improved standards overall.
40. A well-proven system of performance management is in place for both teachers and other support staff and is very closely linked to a very effective programme of professional development. These play a vital role in helping to bring about improvement. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified staff are good as is the school's contribution to initial teacher training. There are very good induction and professional development opportunities for teaching assistants. Two have achieved an NVQ level 3 and three others are undergoing training.
41. Coordination of the provision for special educational needs is good. There is a clear strategy for meeting the needs of students within small group settings and key mainstream lessons, particularly in the lower school. Communication and management can be more problematic because of the split site. There needs to be more thorough identification of where Year 10 and 11 students are located and more effective monitoring of provision and deployment of support in mainstream lessons at the upper school site to ensure that students are reaching their full potential. Although the school monitors the achievement of gifted and talented students at the end of each key stage, the coordinator recognises the need to measure the impact of gifted and talented initiatives more closely, particularly in relation to achievement.
42. Leadership and management of the provision for students for whom English is an additional language are good overall. The staff work as an effective team and have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, strengths have been maintained and arrangements have been put in place to encourage students to take GCSE examinations in heritage languages. However, there is insufficient guidance on the processes of reading and writing for the few students in Years 10 and 11 who are at the early stages of learning English.

## **Financial management**

43. The school manages its finances very well. Senior staff have been innovative and successful in seeking extra funding and the school administers its budget efficiently and effectively. With its split site, specialist status, large number of students with different specific needs, and involvement in a variety of initiatives such as Excellence in Cities, Pathfinder and BEST, its funding is generous and complicated. Ear-marked money is spent appropriately and accounted for carefully. The distribution of departmental budgets is transparent and equitable, and the bursar keeps subject managers well informed about their spending as the year progresses. Governors are keen to ensure that current funds are spent on the students currently in school and that decisions are made with due consideration to achieving best value; for example, staff had to make a very good case for investment in new computers – a decision which has helped students to achieve well in this subject and also to gain above average competence in their use of ICT across other areas of the curriculum. Taking into account the school's context, the good quality of education that it provides, its positive ethos and the students' good achievement, it provides good value for money.

### **Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005**

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |         |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income               | 5,724,021 | Balance from previous year          | 336,064 |
| Total expenditure          | 5,775,646 | Balance carried forward to the next | 284,439 |
| Expenditure per student    | 4,163     |                                     |         |

#### **Work-related learning**

44. Provision within the current curriculum for work-related learning is satisfactory. The school is fully aware of its statutory duty to prepare students for the changing world of work by providing opportunities to work within the community, by extending the range of vocational courses and by developing essential skills. There has been a rigorous audit of the way in which these strands are already being met, both through individual subjects and through careers education and guidance within the personal, social and health education programme.
45. Plans for extending work-related learning requirements are well advanced. Links with outside agencies are already providing funds and resources to build up enterprise activities within the school. Plans to adapt the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, in order to include identified work-related activities, are in place. New vocational qualifications in art and design and physical education are ready to be introduced. Students are poised to benefit significantly from the very thorough planning and careful documentation of all these further developments.





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

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

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- New and effective leadership is having a significant effect on standards.
- Standards are improving more rapidly in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.
- Some erratic attendance, poor punctuality to lessons and poor attitudes to learning from boys affect their rate of progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good. This leads to good learning and above average progress by Year 9 but these effects are not yet fully in place in Year 11.
- Information and communication technology skills are above average.
- Weak literacy skills adversely affect the quality of the students' work in Years 10 and 11.
- In other subjects, too many errors of language and spelling go uncorrected.

##### **Commentary**

46. Standards on entry have been well below average in recent years, particularly in writing, but as the result of good, sustained and well structured teaching, students have made good progress through Years 7 to 9. Work seen and lessons observed show that achievement is good by Year 9 and the national test results have moved closer and closer, year-on-year, to the national average. Students' speaking skills are good, they listen well in lessons and generally read aloud competently. Reading skills improve throughout Years 7 to 9 because much well-focused work is done to raise reading levels. Even though there are still some weaknesses in writing, students in Year 8 produce stories and poems, which are imaginative and creative. This represents good achievement overall. At this age there is little significant difference in the results for boys and girls. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as others.
47. In 2004, GCSE results were below average in A\*-C grades but above average in grades A\* to G. The students tended to do worse in English than in their other subjects in 2004. Results for both girls and boys are below their respective national averages but boys are much further behind. The work of students presently in Years 10 and 11 is also below average. It shows that they know what to do to answer a question but their weak literacy skills affect the quality, accuracy and relevance of their answers. The situation leading to the poor results is exacerbated by problems of attendance and punctuality to lessons. Standards of the boys in particular are further affected by some poor attitudes to learning and this is shown in their results. This means that their rate of progress over Years 10 and 11, though satisfactory, is not as good as it could be, despite the good teaching they receive. Achievement overall at this key stage is therefore satisfactory rather than good. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as others at this stage.

48. Teaching and learning are good overall, but better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 where learning is only satisfactory. Teachers are thoroughly consistent in their structured approach to teaching English and much is expected of the students. Lessons are taught at a good pace with a clear and sustained emphasis on developing understanding and skills through a variety of teaching and learning styles. Teachers have above average ICT skills and achieve very good relationships in lessons, which enable them to create a purposeful learning environment. The result is good learning in Years 7 to 9, where an enjoyable work ethic is clearly well established. In Years 10 and 11, learning, like achievement, is satisfactory rather than good because the rate of progress is adversely affected by some boys' poor attitudes to learning.
49. Leadership and management are good overall. The effective new leadership is having a good impact in Years 7 to 9, and is beginning to tackle what needs to be done in Years 10 and 11. The present head of department has been in post for over a year and leads with a clear and consistent vision. The department's vigorous and committed approach to teaching is involving students in their learning and making rigorous demands on them. Media studies has been introduced as a GCSE subject. The schemes of work have been rewritten and the consistent, structured approach to teaching the subject is now a feature of all lessons. The benefits of this are seen more in Years 7 to 9 where students are improving significantly. This rate of improvement is not yet seen throughout Years 10 and 11. However, students in the present Year 9 will enter Year 10 with stronger English skills and a real enjoyment of learning, which will provide a good basis for GCSE studies. The collection and use of data to track student progress is outstanding, as are the comprehensive analysis of the department's examination results for the past year and the English GCSE revision website. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore good.

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

The school has embraced the national literacy strategy and subject areas are aware of the importance of subject specific vocabulary. This is to be seen in displays in classrooms and in the way students use the correct terminology in their subjects. Literacy skills are below average in Year 9 which is good achievement from their well below average standards on entry in Year 7. These skills are still below average by Year 11 because there is still much work to do in Years 10 and 11 following on from the good progress taking place in Years 7 to 9. Reading in class takes place in a number of subjects in Years 7 to 9 and is beginning to have a good effect. Writing remains a major weakness across the school. In some subject areas, students' books are marked for specific subject content but errors of language and spelling go uncorrected. While the English department is focusing on developing writing skills, this thrust needs to be supported to a greater extent elsewhere in the school.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

Overall, provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well to support learning.

- GCSE results were below average because some students failed to complete assignments and did not attend some examinations.
- The range of strategies for improving the learning of underachieving boys is insufficiently wide.
- There is a strong team of teachers in the department who are committed to improvement. They have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well.
- Numbers choosing the subject in Year 10 are low because there are no alternative courses to GCSE.

## Commentary

50. In 2004 the proportion of students reaching the expected National Curriculum levels in the teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 was above the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average. Higher attaining students can produce more complex sentences, referring to past present and future events. Given low levels of literacy and low attainment on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
51. In 2004, GCSE results in **French** were below average. Girls performed better than boys, but the gap between the genders was broadly in line with the national gap. All students entered achieved a graded result, but the number of students achieving higher grades in French was well below the national average.
52. GCSE results in **Spanish** in 2004 were also below average. Girls performed better than boys, but the gap between the genders was slightly wider than the national gap. The number of students achieving a graded result was in line with the national average, but the number of students achieving higher grades was well below average.
53. In both languages, non-attendance at examination sessions and failure to complete coursework assignments contributed to the below average results. Overall, both **French** and **Spanish** were among the better performing subjects in the school.
54. Standards of work seen in both languages during the examination were below average overall. Only higher attaining students are confident in their use of different tenses, and capable of producing extended complex free-writing. Given students' low previous attainment levels, this still represents satisfactory achievement. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
55. Teaching and learning in both languages are satisfactory overall with good features. The quality of teaching is slightly better in **French** than **Spanish**, and is also slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In the better lessons, teachers set clear learning goals and share them with students. They use French and Spanish judiciously and effectively. Lessons proceed at pace, with a good variety of activity. ICT supports learning well and provides a focus for students that keeps them on task. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they try to cater for the different ways in which students prefer to learn. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not pay enough attention to motivating and engaging lower attaining boys. As a result, these boys do not achieve as well as they might.
56. The leadership and management of the faculty is satisfactory overall. Both aspects have suffered in recent years as a result of a rapid turnover of more senior subject staff. While the teaching team has remained relatively stable, the lack of guidance at

critical stages in the faculty's development has contributed to the recent dip in standards. The current subject leadership, however, has a clear vision for the direction of the faculty, has analysed problem areas carefully and taken appropriate action to secure improvements. For example, the department is trying to improve recruitment into Year 10 from its current low position through a useful investigation into alternative courses. Faculty documentation has been thoroughly reviewed and now supports teaching and learning more securely. There are systems in place for monitoring the quality of teaching, and for analysing student performance trends and tracking underachievement more assiduously. There are opportunities for staff to develop themselves professionally, and the faculty evaluates its own work rigorously and honestly. There is a strong team in place with a shared commitment to improve and the capacity to succeed.

57. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Despite instability at faculty leader level, the quality of teaching has been maintained.

## **Community Languages**

Provision for community languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In Urdu, a minority of students, mainly boys, underachieve when management of their behaviour is unsatisfactory.
- There are good opportunities for students to study Bengali after school, but achievement is affected by sporadic attendance.
- There are good opportunities to enter and prepare for GCSE in other community languages. Most students gain a GCSE.

### **Commentary**

58. Urdu is taught to small groups of students in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE in 2004 were below the national average but were in line with students' prior attainment. In most lessons, standards are below average overall, but very varied. They are in line with students' very varied prior attainment and achievement is satisfactory. However, in a minority of lessons a small number of students, mainly boys, have poor attitudes to learning and misbehave. Management of this behaviour is unsatisfactory and results in underachievement. Most girls work hard but the pace of their learning is slowed by disruption in class.
59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies is used, which does not motivate all students. The teacher has good subject knowledge and pays good attention to correcting mistakes in pronunciation and modelling correct responses. However, the planning of some lessons does not take sufficient account of the very wide range of students' learning needs. Some use is made of ICT to enhance lessons and teaching makes a good contribution to students' cultural and social development.
60. In the current year, Bengali is offered after school once a week to students in Years 10 and 11. In the lesson seen the students worked hard and achieved well. However the attendance of some students is sporadic and affects standards achieved. Good

support is provided by a non-specialist teacher working with a member of the support staff for whom Bengali is a community language.

61. Students who are fluent in other languages are offered some well-planned sessions, where good advice on examination technique is given. There are also opportunities to practice on past papers for a few weeks prior to the GCSE examination. In 2004, small numbers of students attained GCSE in a variety of languages, including Farsi. During the inspection good advice was provided to a student entered for Russian.
62. Leadership and management of Urdu are satisfactory. Leadership and management of other community languages are good and improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Considerable ingenuity is used by the school, often using the expertise of members of the school's communities, to provide opportunities for students to gain GCSE accreditation. One example of this is using a Russian native speaker to conduct the GCSE oral examination. This provision makes a good contribution to the inclusive ethos of the school by demonstrating respect for students' cultures, skills and talents.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

- Teaching, though satisfactory overall, ranges in quality from excellent down to poor.
- Progress in lessons with younger students is sometimes hindered by unsatisfactory behaviour.
- New leadership is innovative and is focused clearly on improving standards through better teaching and learning.

## **Commentary**

63. Current standards currently in Year 9 are below average. This is satisfactory achievement from the students' attainment on entry to the school which was well below average. In 2004, results in the national tests were below average. GCSE results for students at the end of Year 11 were below average for grades A\*-C but close to average for grades A\*-G. This represented satisfactory achievement from their results in the national tests at the end of Year 9. The school enters all students and almost all attain certification. This shows a clear improvement from the previous inspection.
64. However, there are marked difference in the progress of different groups because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Students currently in Year 11 are also working at standards below average. This is satisfactory achievement from entry standards for those who attend regularly. Higher attaining students are confident learners who are achieving well. Throughout their time in school, students with English as a second language and students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily.
65. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but ranges from excellent down to poor. There are significant differences in the ability of individual teachers to promote good learning. In the very best lessons, teachers share objectives and expectations for learning and behaviour openly with students and enforce these firmly. Teachers plan well and work hard for their students. Students show good attitudes to learning

mathematics. They make good use of a wide range of resources to make lessons interesting and assess accurately how students are progressing. However, despite this, students in Years 7 to 9 sometimes behave badly and this is not managed well enough by some teachers. In Years 10 and 11, learning is never less than satisfactory. This is because students are more mature and show more respect for their teachers.

66. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of faculty is new to the role and has ensured a unified approach to good planning and assessment along with a strong focus on making the best use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics. There is good extra-curricular support for all types of students and a real drive to improve standards of numeracy. The faculty runs smoothly but there is work to be done in ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

67. Though their mathematical skills are below average, they are adequate for the students to cope with the numerical demands of the rest of the curriculum. This is due to the school's drive since the last inspection to promote numeracy across the curriculum – a key issue at the last inspection. All subject areas have received advice on how mathematics can be developed in their curriculum and teachers meet regularly to track how this can be further improved. In ICT, for example, students use formulae well in spreadsheets and interpret a wide range of graphs meaningfully. In geography, a project on rubbish recycling reinforced the sound skills in data handling that are consistently well developed in this subject. Students in science handle data adequately and draw and interpret graphs accurately. In art and design, students have a good grasp of perspective and scaling and in design and technology, they measure and weigh accurately.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The successful implementation of the National Strategy for science has improved the quality of teaching.
- Standards achieved in GCSE science examinations are lower than in most other subjects and need to improve.
- Attitudes and behaviour of students are generally good and underpin their achievement.
- The sharing of good practice in teaching is underdeveloped.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to extend student's learning.

### **Commentary**

68. National Curriculum test results taken by Year 9 students in 2004 were below the national average and lower than might have been expected in terms of student's prior attainment. Students did better in similar English and mathematics tests than they did in their science tests. Results of GCSE science examinations for grades A\*-C were markedly below the national average and lower than in recent years.

69. Current standards in Year 9 are below average but represent satisfactory achievement for these students. Students enter the school with well below average attainment and with literacy deficits that act as an initial barrier to learning. For example, middle and lower-attaining students have a limited knowledge and understanding of key scientific words that they might reasonably be expected to know and this holds their learning back in science. However, as the result of teaching which is predominantly satisfactory, they make adequate progress over time and their achievement is satisfactory. For example, higher-attaining Year 9 students can work out the number of atomic particles present in an element from its position in the Periodic Table. On the other hand, middle and lower-attaining students struggle with some aspects of this theory, for example, evaluating the element's electronic configuration.
70. Current standards of work in Year 11 are also below average. However, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory because students are continuing to improve at a satisfactory rate relative to their starting point in Year 9. For example, students improve their experimental and investigative skills satisfactorily because many lessons involve practical work. Students with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language make the same satisfactory progress as other students due to the support they receive from teachers and other staff.
71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some very good teaching was seen during the inspection. However, there is at present no mechanism in the department by which this very good practice can be disseminated. Teachers have a good command of the subject areas they teach. As a result, explanations of theories and concepts are usually clear and this improves students' learning. Lessons are usually well planned. Most follow a three-part lesson structure and this improves the overall quality of teaching because it gives lessons a much sharper focus on learning. Day-to-day work is regularly monitored but students would benefit from an indication of the standard they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Teachers are increasingly using ICT to improve lesson delivery but individual students do not use it to promote or extend their learning, for example, by the use of dataloggers. Behaviour is usually well managed and students' attitudes to work are good. However, where teaching is weaker the result is less engagement on the part of the students and a slower rate of progress.
72. The leadership and management of the subject area are satisfactory. The absence of a permanent head of department in the current academic year has resulted in only moderately effective monitoring of the work of the department and taking action to improve. Despite this, teachers and support staff have worked well together as a team to ensure that the department functions efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The new leadership now needs to focus on raising overall standards in the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

In Years 7 to 9, all students follow a course in ICT. In Years 10 and 11, students either follow a discrete course in ICT or ICT is taught to them in a number of subjects of the curriculum.

Overall, provision for ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**



- Teaching is good overall and much of it is very good, consequently students learn well.
- Year 9 test results were above average compared with similar schools; students achieved well.
- GCSE results in 2004 were well below average but standards seen are much better than this – the effect of better teaching and more effective leadership.
- Marking is thorough, well recorded and used well to provide thorough evaluations of the work of the department.
- During lessons, students do not often assess their own work and decide how to improve it.

## Commentary

73. Teachers' assessment results for Year 9 in 2004 were about average in comparison with the national average and higher attaining students did particularly well. GCSE results, on the other hand, were well below average. In lessons and students' records, current standards in both Years 9 and 11 are about average and in both years the standard achieved by the higher attaining students is well above average. Improvement, especially in Years 10 and 11, has been rapid and is due to new courses introduced swiftly as staff have changed. There is now a full complement of specialist teachers, which, with new leadership, is quickly raising standards.
74. Students' achievements in Years 7 to 9 and 10 to 11 are good because lessons are demanding. They are very well planned so that students know what to do and, as a result, they succeed and their morale rises so that they continue to work hard. Boys and girls and students from all ethnic groups do equally well. Good support from teachers and clear instructions ensure that students with special educational needs achieve well.
75. Overall, teaching and learning are good and, in many lessons seen, they were very good. Teachers have a good command of their subject; planning is very good and provides many opportunities for students to learn independently but sometimes teachers lead for longer than necessary. Discipline and relationships are always good. This fosters good attitudes to learning so that students work hard and learn well. Teachers use ICT skilfully to interest students and to ensure that lessons move on quickly. Well-prepared teaching materials are shared and made available to students by making good use of the school network. Literacy skills, for example through drafting and re-drafting, are taught well. Some tasks provide opportunities for students of different abilities to achieve well but sometimes higher attainers need more demanding work and sometimes opportunities for discussion are missed.
76. Leadership and management are both good. New courses have been introduced to all year groups and the National Strategy is used well in Years 7 to 9. Good use is made, particularly in the GNVQ course, of vocational applications of ICT that interest students and improve the achievement of lower attaining students. A flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers a range of courses that are well suited to the needs of students of all abilities. Development plans are good; they provide continuity between Years 9 and 10 and prepare for new vocational courses in the future. Records of marks are very thorough; they are used to evaluate the success of teaching and the curriculum and to provide targets for tests and examinations. However students are not, except in GNVQ courses, regularly asked to assess their own work and to decide how to improve it.

77. Improvement recently has been good. Since the last inspection GCSE results declined but this trend has been reversed and good use is now made of vocational courses to motivate students and raise standards. In Years 10 and 11, work is carefully monitored and recorded. Resources and their management are very good and teaching is better than it was.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum**

78. Current standards in ICT skills are in line with national standards and are sufficient for students to cope well with the use of ICT across the curriculum. The use of ICT in mathematics and music is very good and it is good in many other subjects including English, design and technology, history, geography and in media studies. Students learn well how to use word processing and presentation software, which they make good use of to complete their coursework. Spreadsheets are used regularly in mathematics where students learn to tabulate data, plot graphs and analyse information. Good provision in this broad range of subjects ensures that statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are met for students who do not follow a discrete ICT course.
79. In many subjects, ICT is used to increase opportunities for independent learning. In English it is particularly effective in interesting and motivating students, especially boys. In ICT courses and in geography, computers are used well to improve students' literacy. Physical education teachers use ICT well but in science and religious education it is not used enough.
80. Many teachers use projectors and interactive whiteboards to skilfully increase the pace of lessons and to generate student interest. The school network is very well managed and allows teachers to produce quality teaching materials that are shared with colleagues and students. Equipment levels are excellent and well-managed investment in ICT, and training to use it, is raising standards by improving learning in many subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Overall, provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Some innovative teaching requires students to think for themselves and results in good learning.
- Poor literacy skills, insufficient extended writing, the poor attendance of some students and the poor attitude of some boys inhibit their achievement.
- Very good relationships mean that students work cooperatively and respond well to teachers.
- The increased use of ICT is helping to promote independent learning skills and to hold the interest of boys.

## Commentary

81. Current standards in Year 9 are below the national average but this represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points in Year 7. Students with English as additional language make equivalent progress. Students with special educational needs also make equivalent progress because teachers provide good learning materials. Gifted and talented students achieve well when they are given difficult enough work. Some Year 9 gifted and talented students have extra tuition in essay writing and write good accounts of their extra curricular visits, for example, to the Lancashire Fusiliers Museum but, overall, there is not enough extended writing.
82. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall and achievement from their previous attainment in Year 9 is satisfactory. GCSE results remain below the national average and, in 2004, students tended to do worse in history than in their other subjects. The emphasis placed on the teaching of examination techniques enables Year 11 students to evaluate and grade model answers. Year 10 students are able to assess the reliability of sources and explain their decisions. Oral work is good because students respond well to questioning and are keen to join in class discussion, but they do not write well. Extra-curricular revision classes are provided for students who need extra help. However, achievement overall is inhibited by the poor literacy skills and also by the poor attendance of some students and a reluctance on the part of some boys to apply themselves to academic work.
83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and much of it is good. Good guidance and clear explanations of learning objectives mean that students know what is expected of them. They are learning good historical skills, for example, how to recognise bias and to be selective with evidence. As a result of the good management of classes, and careful questioning, students provide much of the information needed to move the lesson along at a good pace. Occasionally, not enough is demanded of students so that their interest fades, but in most lessons students are kept fully involved. ICT is used effectively to promote independent learning, particularly for very good project work, and to provide a stimulus for boys' learning. Effective multimedia presentations set historical scenes vividly. For example, students are able to 'walk' into Auschwitz. Assessment procedures are in place and students know their individual targets but assessment exercises in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not moderated and marking is not diagnostic enough. Extra-curricular expeditions to places of historical interest expand students' outlooks and develop further their social and academic maturity.
84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The specialist teachers work very well as a team. The head of department provides good support, particularly for the non-specialists who teach the split classes (the result of having to timetable across a split site). The head of department adapts to changing circumstances and has, for example, introduced a GCSE module on Multicultural Britain in order to reflect the cultural diversity of the school. Assessment and marking procedures and the literacy policy need to be further developed. Recent improvement, in particular the use of ICT, is satisfactory. The history department is forward looking, committed to raising achievement and ensuring students continuing enjoyment of the subject.

## Geography

Overall, provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership is providing a clear vision for improvement but there are too few opportunities available for close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning across the department.
- Good teaching and learning enable students to achieve well in Years 7 – 9.
- In Years 10 and 11, low literacy levels, erratic attendance and poor concentration in lessons reduce the achievement of some students.
- Good assessment tasks are used to show students how well they are doing and how to improve.

## **Commentary**

85. At the end of Year 9, standards of work are below average but this represents good achievement from the students' starting point in geographical understanding when they enter the school. Many students have difficulty in understanding, using and remembering geographical vocabulary and so their written work lacks accuracy. However, they participate with enthusiasm and interest in topical discussions. Students carry out imaginative investigative work, for example on aspects of waste disposal and recycling, enabling the most capable to produce quality reports illustrated by accurate, well-presented data. Teachers give good individual support in lessons to students with special educational needs, enabling them to achieve as well as other students.
86. Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 were well below the national average, particularly for the high proportion of boys. Results have fluctuated in recent years, as has the relative success of boys compared with girls, but they have generally been in line with the school average. Standards of work seen in the current Years 10 and 11, on the other hand, are better than this. Students with a wide range of attainment, mainly boys, opt to study geography. Well-motivated students, for example, those in the current Year 11, respond very well to revision techniques that boost their confidence and show them how to use their knowledge successfully. Strategies for improving coursework this year are helping to raise standards, particularly for boys. Achievement is satisfactory compared to their Year 9 attainment. Students in Year 10 are able to identify and discuss patterns of tourist activity, but concentration and achievement deteriorate for those who find it difficult to write extended answers due to their relatively low literacy levels. A significant number of students fail to attend school regularly, or to arrive on time for lessons, and so their work is incomplete.
87. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have developed a range of dramatic geographical images which they use to widen students' awareness and understanding of the world beyond their own local environment. The good use of computer technology helps to sustain interest and to speed up the pace of learning. There is a constant focus on techniques designed to help students to improve their writing, for example, through the use of model answers. A good series of tasks are assessed accurately to show students the levels they have reached, how to improve their work and how to become more independent learners. However, this good practice is not always evident in day-to-day marking – more is needed to improve students' overall literacy skills.

88. Sound leadership has established high aspirations, a constant focus on improvement and generous co-operation and support amongst colleagues. Management under difficult practical conditions is satisfactory although there are too few opportunities available for close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning across the department. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

### **Religious education**

Overall, provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In Years 7 to 9, students learn well and achieve well because of good teaching and their own good attitudes.
- Unsatisfactory staffing and assessment in the Year 10 GCSE short course are barriers to the majority of students achieving higher standards.
- Students' weak literacy skills affect standards in religious education.
- The GCSE full course is very well taught and students' achievement, underpinned by their very positive attitudes to learning, is very good.
- In all year groups, not enough use is made of computers to help students learn.

### **Commentary**

89. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below average. Given their well below average starting points this represents good achievement for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs. All students know something of the principal religious beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other major world religions, particularly Islam. However, only a minority of students are able to draw out similarities and differences between religions, and their overall reading and writing skills, particularly when expressing their views at any length, are barriers to their attaining higher standards. Their positive attitudes support their learning.
90. GCSE short course results in 2004 were below average but the highest ever for religious education. All Year 11 students took the short course and the proportion of students entered for the examination was above average. There were no full course entries.
91. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall and achievement from their previous attainment in Year 9 is satisfactory. Results in the current Year 11 GCSE full course are above average. All groups of students, including gifted and talented students, have very good attitudes to learning and are achieving very well. They can make mature judgments on the diversity of belief and practice within religions. Their knowledge and understanding of the main features of Islam are particularly well developed. The majority of students take the short course. It was not possible to see any Year 11 GCSE short course classes or work. Standards in Year 10 are below average overall. Standards in classes with specialist teaching match the national average and students are achieving well. They have a good understanding of some key issues, such as wealth and poverty, arguments for the existence of God and the basis for a Christian attitude to racism. Few, however, can write at length about what they believe, using the correct terminology. In the majority of classes, where teaching is not specialist, what students study is not consolidated into real understanding and achievement is no better than satisfactory.

92. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 where specialist teaching ensures that lessons set challenging objectives, are well planned and where management skills ensure students devote the maximum time to new learning. Teaching in the full GCSE course is very good and students' attitudes to their work are very positive. Specialist, skilful teaching ensures that what is taught is challenging, accurate and focused on students obtaining the highest possible marks, especially in their coursework. Teaching in the short course is satisfactory overall. In the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen students were allowed to waste too much time chatting and fooling about and not enough learning took place. However, teaching in Year 10 is satisfactory and some of it, where specialist teachers are involved, is good. Overall, relationships are good and this encourages students to want to learn. Planning is good and structured to new learning. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Students have little idea how well they are doing in relation to GCSE targets and their written work contains insufficient advice on what they have to do to improve and gain a higher grade. In all year groups, the use of ICT to support students' learning is unsatisfactory as little use is made of computers, either in lessons or as homework tasks.
93. Leadership and management are satisfactory. During the temporary absence of the head of department, the current leadership team is ensuring that the subject does not lose its focus on raising standards of achievement. However, in the GCSE short course, staffing and the over complicated staff deployment – each teacher teaches one topic to each of ten groups over the year – are issues that need to be tackled as they are a barrier to raising achievement further. The subject does not do enough to help students improve their basic English skills. For example, its marking policy pays insufficient attention to helping students improve their spelling, punctuation or grammar. 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 satisfactory.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Overall, provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### **Strengths and areas for development**

- Students achieve well because they and their teachers work together to make good use of the much-improved accommodation and learning resources.
- Standards are improving but could be higher still if there was more innovation or discovery in students' work and the link between designing and making was made stronger.
- The faculty is well led and managed and there is good capacity to improve further.
- There are some weaknesses in resistant materials, especially in the way the design process and the correct use of tools and equipment are taught.
- There is inconsistency in the way students' work is assessed.

#### **Commentary**

94. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 matched the national average but were too generous. The GCSE results in 2004 were below average but better than other subjects in the school and improved on those of 2003 and at the last inspection.

Results were better in systems and control, electronics and food and textiles than they were in resistant materials.

95. The current work in school is below average but improving. From Year 7 onwards, students are making increasing use of good quality computer-aided designing and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) equipment when they design and make small household objects or three-dimensional images from digital photography. They make good use of computers to present their research and findings in carefully organised folios, especially in food studies and textiles. Standards in resistant materials are lower than in the other disciplines because the link between designing and making is not strong enough and tools are used incorrectly and inaccurately. Recognising the students' low knowledge and skills when they enter school, achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. The work at the end of Year 11 is close to average, overall, and students continue to achieve well. Design folios in food studies and textiles are very well organised. Practical skills are much improved although drawing skills are weak. Students have difficulty writing or talking about their work or relating it to the work of famous designers. There is some lack of innovation or experimentation in students' work and too many design CD racks or storage systems rather than investigating more original designs and exploiting the technology available within the faculty. Lower attaining students make good progress because their teachers appreciate their special needs while the higher attainers make good progress, especially in textiles where the work more often reflects the multi-cultural nature of the student body. Students who are in the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress but occasionally experience difficulty understanding the work.
96. Teaching and learning are good. The best teaching and learning occurs in Years 10 and 11, particularly in food studies and textiles. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well, making good use of CAD/CAM to allow a view of industrial methods. The students' good attitudes and relationships with teachers are a feature of the faculty. Students do not reflect on their progress or that of their classmates well enough. Assessment methods are not applied consistently, marking sometimes lacks helpful comments and spelling errors are often ignored. Year 11 students made very good progress because of their teacher's imaginative way of giving them full responsibility for their own learning when revising for their GCSE examination. Students in resistant materials occasionally have to work with the debris of previous lessons on the benches and floor. Learning was unsatisfactory in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson because the teacher's expectations of industry and behaviour were not high enough, and in a food studies lesson when the teacher failed to capture and hold the attention of Year 7 students assessing the qualities of a pasta salad.
97. The faculty is well led and managed. The head of faculty has overseen significant improvements to the accommodation, resources and courses that are helping raise standards and provide an understanding of the use of technology in society and the world of work. Single-sex GCSE groups are helping to raise attainment. The use of ICT is central to the improvement since the last inspection. Students' achievement has improved to good, especially in food, textiles, systems and control, electronics and graphic products. There is strong teamwork and a capacity to improve yet further. Improvement overall is satisfactory rather than good since weaknesses in resistant materials identified last time have not yet been well enough addressed.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Art and design and music were inspected in depth and media studies and drama were sampled.

One lesson of the recently introduced media studies GCSE course was inspected. Teaching, learning and achievement were good. Students were very interested in the lesson and used computers confidently, showing above average ICT skills.

Three lessons of drama were observed. One excellent lesson was seen in Year 10 in which the students' finished performances were exceptionally good. In two lessons seen in Years 7 and 8, teaching was satisfactory. Drama is taught by a specialist head of department and by a number of non-specialist teachers.

### **Art and design**

Overall, provision in art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well because very good teaching promotes very good attitudes, very high technical skills and rapid learning.
- Standards are well above average and the best in the school.
- Students do not experiment or investigate with methods or materials well enough to allow the level of independent learning expected in such high attainers.
- Students find it difficult to talk or write about their work, explaining its merit in art and design language.

### **Commentary**

98. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were average. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average, the best in the school and improved since the last inspection. The students' current work is well above average. Compared to their below average attainment when they arrive in school the students' achievement at the end of Years 9 and 11 is very good. Drawing is central to the students' work from Year 7 onwards and their use of line, tone and colour is soon well above average. Research sheets are particularly well presented, reflecting the students' pride in their work, although as with drawing, their research tends to be overworked. Their use of watercolour and oil paint, often with mixed media is also well above average. The work is influenced by European and multi-cultural art and crafts and current political and social events. Compositions in clay and mixed media, including pots by Year 8 students, influenced by the ceramicist Kate Malone, are of a remarkable standard. Older students are increasingly confident using their practical skills in large scale two and three-dimensional compositions. Highly finished work is displayed to good effect in the department and around the school. The lower attainers make very good progress because the teachers ensure their progress in lessons as they circulate, assessing and encouraging them in their work. Higher attainers also make very good progress and four times the national average gained the highest GCSE grades in 2004. (There were four A\* and seven A grades out of an entry of 37 students, and a further six A\* and six A grades in pottery, out of an entry of 15).

99. There are some areas for development: students find it difficult to talk or write about their work in any critical way, a problem not restricted to art and design. Drawing is



mainly used as another way of making a picture rather than to collect particular information. Surprisingly little work is done on computers. Attention to these points would make achievement in art and design truly excellent!

100. Teaching and learning are very good, overall, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and bring a range of interests to their work, promoting the very good attitudes at the heart of the students' success. Lessons are very well planned and compelling demonstrations highlight the teachers' expectations. Students respond eagerly to new processes as they are introduced. Lessons are very well managed and learning is rapid. Insufficient investigation and experimentation in sketchbooks or regular discussion of progress leads these high attaining students to rely more on their teachers for guidance than expected. Information from assessment is not used to set short-term targets, encouraging independence.
101. The students' very good achievement and high standards of attainment make it clear that the head of department leads and manages his strong and talented team effectively. There is little formal monitoring of teaching and learning but the head of department has a clear view of the work being done in his department. Courses maximise the department's resources but difficulty accessing computers makes full delivery of the National Curriculum impossible. The main art area is open-plan, encouraging a creative atmosphere but through traffic and noise from adjoining teaching areas often interfere with reflection. Other departments use the rooms in the lower school, preventing permanent displays or still life groups. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Achievement, teaching and learning, and leadership and management have improved and standards have risen. Investigation and experimentation remain relatively weak.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students respond well to the generally satisfactory teaching and show satisfactory achievement overall.
- In Years 7- 9, learning is supported by some very good resources but in Years 10 and 11 the deficiency in available resources contributes to the below average standards.
- Music in Years 10 and 11 is taught in poor conditions which undervalue the subject and the accommodation for music in Years 7-9 is most uneven and results in inconsistencies in the standards of teaching and learning.

## **Commentary**

102. Students' standards at entry in Year 7 are generally much below average. The most recent teacher assessments in Year 9 indicate that standards are now well up to average. Achievement in relation to this starting point is therefore generally good although there is some underachievement in Year 7. This is partly because of poor acoustics in one of the music rooms and also to some lack of detail in lesson planning. Written work is well presented and Year 9 students have a good knowledge of the keyboard and a good understanding overall. Students in Year 8 use the computer sequencing programs well in their composition exercise and also show that they can listen well to recorded music. Students with special educational needs and those for

whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other students. Much of the practical work is very accessible. Students are able to work at their own pace and receive good support from their teachers.

103. In recent years the number of students taking music at GCSE has varied considerably although it has generally remained low and comparison to national standards has little relevance. Students in the most recent group to take GCSE all performed in music at a standard very comparable to their other subjects. Current listening standards in Year 11 are lower than average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall but there is evidence of lack of security of knowledge around the key works and periods.
104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some is good. The good lessons are well planned but sometimes more detailed planning could ensure that plenary sessions are more effective in helping students to share their work. The best teaching was in Year 9 lessons where the good quality work sheets were a support to the teacher's very effective explanations and demonstrations. The students respond well to their tasks and often show a marked maturity in the manner in which they work together at the keyboards and in their often excellent attitudes.
105. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are, though, some inconsistencies in the provision for music. In the lower school the very good resources to support learning are only available in one of the two music rooms. The other room lacks any appeal and has unhelpful acoustics that do little to enhance the teaching and learning experience. The accommodation for Years 10 and 11 is poor and quite inadequate. There are no facilities for using the computer programs which are so usual at this stage and the general ethos is depressing. The number of students taking music in Years 10 and 11 has varied very much and has never been large. However, it is encouraging that the take up for music in Year 10 in 2005-6 is substantially larger than recently but it is a matter of considerable concern that some of the teaching will have to be, as in the present Year 10, after the normal school day as a 'twilight' session.
106. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards by the end of Year 9 have certainly risen and there is no problem with the timetable provision. Students listen well to recorded music, and to each other, but familiarity with the conventions of notation are not well developed and Year 7 singing still lacks development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Overall, provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching results in a very positive attitude from students and leads to good achievement overall.
- Extra-curricular provision in physical education and dance is very good and provides students with many additional opportunities for active participation.
- The leadership and management of a committed and enthusiastic group of teachers are good, resulting in an excellent team spirit and consistency of approach.
- Assessment procedures do not always provide an accurate reflection of attainment at the end of Year 9.

## Commentary

107. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicate that standards are well below average. Inspection findings show standards to be higher than this. In the current Year 9, attainment is broadly average. GCSE results in 2004 were just below the national average. Most students reached their target grades and they gained better results in physical education than in their other subjects. Standards among examination students in the current Year 11 are very similar to those of last year, but are higher in Year 10. All seven candidates who studied dance at GCSE level outside of normal lessons gained A\*-C grades. Current standards in dance are above average. Standards in National Curriculum physical education are average overall. A significant number of students, including those identified as gifted and talented, reach above average standards in athletics, cricket, football, netball, rounders, rugby league and volleyball. Several students compete at district, county and, in the case of gymnastics, national level.
108. Given the very wide level of ability on entry, students' overall achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. In National Curriculum physical education in Year 11, achievement is also good. This is because students continue to receive two hours a week of timetabled provision and because the majority of students retain their interest and level of commitment. The achievement of students following the examination course is very good, particularly in the practical elements of the syllabus. Students with special educational needs, several of whom are taking the GCSE examination, achieve as well as others, so also do those students for whom English is an additional language.
109. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are consistently good and are sometimes very good or excellent. Lessons are planned in considerable detail and relationships are relaxed but purposeful. A variety of good quality resources, including ICT, are used very effectively to support learning. The willingness of students to work constructively with their teachers is apparent in all lessons. This contributes to the progress that they make. Behaviour is very good and participation rates are high. Helped by several other teachers, the departmental staff provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities throughout the year at lunchtimes and after school. These are well attended by students.
110. The head of department has been in post for less than two years. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work very well together and are mutually supportive. Very good improvement since the last inspection has seen the provision of impressive new facilities on the upper school site, including an athletics track and sports hall. These are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Dance is now offered as a GCSE subject as part of the curriculum. Links with primary schools and other organizations have improved significantly as a result of the involvement of the School Sports Coordinator who is also responsible for running the Junior Sports Leaders Award as part of the extra-curricular programme. During the inspection, students officiated very competently in a football tournament for primary school students. At present, there is no designated room for teaching the theoretical elements of the two examination courses. Such a facility would help teachers in their quest to raise standards, and would also support the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In 2003, the department successfully re-applied for the Sportsmark Award.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

At present, the school has few vocational courses but plans are well advanced to adapt the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, in order to include new vocational qualifications in art and design and physical education. GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism and ICT are now established in Year 10 and will continue through to Year 11 next year. The latter is reported on in detail in the ICT section above. One leisure and tourism lesson was sampled. Standards were above average and teaching, learning and achievement were all satisfactory.

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

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught by form teachers, together with citizenship, in specific lessons on a twice weekly basis. The programme covers all the statutory subject matter relating to drugs, sex and relationships and careers education. The PHSE coordinator provides teachers with topic books containing all the information they require. The coordinator does not have a full overview of the course because teachers decide in what order they will teach the modules. Three PHSE lessons were observed in Year 7. In these lessons, the quality of teaching and learning was good overall. Very relevant subject matter is taught in a lively manner that capitalises well on the teachers' good relationship with students. As a result of carefully-planned and well-managed lessons, students are learning to work cooperatively, to listen to each other and to appreciate the impact their actions have on other people.

### **Citizenship**

Overall provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

- A well-planned programme provides the required curricular coverage.
- Topics are well focused and made relevant to the every day lives of students.
- Assessment is a relative weakness partly due to the relative lack of written work to assess.

### **Commentary**

111. Citizenship is delivered in discrete lessons by form teachers through the PHSE programme. There is also some effective cross-curricular contributions to the subject. For example, the religious studies department deals with cultural diversity, geography with environmental issues and history course work focuses on multicultural Britain. The citizenship coordinator has produced detailed handbooks for each topic so that teachers have clear guidance yet are able to choose the method by which they deliver the topic. The programme is discussed and, if necessary, amended in regular meeting between the coordinator and the teachers.
112. In the lessons observed, standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. There is evidence of enthusiasm for the subject and many students contribute well to class discussion. Year 9 students understand the comparison made between parliament and their school council. They are also able to define and discuss the opposing features of democracy and dictatorship. Year 11 students' interest is caught by a review of the recent parliamentary election and they are able to make informed comments about the results and the politicians involved.
113. Most students in the current Years 9 and 11 enter the school with low prior attainment in literacy, and achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory because students appreciate the relevance of the topics they study and want to explore further. At the

end of Year 11, achievement is satisfactory but less so than in Years 7 to 9 because it is hindered by the unsatisfactory attendance of some students. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make equal progress to that of others because almost all the work is done orally and there are opportunities for all students to contribute at their own level.

114. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. It is confident and lively and results in satisfactory learning which is constantly reinforced by effective questioning and discussion. Most classes are well managed, lessons are well planned and learning objectives clearly explained so that students know exactly what is expected of them. In a Year 11 lesson, students achieved a good understanding of the process by which a bill becomes law because of the clarity of the explanation given by the teacher. Learning is made relevant, for example, by Year 8 students watching a video on a boy's campaign for election to his school council and relating it to their own experience. In the lessons seen the sharp focus on every day issues is giving students a better understanding of what is happening around them. Students are benefiting academically and socially because they are being encouraged to think for themselves and being given the opportunity to express their individual opinions.
115. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The citizenship programme is well planned and organised. The school provides good opportunities for the development of the social, communication skills and sense of responsibility necessary for good citizenship. For example, under the auspices of the history department and Help the Aged, Year 8 students meet and talk regularly with older people and produce excellent booklets detailing their early lives from the stories they tell. The school has good contacts with outside agencies, for example, the Fire Service. The existing assessment procedures need developing further. Citizenship is recognised by the school as an area for further development and is being given a higher profile under the guidance of a newly appointed assistant head.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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