

INSPECTION REPORT

WAKEFIELD CITY HIGH SCHOOL

Wakefield, West Yorkshire

LEA area: Wakefield

Unique reference number: 108272

Headteacher: Alan Yellup

Lead inspector: Bill Stoneham

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th March 2005

Inspection number: 268503

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

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Terms used in this report

Key Stage 3 refers to pupils in Year 7 who have transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of Year 6. **Key Stage 4** refers to pupils who are in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and programmes of study set out in the **National Curriculum**. A course in religious education is a requirement for pupils of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**).

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

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. The term **SENCO** refers to the special needs co-ordinator. An **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education and **WRL** refers to work-related learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	640
School address:	Warmfield View Wakefield West Yorkshire
Postcode:	WF1 4SF
Telephone number:	01924 303755
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Anderson
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wakefield City High School is a growing, mixed 11-16 comprehensive school serving the industrial city of Wakefield, West Yorkshire. There are similar numbers of boys and girls and most live close by, with many walking to school. The school is considerably smaller than average with 640 pupils attending. At the time of the inspection, the school had just been informed that its application to become a specialist mathematics and computing college had been successful. The school has received many other local and national accolades, including being a Beacon School and a Leading Edge School. It mainly serves areas of high social deprivation. Standards on entry to Year 7 are well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average, though the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is above average. The ethnic mix of the school reflects that of the surrounding area. Approximately 75 per cent are of White British heritage with a number of other heritages being represented, especially Asian or Asian British Pakistani. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is high, with 68 pupils being at an early stage of English acquisition. There are also small numbers from traveller, refugee and asylum seeking families, though the school's mobility factor is low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector	
18989	Bernard Mason	Team inspector	English
4926	Thelma Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
27050	Valerie Blackburn	Team Inspector	Science
2079	Trevor Slack	Team Inspector	Design and technology
2048	Doug Masterton	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology
27666	John Dockrell	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages
28101	Andrew Lagden	Team Inspector	History
33015	Roger Winter	Team Inspector	Citizenship Geography
10053	Janet Simms	Team Inspector	Art and design
31701	Graham Rutland	Team Inspector	Music
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team Inspector	Physical education
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	22
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	42

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Wakefield City High is an excellent school. Pupils join the school with low standards, particularly in terms of their key literacy and numeracy skills, and they achieve extremely well to reach standards in Year 11 that are in line with national averages in most subjects. Teaching, leadership and management are very good, as is the value for money provided.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational, and that offered by other key staff is very good.
- The overall level of achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, is excellent because of the very good and often excellent quality of teaching provided.
- Provision in many subjects, including English and mathematics, is very good; in music and work-related learning it is excellent.
- The curriculum benefits greatly from the school's very good partnerships with the local community.
- The pupils' achievements are significantly enhanced by very good assessment procedures.
- Attitudes to learning are good; the school is harmonious because all pupils are valued.
- The provision for ICT across the curriculum is inconsistent, and is not meeting statutory requirements in some subjects.

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in March 1999. The key issues identified then have been addressed well and standards are now far higher. The school has been particularly successful in recruiting and retaining many skilled staff. It has developed its curriculum very well and its work has received many local and national accolades, including its recent designation as a specialist mathematics and computing college. However, it still has difficulties in providing a daily act of collective worship because of a shortage of space.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is excellent. The pupils enter Year 7 with standards that are well below average; crucially, their literacy and numeracy skills are particularly low. Very good teaching, support and care in Years 7, 8 and 9 result in very good progress and achievement across the range of subjects. Standards are rising, although in many subjects they are still below average in Year 9. The very good teaching and achievement continue in Years 10 and 11 and the rising trend in standards is sustained, so that in most subjects

standards reach the national average by Year 11. In religious education, Urdu and music pupils do particularly well and standards are above average; notably so in music. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations matched the average of all schools nationally, but were much better than those in similar schools. Between Years 7 and 11 the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, achieve so highly because they are consistently very well taught, very well supported and valued.

The pupils' personal qualities are good. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Assessment procedures are very good, as is the curriculum, though there are some statutory infringements in the delivery of ICT. Enrichment opportunities are good and community links are very good. Links with parents are satisfactory and pupils receive good academic support. Induction arrangements into Year 7 are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership and management skills of the headteacher are excellent and those of other key staff are very good. Governance is good and governors offer strong support. They know there is no daily act of collective worship and the infringements in the provision of ICT are acknowledged and are highlighted in the current school development plan. All other statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Many parents are reticent about becoming involved directly in school life, but they value the school and think that it is effective. The pupils value their school. They believe that they are taught at least well and most are appreciative of the opportunities offered.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the provision in ICT, ensuring that the statutory requirements are met across the range of subjects and for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

and, to meet other statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement overall is excellent. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average, but by the end of Year 11 they match the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is excellent because of the very good teaching that is provided.
- Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language achieve excellently because they are so well supported and encouraged.
- Very good assessment systems also contribute significantly to the very high levels of achievement.

Commentary

1. The school recruits pupils into Year 7 from a small number of primary schools. Standards on entry are well below average, and many pupils have skills in literacy and numeracy that are particularly poor. Information offered by the local education authority (LEA) showed that standards in two of the feeder primary schools are in the bottom five per cent of all primary schools nationally. The LEA data also shows that during the five years that pupils spend at this school, most make progress in their standards of work that is much higher than expected. Thus, by Year 9 standards have risen, although they are still below average overall. The pupils' achievement is very good. By Year 11, standards make another significant jump, rising to a level that is comparable to national averages. Between Years 7 and 11, achievement is excellent. GCSE results are now significantly better than when the school was last inspected, with the level of improvement being far greater than that recorded nationally. GCSE results also exceed the challenging targets set annually by governors.
2. The high levels of achievement are attributable to very good teaching, allied to the care, support and encouragement that are offered to all pupils irrespective of their ability or background. In the 2004 national tests for Year 9 pupils in English, mathematics and science, results overall were well below the national average for all schools. However, when compared to similar schools, standards were average in all three subjects. This outcome represents very good achievement when the pupils' performances are judged in terms of their prior levels of attainment.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30 (29.2)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	32.3 (30.2)	n/a (35.4)
Science	28.8 (28.9)	n/a (33.6)

There were 129 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

NB: The figures quoted above are unvalidated. At the time of the inspection, no national data for 2004 was available.

3. The contribution made by English and mathematics to this outcome is significant and indicates what can be done when lessons are well prepared, classes are taught by highly competent and committed staff and expectations are high. There are other factors at work. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well because of the quality of support they are offered. Achievement is further boosted because of a range of very good assessment procedures, including an in-house *Going Green* system which allows pupils of all abilities to meet with success by achieving individual, yet challenging, targets. Other factors also contribute: the school has been able to recruit and retain a number of highly competent teachers and considerable time and effort are expended to ensure that pupils attend regularly. The commitment of staff cannot be faulted and the pupils invariably respond positively to the challenges presented to them. The cumulative effect of so much good practice is that achievement is very good with most pupils exceeding their targets by the end of Year 9.
4. For present pupils in Year 9, standards overall are below average. In individual subjects, standards are below average in English, geography, history, design and technology, ICT and art and design. In French, mathematics, science, physical education and citizenship, standards are average and they rise to above average in religious education and music. Achievement is satisfactory in geography and good in science, design and technology, physical education, ICT, art and design and citizenship. In French, mathematics and history, achievement is very good, but in English, religious education and music, the pupils' levels of achievement are excellent. Across Years 7 to 9, achievement is, therefore, very good overall.
5. There was a significant improvement in GCSE results in 2004 with the headline figure of 5 A* to C grades increasing by an impressive 44 per cent. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2004 were average when compared to all schools nationally, based on the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades at A* to C and when based on total GCSE points per pupil in their best eight subjects. When compared to similar schools based on prior attainment, results were well above average on both measures. The outcomes for similar schools in 2004 were similar to those in 2003. However, a comparison with national data for value added shows the school to be in the top five per cent nationally. This represents excellent achievement.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (36)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33.3 (29.5)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 110 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. For current pupils in Years 10 and 11, standards are average overall and achievement is very good. In mathematics, history, art and design and citizenship, standards are below average. They are average in all other subjects except religious education and Urdu, where they are above average, and in music where standards are well above average.
7. Levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are very good for all pupils. In individual subjects, achievement is satisfactory in physical education and it is good in French, science, design and technology, art and design, citizenship and Urdu. In mathematics, geography, history, ICT and

music, pupils achieve very well and their achievements in English and religious education are excellent. The cumulative effect over time of such consistently high quality teaching is that achievement is excellent. Various measures offered by the school and the LEA indicate that by the end of Year 11 the attainments of many pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, are far in excess of what is predicted based on prior attainment. This again represents excellent achievement overall.

8. Pupils with all types of special educational needs achieve as well as others in each subject. It is very noticeable that almost all pupils, regardless of their special need, gain a GCSE qualification in English and mathematics before they leave school. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well in the imaginative activities provided for them in Years 10 and 11 that are alternatives to the conventional GCSE courses.
9. There is very good provision for pupils who have English as an additional language. For pupils at an early stage of learning English, the specialist staff prepare separate programmes to match individual needs. Where subjects have a large visual content teachers support these pupils in normal classes, and in these groups the specialist support teachers also help other pupils in the group. In addition there are one-to-one sessions, small groups and work packs so that these pupils can work in the learning support area. On Fridays all those pupils at an early stage, whatever their first language, meet together for open conversation and an opportunity to discuss their own culture. Very good monitoring and assessment of these pupils at all stages show that the school's strategies enable excellent achievement. Socially these pupils are well integrated in the school community. Throughout the school there are many pupils with English as an additional language who are working at the level of the other pupils. On an incidental basis these pupils are given support on finer points of language and culture. Pupils are offered the opportunity to study Urdu at GCSE and have very high success rates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attitudes and behaviour in lessons enhance learning and achievement.
- Achievement is very high because of the strong relationships between pupils and teachers.
- The behaviour of some pupils adversely affects learning and the social environment.
- Exclusions have fallen. This owes much to work of the Inclusion Unit (CHIP).

Commentary

10. Most pupils like learning and their positive attitudes are shaped by their interest in lessons and social and recreational activities outside the classroom. In most lessons pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and sometimes exemplary, particularly where the teaching is most stimulating and thought provoking. In these lessons pupils pursue their tasks enthusiastically, behave positively and become involved. Attendance is good with satisfactory punctuality. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	0.1
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.

11. Most pupils speak favourably about teachers and teaching and use their knowledge and understanding of the school to acknowledge and celebrate the school community and its strengths. Pupils are frank in their analysis of where the school needs to improve. They identify the proper disposal of litter and a reduction in the threat of antisocial behaviour as key areas. This illustrates pupils' desire to learn and develop into caring citizens, which in turn complements their good moral development.
12. Pupils value their time and actively pursue sports such as netball and football. They develop their creative skills through drama productions, they play and enjoy music and use their free time to work for others through the school council. This invaluable experience ensures pupils develop into more confident and motivated individuals. The interaction between pupils supports their cultural experiences and promotes learning for pupils from all racial backgrounds.
13. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory. Most pupils are polite, considerate, friendly and welcoming, especially female pupils, but some pupils engage in silly, boisterous and noisy behaviour, which can affect learning and set a poor example for others. Most teachers manage pupils' antisocial behaviour well by implementing the school's clear code of conduct and making good use of the isolation rooms. This largely explains the significant reduction in external exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	484	25	3
White – any other White background	7	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	2	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	141	-	-
Black or Black British – African	1	-	-
Any other ethnic group	4	-	-

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

14. Between lessons, the movement of pupils can be noisy and is made worse by the narrow corridors and the lack of supervision from staff. This has been raised as a valid concern amongst some parents and pupils.
15. Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language are valued members of the school community. Care is taken to provide for all types of need, including that of pupils who are particularly vulnerable, whether on a long-term or

transitory basis. Those with behavioural and social learning difficulties are helped to manage their own problems effectively through a consistent approach to behaviour management, which includes rewards as well as sanctions.

16. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Some areas of the curriculum, such as religious education and English, encourage pupils to explore and reflect on spiritual values. However, opportunities are lost in assemblies and tutor times where a moment for reflection is not always provided. The school provides a very clear code of conduct and moral code so that pupils know what is expected of them. Social interaction is good in all subjects. Pupils work co-operatively and listen to their teachers and to each other with courtesy and respect; they have the confidence to offer their views, knowing that teachers will respond positively. Group work is a particular strength of the school. Many subjects provide effective opportunities for pupils to explore their own cultures and those of others, for example design and technology, music, citizenship and religious education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall, as is the curriculum, though there are some statutory infringements in the delivery of ICT. Enrichment opportunities are good and the quality of resources and accommodation is satisfactory. The school's work with other schools and its wider community is very good. Links with parents are satisfactory and pupils receive good academic support. Induction arrangements into Year 7 are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teaching is very good in all year groups. Assessment procedures are also very good in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and this leads to excellent achievement.
- Pupils learn very well because in many classes they are challenged and work is planned very well to meet their needs; in some classes the teaching offered is inspirational.
- Very thorough assessment processes ensure high levels of achievement.
- The use of ICT as a tool to extend and enliven learning is limited.

Commentary

17. Most of the teaching and learning seen was at least good with much being very good or excellent. Over half of the 94 lessons seen were either very good or excellent. Though the school has some highly competent classroom performers, especially in mathematics and music, the 13 excellent lessons seen were spread over a number of subjects and involved all year groups. The strength of teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 was almost exactly matched by that seen in Years 10 and 11. The amount of good and better teaching is significantly higher than that observed in the last inspection; the level of improvement is very good. The school has developed very good procedures for

monitoring and sharing the quality of classroom practice. The success of these procedures is reflected in the very high proportion of teaching that was graded as good or better. Pupils attend lessons knowing that they will be expected to work and that they will be challenged. Though some minor inconsistencies were found in marking and the setting of homework, these were not particularly serious. What did emerge strongly was that the staff knew their pupils well, planned lessons accordingly and offered suitable help and assistance where it was required.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 94 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (14%)	35 (37%)	38 (40%)	6 (7%)	2 (2%)	0	0

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

18. Most lessons were characterised by at least good learning and the consistent diet of high quality teaching means that over time the pupils make far greater progress than expected. Teaching and learning were good in most subjects, but in English, mathematics, religious education, geography, history, ICT and music they were very good. In the best lessons pupils learn at least very well because tasks are well prepared, there is a desire to challenge, learning objectives are shared and a starter activity is included to consolidate previously learned knowledge. Where teaching is especially effective, staff employ a range of strategies designed to enthuse the pupils and capture their imagination. This was frequently the case in subjects like mathematics, ICT and music, where some of the teaching seen was inspirational. Staff in other subjects showed similar skills. A particularly striking aspect of the school's work is that there is an unyielding belief that the pupils can succeed. Though difficulties and contextual factors in prior learning are acknowledged, these factors are not seen as excuses or reasons to slow learning. Rather, staff are determined that the pupils will overcome such handicaps and in most lessons staff ensure that work is properly planned, that lessons proceed at an appropriate pace and that as much as possible the pupils are pushed and challenged, with the result that over time levels of achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are excellent. On the very rare occasions where teaching is less than good, there is a tendency either for the lessons to be too teacher-centred, or the level of challenge is weak. Both situations result in pupils becoming restless, progress slackening and learning becoming slow and even unsatisfactory.
19. Some parents and pupils expressed criticisms about homework, especially its regularity and quality, and marking, where the main criticism centred on consistency. The inspection team found scant evidence to support these views; instead they agreed with the majority of parents and pupils who believe that the quality of teaching is at least good. The inspection team concluded that most homework is planned well, with thought given to how it would further extend learning. Though some variability in marking was discovered, most marking was at least good. Generally, marking was thorough with helpful comments added to the pupils' work.
20. Underpinning the quality of teaching is the good, and sometimes very good, quality of working relationships in the classroom and the positive attitudes and behaviour of the great majority of pupils. In a good number of lessons the teachers' natural enthusiasm is shared with pupils and, as a result, they work hard and well in a very purposeful

atmosphere. The use of ICT as a tool to enliven teaching and learning is under-developed in comparison to most other schools. However, this relative weakness has been identified by the school and is prominent in the present school improvement plan as a priority for development.

21. Pupils' special educational needs, including where competence in English is not strong, are identified efficiently through very good links with the primary schools, careful testing, links with parents and discussions between teachers. Individual education plans for all pupils recognised as having some learning difficulties set clear and simple learning targets, linked well to statements of special educational need where relevant. Well-trained support assistants know the individual targets for the pupils for whom they are responsible. They maintain a good overview of pupils' progress towards these targets and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils also know their own targets and try to reach them. Teachers do not identify consistently how they will help pupils reach their individual targets in planning, although they do match work to the pupils' levels of attainment.
22. The school's assessment procedures contribute significantly to pupils' very high levels of achievement. Participation with feeder primary schools provides essential assessment of pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7, for example, highlighting special needs in literacy and numeracy, so that such weaknesses receive immediate attention. Marking is accurate and supportive, showing pupils how to correct errors and advising on improvements. Effective recording processes provide essential data used to drive standards, set individual targets and refine teaching approaches.
23. Evaluation of examination results is thorough and areas of weakness are carefully and systematically addressed; for example, by providing (in some cases) single sex classes. Regular testing identifies underachieving pupils, who are then appropriately supported within target or withdrawal groups and whose work is carefully monitored. Talented pupils are identified and, for example, in English, mathematics and modern languages, they are set further challenges. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who earn successful achievement assessments are rewarded with the highly prized *Going Green* award; this commendation has proved in mathematics (which introduced the award) and in English to be particularly effective in stimulating working attitudes of pupils at all levels of attainment.

The curriculum

The school provides very good curriculum opportunities for pupils. There are good opportunities for curriculum enrichment. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The broad, balanced and innovative curriculum promotes very high achievement.
- The curriculum benefits considerably from the very good partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies, community organisations and public services.
- The curriculum prepares all pupils very well for the next stage of their lives.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, especially the alternative curriculum which enables disadvantaged pupils to gain success and make progress.
- The good range of enrichment activities has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and relationships.

- In Years 7, 8 and 9 insufficient time is allocated to ICT to cover the National Curriculum, whilst provision in Years 10 and 11 does not meet requirements.

Commentary

- Overall, the school curriculum is very good. The pathways structure in Years 10 and 11 offers courses that are tailored to the needs of individual pupils. This allows them to follow a wide range of traditional GCSE courses as well as a variety of vocational ones. The integrated studies course, for example, is a very well planned and flexible programme that offers lower attaining and potentially disaffected pupils a wide range of learning experiences in areas such as health and safety, enterprise and leisure and tourism. Some of these courses are taught in local schools and further education colleges and all benefit considerably from the very good partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies, community organisations and public services, including the West Yorkshire Fire Service.
- The curriculum prepares all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, very well for the next stage of their lives through the excellent work-related learning programme, careers education and guidance and a variety of initiatives including business links, visits and taster sessions to institutions offering post-16 courses. The well-organised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme covers topics such as health, sex and relationship education as well as drug, financial and social awareness. It complements the citizenship programme well and also makes good use of the school's partnerships with community organisations, especially for the provision of speakers and events.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, insufficient time is allocated to ICT to cover National Curriculum programmes in sufficient depth, whilst provision in Years 10 and 11 does not meet requirements because a significant proportion of pupils do not study the subject sufficiently. The school is aware of this problem and is addressing it; it features as a key point in the present school development plan.
- Pupils with all types of special educational needs are able to take part in all school activities. The school takes seriously its commitment to equality of opportunity and provides a very good alternative curriculum to enable those with special educational needs who cannot manage the standard curriculum to develop personal and social skills, skills for life and basic academic skills. For younger pupils, there is a suitable emphasis on basic skills and development of independence through the use of computer-aided learning. Classroom assistants are valued members of the teaching team and are well trained to work alongside classroom teachers. However, there are too few classroom assistants in some classes, where there are high numbers of pupils with special educational needs, to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Due to the uneven nature of the site and many staircases, access for wheelchairs to many areas is not possible, although the school does everything possible to make sure that disabled pupils attending the school are not disadvantaged.
- The good range of enrichment activities has a beneficial effect on pupils' attitudes and relationships. A wide range of activities support their learning outside the school day. These include coursework and examination preparation days, booster classes and study clubs as well as Easter revision classes and summer schools. In sport, a good programme of extra-curricular activities encourages a high level of pupil participation, especially by boys. Pupils participate well in arts activities by taking part in festivals,

productions and theatre visits. Some of these activities benefit the local community and partner primary schools and involve both the music and drama departments.

29. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. Considerable efforts are made to ensure the best use of rather drab buildings by creative use of displays and decoration. Narrow corridors are enhanced by very good use of display materials. Departments benefit from attempts to ensure that rooms are located in subject specific areas. This is especially effective in English, mathematics and science. Some rooms are bright, clean and generally well maintained, providing an often good environment for learning. In design and technology the workshops are in need of refurbishment. Provision for physical education is satisfactory with very good fields for outdoor games. The gymnasium does not offer indoor facilities that enable the department to deliver a wide breadth of curriculum. Efforts are made to ensure that the accommodation is accessible for all.
30. The school is very well staffed with specialist teachers and this is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of support staff is also very good, though there are insufficient classroom assistants to cater for the large number of pupils with special educational needs in some groups. Staff professional development is very good. The support that senior managers give to the induction of new staff helps to create a dynamic working environment and, as a result, staff absence and turnover are low.
31. Resources for learning are satisfactory but there is a lack of resources for ICT in subjects. The library is well managed with appropriate learning resources, including computers which can be booked for whole class sessions. This means, however, that they are not always available to individual pupils. Books available in the library are adequate and offer pupils material which supports reading for information and pleasure.

Care, guidance and support

The school offers good pastoral care and ensures the welfare and well-being of the school community. Staff support pupils well and ensure good guidance, which enables pupils to make informed choices and learn in a happy, safe and secure environment. Pupils are given good opportunities to voice their opinions and their views are given serious consideration through the work of the school council.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are caring and know their pupils and provide good advice, support and guidance, which ensure pupils develop into motivated and responsible citizens.
- A good induction programme ensures that all pupils entering Year 7 settle quickly.
- A more consistent approach is needed to the problem of litter.
- Careers education and guidance are good and ensure that pupils make informed choices about their next stage of their education.
- The school council makes a significant contribution to the care for pupils.

Commentary

32. Pupils are managed in a caring manner; teachers listen, value their pupils and celebrate their achievements. This ensures harmony and that pupils value the diversity of their cultures and take a responsible attitude for learning. These arrangements promote trusting relationships between teachers and pupils and enable pupils from different class, cultural, religious, racial and linguistic backgrounds to work together

with confidence and learn in safe and secure environment. Pupils rightly value the good support and guidance they receive from form tutors. This helps them to make informed decisions about their personal development. However, staff could do more to combat the growing litter problem around the school, which affects pupils' personal development and affects the school's reputation in the wider community.

33. The school council is effective. It is becoming stronger and makes a significant contribution to the learning, welfare and well-being of pupils. It helps to set good standards of discipline and encourages mutual respect, effective communication, co-operation and self-discipline.
34. The induction of new pupils is effective. Parents and pupils agree that arrangements for starting school in Year 7 help them settle in quickly and adapt to school routines. Regular meetings between school staff and colleagues in the main feeder primary school further enhance this process. A structured programme of events introduces these pupils well to school during the year prior to their starting in September. A number of outside agencies, including the education welfare and careers services, make a significant contribution to the pupils' education. An effective work-related learning curriculum is offered to a range of pupils, some of whom are otherwise disenchanted with school life. This enables them to prepare well for life after school. Year 10 pupils are given good quality work experience.
35. There are very good procedures for identifying and tracking pupils with all types of special educational need, whether they are social, emotional, physical, behavioural or academic. A safe haven is provided to which pupils can go when they find it difficult to cope and where they are helped to become more confident, with a view to becoming independent of additional support. Links with external agencies are very good and additional support and advice that may be beneficial to pupils are actively sought.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Most parents enjoy a satisfactory and productive relationship with the school and value its work. The school's work is enhanced by its good partnerships with other schools and education establishments, as well as its very strong standing in the wider local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' education benefits greatly from the strength of community partnerships.
- Good links with others schools, colleges and higher education enable pupils to make informed choices and ensure a smooth transition to their next stage of education.

Commentary

36. The school values its very close ties with the wider community, including its productive relationship with other educational establishments. Involvements with the community allow pupils to have greatly enhanced experiences in a wide variety of areas. For example, during the summer several local schools worked closely with local historians, visiting local mines and other places of historical importance. These experiences supported topics in history and geography for Year 9. Artists and musicians frequently support teaching of art and music and this enhances pupils' achievements, as illustrated in displays and exhibitions around the school. Various sports organisations, including a local rugby club, provide coaching facilities for pupils. Pupils visit other

places of worship and these opportunities prepare pupils for learning, living and working in a multi-cultural society.

37. Feeder primary schools are supported by specialist teachers from the English, mathematics, physical education, music and drama departments. This helps primary pupils to prepare for secondary school life. The school also enjoys productive links with further and higher education and these ensure that pupils can make informed decisions about further and higher education. The school is committed to doing its best for its pupils and consistently encourages them to aim high. A good recent example of this commitment was the visit made by some youngsters to an Oxbridge college.
38. The school also works hard to involve its parents, but some are reluctant to commit themselves. Reports are of a suitable quality and are informative. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress and are fully involved in target setting.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is expertly led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and that of other key staff is very good. The school is very well managed. Governance is good: governors provide good support and they are involved well with the work of the school, but do not fulfil their statutory obligations with respect to provision for ICT and collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has led the school to nationally-recognised excellence in terms of pupils' achievement.
- Senior and middle management is very good and plays a full part in sustaining pupils' development.
- Financial management is very good, with resources targeted directly to securing high quality teaching and learning.
- Performance data informs all aspects of school management and development.
- The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

39. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Under his guidance the school has become a learning community with outstanding qualities, operating in an environment where there are very many barriers to pupils' achievement. He has an unshakable belief that pupils from whatever background can succeed when they are taught well. The headteacher has engaged teachers of the highest quality and through unlocking any barriers to their effectiveness and creativity, the school has become a beacon of excellence that is recognised nationally. It is an outstanding model of good practice and all members of the school staff participate in sharing their work with others. The headteacher has, on several occasions, been released on secondment to the local authority to assist its work in vital areas. His successful methods have become so well embedded and senior managers developed to such high competency that his absence did not impede in any way the progress and development of the school. The remarkable success of the school in developing pupils' achievement through the work

of a gifted staff is a testimony to the leadership of the headteacher that guides, nurtures, supports, develops and enthuses all who work with him.

40. Leadership is very good at both senior and middle management levels. This quality has been secured through careful recruitment and development of staff. Encouraged and guided by the headteacher, staff have been given opportunities to make new and important contributions to the school. An important spin-off has been the whole-hearted wish of many teachers to remain working in the school, thus providing continuity and stability that have been of great benefit to the pupils. The sound leadership at every level in the school is evident in subject departments that are well organised: some are themselves beacons of excellent practice. Pupils, irrespective of their ability or background, are well cared for and there is an ordered, well-behaved school community in the heart of a very deprived locality. A fitting testimony to the very good leadership and management throughout the school has been the recent success in gaining specialist college status in mathematics and computing.
41. The work of the governing body is good. The chair of governors maintains a particularly close working relationship with the school; he visits weekly and is well known to staff and pupils. This maintains an important channel of communication with the governing body. Other members of the governing body exercise a high level of vigilance and scrutiny. The governors have carefully monitored the development of the school and have supported the headteacher in implementing changes. They have also carefully ensured that the mission to help other schools has always made a positive contribution to the work of this school, both through securing additional finance and the staff development opportunities that have been afforded. Through the application the school has made to secure specialist college status, the governors have taken action to ensure that the curriculum will fully meet statutory requirements for ICT. However, because of issues relating to a lack of space and easy movement of large numbers around the cramped school corridors, they have not been able to provide a daily act of collective worship.
42. Financial management is very good. The school budget is carefully prepared and takes full account of the priorities of the school, particularly to ensure that teaching standards are the highest possible. This has put pressure on finances, with the school spending a higher proportion of the budget on staffing compared to many other secondary schools. Additional funding has been secured through the school's vigorous participation in a number of initiatives such as the Education Action Zone. While all new money has been fully used to meet the expectations of such initiatives the school, nevertheless, has been able to manage resources so successfully that even a substantial budget deficit was recently eliminated.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,933,357
Total expenditure	1,883,189
Expenditure per pupil	2,915

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-21,500
Balance carried forward to the next	28,668

43. There is very close monitoring of expenditure, with a detailed month-by-month comparison of actual costs against the detailed budget plan. An internal audit report from the local authority undertaken just prior to the inspection reported that financial

procedures were very sound and with only very minor adjustments to some procedures being required. The budget position is currently sound with a small surplus of just 1.5 per cent of total expenditure carried forward.

44. Overall management of the school is highly effective. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Records are carefully maintained, easily accessible and informative. Legal requirements are met. The most recent national guidance has been fully implemented. The designated budget is used effectively to ensure pupils are well supported. The governing body is well informed and the designated governor is very aware of the level of provision in the school. There is a culture of continual self-assessment that permeates all levels of the school. Data on pupils' past and present performance is used continuously by all managers to monitor pupils' success and the efficacy of teaching methods. The focus on performance and improvement informs the school systems on assessment, in which pupils' awareness of their own achievement plays a major rôle. The same rigour applies in the well-established systems for performance management of staff, which have also helped to secure the improvement in the school.
45. There is a general vigilance to secure best value. The school regularly reviews options for the supply of services and this process had led to the decision to change the ICT management information systems used. The school managers and governors recognise their chief difficulties to raising achievement. They seek to build continually their links with the community served by the school and develop the curriculum so that it is seen as very relevant by pupils and their parents or carers. Specific resource deficiencies for ICT will be met now that the school has specialist college status, and the planned renewal of the school offers a longer-term solution to the limitations of the present drab building.
46. Positive relationships with local Initial Teacher Training providers are carefully managed to provide very good training for student teachers without compromising the quality of education which the school provides. Performance management arrangements for teaching staff are securely in place and carefully linked to the school's plans for improvement. There are plans to extend performance management arrangements to non-teaching staff in the autumn.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme is thoroughly planned and covers all years.
- The development of work-related curriculum pathways greatly enhances the life skills of the pupils on the programmes.
- Procedures for monitoring, assessing and reporting are detailed and significantly aid achievement.
- The success of this provision is enhanced by the school's many strong curriculum partnerships.

Commentary

47. The school's programme for WRL has been very carefully planned in accordance with national guidance. The programme starts in Year 7 and in all years relevant work is covered, with emphasis being placed on the critical themes of 'learning through work', 'learning about work' and 'learning for work'. The quality of planning is excellent and includes monitoring, assessment, reporting and evaluation. The programme successfully pulls together a number of themes, including careers education and guidance and PSHE, and the package offered more than adequately satisfies all statutory requirements. A further strength of the programme is that it caters for all pupils including low attainers, gifted and talented, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
48. In Years 10 and 11 the WRL programme is used most effectively to motivate some lower attaining pupils and some pupils who have poor attitudes towards school. This aspect of the programme particularly makes use of the school's many strong community partnerships. One especially strong partnership is with the local fire service and during the inspection a group of Year 10 pupils were observed working with two firefighters at a nearby fire station. The quality of this work was excellent. Due regard was given to stringent health and safety considerations but, within these parameters, the mixed group of pupils successfully worked through a training drill. This drill involved classroom instruction in which the pupils had to calculate water pressure loss because of friction as hose lengths were extended and then practical exercises involving the use of hoses, pumps and ladders. The fire service staff gave clear instructions, but the pupils completed the tasks for themselves. Considerable progress was made. Levels of teamwork were excellent. The pupils were enthusiastic and highly motivated by the task, but they worked sensibly and as a team to achieve all the targets set. They were also willing to pack away all the equipment once the exercise had finished. This course is assessed through Edexcel Young Firefighters Award and also contributes to the ASDAN COPE Certificate and Wider Key Skills qualification. A scrutiny of the pupils' files indicates that their progress is considerable and that this curriculum partnership is developing skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and teamwork.
49. Other pupils are offered opportunities to develop WRL skills via a thoroughly planned work experience programme or by working with local training providers. A key strength of this provision is that the school's curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has identified four 'pathways' which the pupils can follow. Each 'pathway' has a WRL aspect and the 'pathways' are designed to reflect the needs of the pupils and offer a sensitive balance between an academically orientated curriculum and one that is more work or vocationally based. For example, while some lower attaining or disaffected pupils might work with the fire service, gifted and talented pupils are offered the opportunity to visit Oxbridge colleges or take part in special exercises where their skills and talents have been used, such as a local history project which included producing tourist literature. All 'pathways' offer suitable forms of accreditation and the emphasis on developing key skills is strongly stated.
50. WRL is excellently led and managed. A detailed audit of provision, covering all years and all subjects, has been undertaken. There is a very clear understanding of what WRL implies and the staff leading the programme are able to guide and advise their colleagues on how work-related themes can be incorporated into day-to-day classroom teaching. The outcome is that pupils' learning benefits significantly, key skills and work-related skills are developed and when pupils finish Year 11 they are well equipped in terms of skills, knowledge and qualifications to pursue various routes into the world of work or further education.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- The consistently high quality of teaching throughout Years 7 to 11 engenders excellent levels of achievement.
- Successful assessment strategies further motivate pupils.
- Pupils do not make full use of available ICT resources.

Commentary

51. Standards in the 2004 Year 9 national tests were well below the most recently calculated national average. Girls' results were better than those of boys, but by less than the national difference. Overall attainment, however, has risen steadily since the previous inspection. Achievement was very good bearing in mind that pupils had entered the school in Year 7 with very poor literacy skills. Results at GCSE in English language have also improved steadily since the previous inspection, with standards in 2004 nearer to, but still below, the national average. Standards in GCSE English literature also improved and rose well above the national average. All pupils experiencing special difficulties in English (and for whom GCSE was inappropriate) passed at the highest grades for the Certificate of Achievement in English. Achievement and value-added improvement scores in English at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were very high.
52. Standards in literacy of pupils entering the school in Year 7 fall significantly below the national average. A further significant proportion of pupils enter the school speaking English as an additional language, with many at an early stage of English acquisition. However, by Year 9 standards in speaking, listening and reading are above average; although standards in writing are also improving significantly, they remain below average. Standards in Year 11, although rising, are below average. Standards in Year 10, however, are rising strongly to meet with national expectations. The accumulation of very good rates of improvement during Years 7 to 11 by all ethnic groups, and by pupils with special needs, amounts to excellent achievement overall.
53. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In Year 7, challenging teaching provides the stimulus to alert thinking and pointed use of language. Year 8 pupils with special needs in literacy learn to add "sparkle and interest" to initially dull sentences, deriving considerable satisfaction in their success. The skilful management of large classes in Year 9 enables pupils to think independently and clarify ideas for essays and speeches. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is consistently

very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils learn to become responsive to language and enjoy poetry. "Wordsworth gives us a picture of London sleeping; Blake's London is screaming for help", are punch lines from one essay. Teaching is pitched appropriately, giving low attaining and talented pupils alike the confidence to ask questions in search of further knowledge. The interest engendered by teachers influences pupils' attitudes and behaviour; they persevere and work hard at worthwhile and interesting tasks. Harmonious relationships between teachers and pupils, together with the variety of literature they study, make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

54. Leadership and management are excellent. Close participation with feeder primary schools identifies pupils requiring support for English in Year 7 as well as those who can be placed in higher attaining sets. Excellent assessment procedures identify under-achievement. Strategies involving the English teaching assistant and the special needs department provide support for these pupils. Successful learning strategies address the weaknesses of boys identified after the 2004 national tests as well as those of girls identified after the 2004 GCSE examinations; some single-sex classes now study texts most suited to their gender. The *Going Green* award strategy is successful in assessing and encouraging further achievement amongst pupils at all levels of attainment. However, owing to difficulties of access, the department cannot ensure pupils make full use of ICT facilities. Co-operation with the librarian and the LEA schools library service has encouraged the school's participation in the Carnegie Organisation's work of selecting the children's novel of the year. The English and drama departments participate in organising theatre visits, theatre workshops and drama productions. The department accepts graduate teachers on training practice. Under the present leadership teachers share not only a sure faith in the value of their subject, but also a sensitive understanding of the potentialities of the minds and personalities of the children. The department has made rapid progress since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Overall standards in literacy of pupils entering in Year 7 are very low. Moreover, a significant proportion enters the school speaking English as an additional language with many pupils still at an early stage of English acquisition. In response to the previous report, the school takes up this challenge with enthusiasm and vigour. The literacy co-ordinator, in co-operation with heads of other subject areas, has developed a whole-school strategy which is significantly improving standards. Almost all subjects provide good opportunities for purposeful talk and disciplined discussion. Most pupils speak with increasing confidence and clarity on both informal and more formal occasions. In lessons they listen attentively to instruction by teachers and to ideas expressed by members of the class.
56. Initiatives in reading ensure pupils learn to read texts for full and exact meaning; for example, reading improvement lessons are provided for targeted Year 7 pupils, and reading mentors occasionally withdraw underachieving pupils from English lessons for further tuition. Vocabulary is developed and extended; for example, technical and more adult and specialist language is carefully explained. In modern foreign languages, pupils often read texts which enrich their English vocabulary. In English pupils enjoy a variety of texts, including poetry; they learn to skim read when appropriate. In religious education pupils learn how language can be used to manipulate the understanding of the reader.

57. Pupils' overall competence in literacy and language skills is satisfactory. Standards in writing have improved since the previous inspection. For example, in modern foreign languages and English strong insistence is put on accuracy of spelling, expression and neatness of presentation. Pupils write for a variety of purposes; imaginative expression enlivens letters written in geography; evaluations and analyses of designs are explained in design and technology. In ICT pupils command a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. In English pupils collaborate in adding spice to initially boring texts and show maturity of thought in their analysis of poetry. Most departments show a consistent approach to the correction of technical errors in pupils' writing. However, there is room for further development of pupils' literacy skills in art and design and science.

French

Provision for French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the head of department is dynamic.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils enable good learning.
- Assessment is used creatively to raise standards and leads to very good achievement.
- All pupils study a foreign language for five years.
- There is inconsistent focus on the key skill of speaking.

Commentary

58. The 2004 French GCSE results were in line with the national average overall, but for grades A*-C results were above average. The difference between boys and girls was less than that found nationally. All pupils gained a grade. This is creditable because the school's entry percentage is far higher than the national pattern. The results are a marked improvement on the previous year and an improvement on 2002, which had also been a good year. These results indicate very good achievement.
59. By Year 9, standards of work seen in French are in line with national expectations and achievement is very good for both boys and girls. Pupils' levels are higher in reading and listening. In speaking they have good accents in imitation of the teacher, but lack confidence in free speaking and restrict replies to single words. Pupils' levels of literacy limit writing standards. Some higher attaining pupils can write using more complex language. Most pupils' writing is accurate, but it is limited and needs much guidance. By Year 11 standards are in line with the national average. Pupils benefit from the choice of a coursework GCSE. This enables teachers to give guidance on the features required for good grades. A range of initiatives to support under-achieving pupils and to offer practice in the weaker skills is raising standards. Independent writing shows weaknesses in grammar. In one group of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs, the intensity of speaking practice and the teachers' encouragement resulted in speaking that was very good for their level. Most pupils are insecure in speaking.
60. Teaching in French is good. Some very good and excellent teaching was also seen. A key feature is the relationships with pupils. Teachers show positive attitudes to all pupils with constant encouragement and support. As a result, pupils are not threatened

by failure and they participate eagerly. Through their positive attitudes, pupils contribute to their own learning. Teachers plan lessons well to match the level of the group. There is a good variety of method and activity, including songs and games to sustain interest. The use of laptop computers and the interactive whiteboard motivates learning for many pupils. Teachers regularly teach in French. In some lessons this is not sustained and the challenge to pupils is lost. Teachers create frequent opportunities for pupils to practise speaking as a class, but are less consistent in setting tasks for individuals. As a result pupils are not confident in simple conversations or classroom negotiations. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work. Marking is thorough and supportive. National Curriculum levels are used and explained to pupils so that they understand their attainment. The levels are also used to set targets for improvement. Achievement is very good because all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, derive considerable cumulative benefit over time from the good quality of teaching provided.

61. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department presents a very good role model through her own commitment and teaching. The department works very well as a team. Some team-teaching is used and this supports the development of teaching methodology. The use of assessment is exemplary. Regular testing is used to identify under-achievement. The head of department has initiated a set of responses to address the weaknesses noted and this action has raised standards considerably. The monitoring of the department's work is very effective. The head of department shows perceptive insights into the subject's needs and is continually reviewing and revising its work. There is already clear progress in the increased use of ICT. The department accepts the need to increase the use of French in both teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and examination standards reflect this. The present team shows the capacity to sustain and improve standards.

Urdu

Provision in Urdu is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well by Year 9 and Year 11.
- Good achievement is promoted by good teaching and learning.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities to promote pupils' ability to speak at length.
- ICT is not used well enough to enhance pupils' learning and study skills.

Commentary

62. Urdu is taught in Years 8 to 11. The 2004 GCSE results were average, but the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above average. All pupils achieved well and this represents good improvement since the last inspection. Standards on entry to the school are below average. As a result of the consistently good teaching, pupils' achievements are good when compared with their prior attainment. Standards in Year 9 are average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to well and, by Year 11, most pupils are now working at an above average level. This too represents good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and reach standards in line with their targets.

63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In an effective Year 10 lesson, pupils had an opportunity to role-play and this improved their speaking skills and the ability to negotiate, understand and answer questions based on the topic of 'shopping'. A generally lively pace generated a willingness to participate. The teachers' expectations of pupils' work are generally high. Relationships between teacher and pupils are good. Teachers use praise well to encourage participation in class discussions. Pupils show appropriate respect for teachers' exposition and behave well. The secure subject knowledge of the teacher and some of the carefully planned activities have a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils of all abilities cope well in most activities. They are able to apply their knowledge in new situations because the teacher gives them enough opportunities to consolidate their understanding before beginning new work. There are, however, some weaknesses in the development of speaking skills. In most lessons, pupils listen attentively but show reluctance in speaking fluently and often give one-word answers. Although the teacher encourages pupils to converse, the planned opportunities for pupils to speak audibly and at length in discussions are lacking. All pupils are given appropriate assessments at the end of each topic, but individual targets of improvement are not used consistently.
64. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader is well organised and aware of strengths and weaknesses in the subject, for example, the need to improve ICT resources and its use to enhance pupils' study skills and word processing skills in Urdu.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning and achievement.
- Leadership and management and the teamwork of teachers are excellent, leading to improving standards and provision.
- Assessment and recording of data are excellent and used very effectively to drive up standards.
- Behaviour and attitudes are very good, so little time is wasted in lessons.

Commentary

65. In 2004 standards attained in the national tests in Year 9 were well below average when compared with all schools and below the average of similar schools, but taking prior attainment into account results were average. Governors' targets were exceeded. In 2004, GCSE results were below average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C, but above for those attaining A* to G, and those attaining A* to B. Overall, however, results were below average. Judging these grades against the pupils' test results in Year 9, achievement was very good. Over ten per cent more pupils take the examination than the national average and almost all pupils gain an acceptable GCSE result, representing very good achievement for those with the lowest attainment. In addition those with the most severe learning difficulties gain another recognizable certificate in basic mathematical skills. The most recent national examination results indicate that standards in Year 10 are at least above average, comparing the data with national statistics in 2004. The achievement of these pupils since Year 7 is excellent.

The overall improvement in examination results since the previous inspection is very good.

66. Pupils enter school with well below average standards in mathematics and, in particular, numerical skills. There is an exceptionally high proportion of pupils with low standards of numerical skills on entry. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are now broadly average in mental arithmetic, number and algebra, data handling and shape, space and measure. They are below average in Year 11. This latter group had particularly low standards on entry and are also the last year group not to benefit from a consistent approach to teaching from entry in Year 7 that follows the most recent national guidelines. Nevertheless, their achievement is very good. Throughout the school pupils are used to solving numerical problems that do not require comprehension skills to be used, but are less adept at interpreting problems where they need greater literacy skills. The very good and often excellent achievement of pupils reflects the constantly improving provision linked to very good teaching based on common policies.
67. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with a number of observed lessons being excellent. Teachers set good role models and convey an enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils that stimulates learning. Lessons are well planned with clear and challenging targets that pupils understand. Expectations of quantity and quality of work and of behaviour are high and, as a result, little time is wasted in lessons. This also leads to pupils showing pride in their work and presenting it well, demonstrating positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils with educational, behavioural and social difficulties, and those for whom English is not a first language, are managed very well. Thus their achievement is very good and they cause minimum disruption to lessons. One of the key features of the excellent lessons is the way work is carefully matched to individual needs, and the way each part of the lesson is used to the best effect. Record keeping, assessment and data analysis are excellent and used very well to identify areas for improvement or groups of pupils that need additional support. For example, boys in the current Year 9 achieve as well as girls, although in previous years boys have not made as good progress as girls in their first three years in the school. Pupils try hard to meet their individual and challenging targets for learning, and to be involved in *Going Green*, a successful method of improving achievement that is beginning to be used in other subjects. There are minor inconsistencies in the development of literacy skills through mathematics and marking, but these are never less than satisfactory.
68. Leadership and management are both excellent and, together with the strong commitment of a united team of teachers, are leading to continually improving standards and provision. A key feature of the changes has been the care that has been taken to make the whole teaching area an interesting place, where all pupils are valued and confidence boosted. The outdated computer equipment is used satisfactorily to support learning, but there is very clear vision for improving still further and for taking up the new challenge of becoming a mathematics and computing college.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. The co-ordination and use of numeracy in other subjects are at an early stage. This is because the priority of a new team of teachers was rightly to make mathematics more exciting, engage pupils and give them a feeling of success and confidence and drive up standards. Much work has been done to create material to support teachers in other subjects, but the implementation of these materials has been temporarily

delayed. Numeracy skills are identified in some subject planning and schemes of work, but there are inconsistencies across subjects. Numeracy skills are used effectively when required, and pupils' skills are sufficient to support the work they are doing and are satisfactory overall.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because they are well taught.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils lead to well-ordered lessons.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always show how improvements can be made.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to help them learn.

Commentary

70. In 2004, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below all schools nationally. Based on pupils' prior attainment, these results were in line with similar schools at average and higher levels, with pupils achieving well. In GCSE double award science, results improved on previous years and were in line with national average figures, with pupils achieving well. Boys did better than girls, but neither did as well in science as in other subjects. A group of pupils sat single award science, but the numbers involved were small and no valid national comparisons can be made.
71. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels in science. In Years 7, 8 and 9 standards rise; pupils achieve at least well, and most reach average standards. Pupils in a Year 8 top group were working at above average levels as they could explain how a prism separates light into colours and how different colours of light produce blue sky and a yellow sun. In the GCSE groups pupils also achieve well because, though standards remain average overall, pupils work hard to maintain this level and the school's value added data shows that most gain better GCSE grades than predicted. Achievement is similar for both boys and girls, and in lessons this is helped by the single-sex GCSE groups where girls in particular can develop confidence in the subject. Those pupils identified with special educational needs also achieve well, particularly when supported by teaching assistants or special resources such as easily-read worksheets. Similarly, those pupils for whom English is not their main language achieve well, especially when they receive specific in-class support to help them acquire new scientific language.
72. Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. The best lessons are well planned, with many different activities to keep pupils interested and thinking about the subject, and progress is checked regularly throughout the lesson. Sometimes pupils are involved in assessing their own understanding at different levels and this too helps learning. Teachers expect and receive high standards of application and behaviour which lead to well-ordered lessons. In the less successful lessons, pupils are not fully engaged all the time; some lose interest and fail to complete their work and so learning for them is unsatisfactory. Work can be poorly presented and untidy and for many pupils in the lower groups this has not improved since being reported at the previous inspection. The detail in marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the department. At its best it is thorough with corrections, comments

and help on how to improve from one piece of work to the next. At its worst it is rarely done and consists only of ticks and a few final comments. Pupils' attitudes to work are generally good and sometimes very good. They behave well, work well and safely together, and there are good relationships between the staff and pupils. Any minor incidents are dealt with firmly and without confrontation.

73. A new head of department has very recently been appointed following a period of staff instability. Consequently it is not possible to make a judgement on leadership and management. However, he has started to develop systems for tracking pupils' progress across the years using the wealth of data available and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. The staff work well together, there is a strong team spirit and they are beginning to share ideas and resources. Whilst the head of department was not involved in the current planning cycle, priorities for improvement such as sharing the considerable expertise within the department are being identified.
74. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Assessment of pupils' progress is much better now as pupils know and record their grades, levels and targets. Some pupils are trialling the *Going Green* system and can describe their achievements in detail. In other aspects there has been little improvement. For example, the department has recently acquired an interactive whiteboard, which allows teachers to enhance the lesson with colourful animated diagrams. Overall, however, there are insufficient computers and associated hardware for pupils to use to help them learn.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables pupils to learn quickly.
- A broad range of ICT courses is offered in Years 10 and 11, catering for a wide range of abilities and interests.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils who do not choose to study an optional ICT course.
- There is insufficient development of the use of ICT to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Commentary

75. Pupils entering the school have limited experience of using ICT and their standards are low. In 2004 just under half of the Year 9 pupils were assessed as having reached National Curriculum Level 5 or better. The present government target is that 75 per cent of pupils should be at this level. Thus standards were below average. Standards that pupils currently reach are restricted by the limited amount of teaching time that they receive. The standards seen in class were also below average, reflecting pupils' low prior attainment and the limited teaching time. The rota timetable means that the average time per week that ICT is taught in Years 7 and 8 is only 20 or 30 minutes, which is below that recommended by the national strategy.

76. In 2004, 33 pupils were entered for an ICT GCSE examination. Ninety seven per cent achieved grade C or better, which is well above the average rate of success. No other pupils in Year 11 last year were taught an ICT course leading to accreditation. Standards seen in class for pupils doing both the GCSE and the new GNVQ course merit the award of grade C but few pupils were working at levels corresponding to higher grades. Standards for pupils currently studying ICT are average overall.
77. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make rapid progress in lessons, with new skills and knowledge quickly learned. Although progress is limited by the short teaching time, achievement is good. Year 9 pupils are able to work with spreadsheets that model simple business operations and look at the best value in mobile phone tariffs, for example. In Years 10 and 11, the achievement of pupils studying for GCSE and GNVQ is very good. Their handicap of previously limited ICT experience is rapidly overcome. Year 11 pupils following the GNVQ course are able to design attractive games for children that could be printed on place mats or cereal packets. They use two-dimensional graphics that they have constructed themselves, illustrations from the Internet and desktop publishing software to produce colourful designs which they then evaluate. Pupils studying for the business and communications studies GCSE examination design and produce a very wide range of business stationery.
78. Teaching and learning in ICT are very good and frequently excellent. The teaching is characterised by many very good features, including very detailed planning with a wide range of appropriate activities, expert teaching with clear lesson aims and good pupil participation together with well-adapted systems for assessment; pupils know what level they are at and how to improve. There is excellent discipline in the classrooms, with a good rapport between pupils and teachers. Pupils listen to and respect their teachers and undertake the learning tasks set. The result is that all pupils work well in lessons and they then enjoy the success they realise. The result is rapid progress and very good achievement. The quality of teaching mitigates to a degree the shortage of teaching time in Years 7, 8 and 9.
79. The leadership of ICT is good. Inspirational leadership from senior management is reflected in expert middle management. There is a very good vision for ICT as a subject and what it contributes to learning. There is a drive to innovate the curriculum. Currently the school does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 as pupils who are not studying an ICT examination course do not receive the statutory programme. This has been recognised and was a major reason why the school has chosen mathematics and computing for its focus as a specialist college, in order to rectify this deficiency. The management of the subject is very good. There is a teaching programme of high quality, incorporating many of the successful approaches from the national strategy but with improvements introduced from school ideas. The small team of teachers work closely together with expert support and development offered for inexperienced staff. Teachers apply school policies on assessments, incentives to learn and behaviour very effectively. Accommodation for ICT is not good. The suite of computers in the school library is not a very suitable environment for formally teaching a whole class. There are insufficient ICT suites to accommodate the requirements for other subject teachers wishing to use one on a regular basis.
80. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement. Achievement is good and sometimes very good. ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 have been introduced, and pupils' attitudes are very good, as are teaching and management of the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. Current provision for ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped and unsatisfactory.
82. There is increasing use of ICT in some subject areas, but little regular use in others and some problems over access to resources are limiting development. Good use is made of portable computers in modern foreign languages, where pupils use software that develops their speaking and listening skills. They also word process in French and thus improve their spelling. From the Internet pupils are able to study authentic foreign language materials. In religious education pupils use the computer to write about historical figures and produce mock newspapers reporting significant religious events. They also use the Internet to research such issues as the way that Muslims and Jews use banking services without compromising their religious beliefs. Mathematics teachers also use computers regularly. However, in design and technology there is currently no use of specialised software for computer-aided design or manufacture and only a little work is done in science with computer-monitored experiments. In art and design the subject is not using ICT as a medium in the way now required by the National Curriculum. Some subjects have difficulty accessing equipment for the work they would like to do. The school has invested in laptop computers for teachers and data projectors, and these are being used increasingly to improve teachers' presentations. The fact that ICT is not extensively used by other subjects has been recognised and is being addressed through the specialist college initiative.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong drive for improvement through very good leadership and management.
- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- GCSE results have significantly improved because of specialist teaching.
- Access to ICT is limited and this constrains teaching.

Commentary

83. Results of teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2004 were well below average because pupils enter the school with very weak geographical knowledge and skills. Moreover, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have only recently benefited from specialist subject teaching. These outcomes represent satisfactory achievement. As only a small number of candidates sat the GCSE examination in 2004, no national comparisons can be made, though the results indicate improving standards. Those pupils who followed the GCSE course, however, achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment. For present pupils, standards are improving because of the specialist teaching offered. Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are now below average, but they are average in Years 10 and 11. In relation to prior learning these outcomes represent very good achievement with all pupils, including those with special education needs and those for whom English is an additional language, successfully consolidating and improving their geographical skills and knowledge.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is excellent expectation and challenge of pupils, which result in very good acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding, especially in Years 10 and 11. This very good teaching is characterised by clear and

challenging questioning to ensure pupils are thinking rather than being fed information. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of low ability classes. They ensure that learning is undertaken in suitably manageable steps and give appropriate praise and encouragement. Pupils are attentive and willing to contribute because teachers ensure they are enthused by the interesting subject matter and well prepared resources. Pupils often become engrossed in their learning and are able to concentrate for sustained periods. Pupils work well in groups because the tasks involve sufficient challenge to make them think and take decisions. Teachers make very good use of recall activities to consolidate learning at both the beginnings and ends of lessons. Attitudes overall are at least good and sometimes excellent. Teacher/pupil relationships are particularly good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment overall is good. Work is marked regularly and teacher comments are very thorough; this helps pupils to improve their work.

85. Leadership and management are very good. Results have improved dramatically through dedicated leadership including, for example, the provision of coursework and revision sessions out of school time and changing to a more suitable examination syllabus. The head of department has supported other teachers well. Links have been forged with local primary schools to help raise standards in geography for pupils coming to the school. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Then, there were no subject specialists, resources were poor and pupils were demotivated. The new leadership has built up resources for all abilities. This has resulted in greatly improved pupil attitudes and standards in Years 10 and 11, and standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are rising.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching and learning in the subject.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good because teachers manage pupils very well.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good; there is a clear vision for the future development of the subject.
- The marking of pupils' work at times lacks specific guidance on how they could improve their grades.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the application of ICT.

Commentary

86. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations were below average in 2004. When pupils enter the school their standards in history are very low and are constrained by poor literacy skills. In Year 9, standards in the work seen, though below average, had risen appreciably. Pupils of all attainment levels are developing a knowledge and understanding of historical developments such as the Industrial Revolution, the British Empire and the Cold War. Lower attaining pupils, for example, could discuss some of the basic facts associated with the assassination of President Kennedy but found it more difficult to explain the various conspiracy theories about this event in writing. In Year 11, standards remain below average. Pupils of all attainment levels have a basic understanding of the significance of key events in the history of medicine. Those preparing for the GCSE examination, for example, could recall some of the basic facts about Florence Nightingale and compare them with the key points

given in the textbook. They found it more challenging, however, to compare the main features of medicine in the nineteenth century with those of the twentieth.

87. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, is very good because they reach levels that are considerably above those predicted based on their prior attainment. They make very good advances in acquiring historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Year 7 pupils demonstrated their increasing ability to analyse what would have happened if William had not conquered England in 1066, whilst those in Year 11 were observed making clear progress in developing their examination preparation techniques.
88. Pupils achieve very well because the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons have a very good pace because teachers plan them with a variety of well-timed activities that ensure high levels of pupil participation. Teachers' skilful questioning quickly involves pupils in discussion. This was the case in a Year 9 lesson for higher attaining pupils on the assassination of President Kennedy. Dramatic photographs of key events combined with the teacher's provoking questions ensured that pupils were stimulated into making valuable contributions about the quality of evidence. Teachers manage pupils very well by developing very good relationships with them and using appropriate praise and encouragement. This ensures good pupil attitudes and behaviour. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful but at times lacks specific guidance on how they could improve their grades.
89. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of history provides very good support for a small team of specialist teachers and has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. There has been some fieldwork and visits to sites of relevant historical interest and the department recognises the need to further develop this aspect of the curriculum. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and pupils now achieve very well, but there are insufficient opportunities for the application of ICT. Whilst there has been some progress in this area, for example, through the use of an interactive whiteboard in lessons, further improvement is needed.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning are leading to excellent achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 and GCSE classes.
- GCSE results for the last three years are well above the national average.
- Assessment is used particularly well to drive up standards.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The department has no significant weaknesses but essay writing skills could be developed more fully in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

90. Standards on entry to the school are well below average. During Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make rapid progress, reaching above average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement is excellent. GCSE results for 2004 were above the national average for both girls and boys. In Years 10 and 11 religious education is a popular option, with about half of each year group following the full GCSE course. Results have

risen steadily over the last five years, reaching a peak in 2003 when 95 per cent of pupils achieved a grade A*-C. In 2004 this fell to 71 per cent but is still well above the national average. This represents excellent achievement for these pupils, who are succeeding way beyond the levels predicted. Achievement for pupils studying core religious education is good.

91. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 were above average. Pupils are using specialist vocabulary accurately and show good understanding of the different beliefs and customs of Christians, Jews and Muslims. Girls and boys make very similar progress. Extension work is provided for pupils who are making faster progress and work is adapted for lower attaining pupils and those for whom English is not their first language to give them the best chance of success. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 were also above average. Pupils in Year 11 have already achieved a high rate in success in the modular examination at the end of Year 10 with over 95 per cent gaining an A*-C pass. This is excellent achievement. In all years many pupils are attaining at levels well beyond those predicted.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. Lessons are packed with different activities so that pupils are instantly engaged, made to think for themselves and, occasionally, inspired. The subject is taught in an academic way and pupils rise to the challenge. Teachers are dynamic in their approach, there is much use of humour, and pupils clearly enjoy their lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is not a first language, develop confidence in expressing their views and understanding of the spiritual, moral and cultural issues covered in the syllabus. Assessment is used very effectively from the beginning of Year 7. Pupils are taught how to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. Pupils understand what is required of them in assessments and examinations and thus build up the skills needed for success. Notes made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are concise and effective but there is less opportunity to develop essay writing skills. Pupils following the core religious education programme in Years 10 and 11 study a good range of options from the moral issues syllabus. This group achieves well.
93. This strong and successful department is very well led and managed, Teachers are committed to continual improvement and self-evaluation is rigorous. Religious education results are among the best in the school and pupils achieve far better than prior attainment data predicts. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in all years have positive attitudes to the subject, which contribute to their good achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good with much that is very good.
- The head of department gives a good lead to her team and the department is very well managed.

- Insufficient use is made of ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 and pupils have too few opportunities to use computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM) in all years.
- Not enough attention is given to the systematic and progressive development of design and graphical skills in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Commentary

94. Teachers' assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average. The standards achieved by the girls were above those of the boys. In 2004, pupils gained results in their GCSE examinations that were broadly in line with the average at the higher grades A*-C. All the pupils entered achieved the pass grades A*-G. In the separate subjects, results in food technology, graphic products, resistant materials and textiles were all near to the average. These are a significant improvement on the results in 2003. Overall, the results for the boys and girls were in line with their respective national averages.
95. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 9 are below average. However, achievement is at least good for all pupils as their starting point in Year 7 is well below average. Teachers use carefully planned projects and tasks in a variety of materials that make increasing demands on pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. As a consequence, all pupils make good progress from a low starting point in terms of experience and attainment. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to use their ICT skills to develop their work. The standards of the girls are above those of the boys. In general girls have design skills that are better developed than the boys. Making and constructional skills in all materials are more highly developed than other areas of the subject, for pupils of all levels of attainment. Graphical skills are below expected levels for the majority. Higher attaining pupils have a more secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary.
96. In Year 11, standards are below average overall. At this time, one third of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not choose to study the subject after Year 9. For those who do opt to continue their studies, achievement is good against their prior attainment. In the work seen during the inspection achievement is particularly good in the food technology and resistant materials courses. Graphical skills for the higher attaining pupils are at expected levels, as are their subject knowledge and vocabulary. Making on all courses continues to be the strongest aspect of the subject for many, especially boys. Girls' design skills are generally better developed than those of boys, particularly in the middle attainment band. The work of the girls shows more rigorous research and analysis of their findings when developing their designs.
97. Teaching and learning are good, with many lessons that are very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan effectively with clear learning objectives. These objectives are usually shared with the pupils though they are not always reviewed at the end of the lesson and, as a result, the lesson loses its sharp, closing focus. The projects used are varied and interesting but some of the challenge is lost when time deadlines are not set for the completion of intermediate tasks. Teachers use a range of appropriate methods to engage the pupils with the learning and explanations; questioning and demonstrations are particularly effective in developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Resources of good quality are provided to support learning. In all lessons teachers give high levels of individual support and well-informed feedback, which aids progress and raises levels of motivation. Good behaviour and concentration by the majority of pupils and their positive attitudes to the

subject add to the effect of good teaching and ensure that achievement is good in all years for all pupils.

98. The leadership of the department is good and it is very well managed. The department development plan has appropriate priorities linked to raising attainment further. The assessment system is good and target setting is in place for all pupils and both contribute to their good achievement. Good use is made of data and the analysis of results. A range of effective strategies is used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum is good but insufficient attention is given to the progressive and systematic development of design and graphical skills in Years 7, 8 and 9. In addition, pupils in all years have very few opportunities to use and experience computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM). The accommodation and staffing are good and the technician is effectively deployed to support the delivery of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment and achievement have improved and teaching is now consistently good or better. All the other issues raised have been addressed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus was on art and design, music and physical education though a Year 11 **drama** lesson was sampled. The lesson was well planned and correctly pitched and well managed. The pace was brisk and the pupils achieved well.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in lessons are good and result in good achievement.
- Resourcing is unsatisfactory, leading to a narrow curriculum, particularly for Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Decisions to resource Years 10 and 11 classes better have led to good results and achievement, but few pupils take GCSE.
- Pupils do not use ICT enough in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Sketchbooks are poor and pupils do not learn to use these well enough.

Commentary

99. Pupils' standards on entry are below average. Many also have low literacy and weak spatial skills. Their curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 is narrow because resources are very limited. Pupils use a restricted range of media. Sketchbooks provided are of poor quality so pupils' work in these is very small-scale and mostly drawing. Projects in Years 7, 8 and 9 place strong emphasis on the design process and pupils understand this well by Year 9. They have little experience of three-dimensional work, so standards are well below average in these aspects. ICT provision in the department is unsatisfactory and pupils do not use computers creatively in Years 7, 8 and 9. Attainment varies between sets and is broadly average in two-dimensional aspects, particularly using dry media such as pencil. Across the expected range of media and scale, however, standards are below average by Year 9. Nevertheless, given their low entry levels and the narrow curriculum, standards of work improve and pupils achieve well by Year 9.

100. A much smaller than average proportion of pupils takes GCSE art. The 2004 group achieved very well and A*-C results were above average. Results have risen in recent years. Standards are not as high in the current Year 11. Numbers are again small; often lower attaining pupils and mainly boys. Standards are average. Pupils have a better quality of experience in their GCSE curriculum, using a richer range of media where they can achieve better. They also use ICT satisfactorily. The department provides extra classes where pupils can boost their achievement if they attend, but some resist this opportunity. Behaviour in lessons is good, but some pupils destroy or damage unprotected artwork on display in the corridor and many lose their sketchbooks. Standards of the Year 10 group are currently below average. Achievement is good to Year 11, particularly for those committed enough to attend additional sessions.
101. Teaching and learning in lessons are good. Learning over time is constrained by the lack of resources and the limited curriculum. Decisions to focus resources into GCSE years have raised examination standards, but there remains significant impoverishment of provision in Years 7, 8 and 9. The teacher has produced workbooks and worksheets which support lower attaining pupils well. Able pupils are limited by this approach and need to make decisions about their own work for themselves. Aspects of art from other cultures are planned well, but pupils do not always understand these because they have not done their own independent research. The quality of sketchbooks provided is poor and pupils do not learn properly how to develop imaginative, annotated preparation work. ICT provision is unsatisfactory, so National Curriculum requirements are not met for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9. Assessment is satisfactory. The very new data projector is used effectively.
102. Constraints described have been managed well at department level, but under-funding significantly limits achievement. Within these constraints, leadership is also good. Many weaknesses from the last inspection remain. Pupils still do insufficient three-dimensional work, for instance. Display outside the art-room is still limited. Large classes in a small space still limit what can be done and ICT use has not kept pace with national requirements. Overall, however, there has been a satisfactory improvement since the last report.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is excellent because of excellent teaching.
- The department is fully inclusive and every pupil develops a secure instrumental technique.
- Music makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Excellent links with feeder primary schools ensure continuity of pupils' learning.

Commentary

103. Standards in Year 9 are above average and this represents excellent achievement because when pupils enter the school, standards are well below average. Pupils are

taught how to sing well and how to play the keyboard using the correct technique. By the end of Year 9, they compose effectively using musical devices to communicate the required effect. They perform confidently and accurately together; a particular strength is the rhythmic understanding that they develop. Pupils of a wide range of abilities choose music as a GCSE subject. In 2004, 95 per cent of pupils entering the GCSE examination attained grades A*-C. These results are way in excess of national figures, representing very good achievement. Pupils perform accurately using instruments which they have learnt in the classroom, building on the excellent foundation laid in Years 7, 8 and 9. They make excellent use of ICT to compose and create individual and memorable pieces.

104. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is excellent. Imaginative musical activities engage pupils positively from the minute they enter the room. Lessons are taught with an enthusiasm which is infectious, resulting in excellent attitudes and behaviour. Pupils treat equipment with respect. Their self-confidence is developed through well-organised collaborative activities. Teaching is based on a thorough understanding of how pupils learn and of the music curriculum. This leads to excellent achievement amongst all pupils, irrespective of their ability or background. Very good use is made of informal assessment in all lessons and as a result, pupils have a very good understanding of how to improve. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from additional support given by teachers beyond lessons.
105. Excellent leadership and management result in a fully inclusive department in which pupils thoroughly enjoy making music. Large numbers select the subject at GCSE. Teachers provide excellent role models. Excellent planning is consistently reflected in teaching. The departmental area is a pleasant working environment. An excellent range of instrumental resources, representative of western and non-western cultures, are regularly used.
106. The department has excellent relationships with feeder primary schools and is working with Year 6 pupils to ensure continuity of their curriculum experience with the aim of raising standards. Recent projects have engaged pupils from the school and from feeder schools in imaginative activities in and beyond the local community. Progress since the time of the previous inspection is excellent. The quality of teaching and learning is much higher, leading to high standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment systems and procedures do not provide secure data and assessment is not consistently used as part of learning.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9 because they are well taught and have positive attitudes.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by good extra-curricular provision and involvement.

Commentary

107. The school does not include GCSE physical education in its Year 10 and 11 options. Pupils join the school with standards below national averages. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve well and standards rise to being average. Good progress is made because good teaching stimulates positive attitudes towards the subject.
108. In Years 10 and 11, the standards in National Curriculum physical education are in line with those in most schools. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. These judgements are based on Year 10 lessons observed and interviews with physical education teachers. During the inspection it was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons and the department does not collect any assessment data. Good participation by boys and girls supports progress and provides continuity in learning. Achievement in National Curriculum physical education is restricted by time allocation, which is below the recommended two hours per week.
109. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and have good systems for managing pupils' behaviour. Relationships are strong. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know what they are learning and why, and regularly check progress by intervention with individuals and groups so that they know what they can do and how to improve. In these lessons pupils are given tasks which are appropriate for their level and are developing skills which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Not all lessons are as effective. In some lessons teachers do not use informal assessment as part of learning. They do not ensure that pupils' literacy skills are developed. Pupils are too dependent on the teacher and work on tasks which are too advanced for their ability.
110. Leadership and management are good. The head of department acts as a very good role model for other teachers and pupils. He has a clear vision of how to raise standards more quickly. There is a group of specialists who work very well as a team. They share good practice and are developing strategies to improve pupils' achievement, but assessment needs improving. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not fully take account of all pupils' needs, though a good extra-curricular programme enhances learning for many. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

One lesson in **health and social care** was sampled. Teaching and learning in this lesson were unsatisfactory as the tasks set did not offer an appropriate level of challenge. The pupils made little progress in the lesson.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The focus was on citizenship. Owing to the timing of the inspection no lessons in **PSHE** could be seen. However, other evidence collected showed that provision is well structured and organised in all years and includes regular training for staff and strong links with outside agencies and speakers. Pupils' learning is monitored and recorded.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good programme of taught citizenship combined with PSHE from which all pupils benefit.
- There is some good written work, but the approach to this is inconsistent and work is not always marked.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, especially in Years 10 and 11, because of the course designed to meet their requirements.

Commentary

111. Standards in Year 9 are average and this represents good achievement in relation to the pupils' prior attainment. Pupils develop a sound understanding and knowledge of being informed citizens during lessons. This is shown, for example, in their work on women's rights, understanding government and living in a multi-cultural society.
112. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average, but achievement is good for all pupils given prior levels of attainment. Much of the written work seen is PSHE rather than citizenship, though there are close links between the two in areas such as consumers' and workers' rights and healthy eating. Careers education and guidance and use of leisure time are also included. The religious education department also makes a contribution through, for example, its work on human rights. Skills of enquiry and communication are developed mainly through class discussion, rather than through written work. In some lessons resources do not provide challenge for more able pupils. Sometimes tasks are open ended, allowing some pupils to write in more detail or with a greater degree of independence. The subject does not have an extensive written requirement that allows pupils opportunities to pursue topics in depth. Homework is not set, so further restricting these opportunities. However, some literacy skills are evident, for example, in writing letters of complaint, compiling a car accident report and booking a holiday.
113. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 10 and 11, where there is a specially designed course that is well suited to their needs. Learning support assistants are very effectively deployed to support these pupils' needs. Pupils are competent in operating computer software to understand what is legal to download from the Internet. This task provides challenge and improves understanding as well as the ability to select and record relevant information.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is clear and resources are appropriate in meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils, though sometimes opportunities are missed for pupils to think for themselves. There is good learning where teachers ensure that pupils take an active part through giving them opportunities to read out loud. Attitudes are good and there are constructive relationships between teachers and pupils. There is real sensitivity towards pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is not a first language. Teachers assess pupils' understanding in lessons and keep records of attainment. Written work is rarely marked and so there is little, except some oral feedback, to inform pupils of how they have achieved and how they can improve. The pupil self-review sheet has recently been redesigned, and teachers now ensure it is completed with thought and care. Attainment is reported to parents annually; however, in Years 10 and 11, reports for the majority only state what has been covered with no indication of progress.
115. Overall leadership and management are good. There is a strong core programme but schemes of work are flexible to allow for whole-school events. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are kept up to date through specialised training. Schemes of work and resources have recently been reviewed, and rewritten if necessary, and additional activities added. Across other curriculum subjects, citizenship is identified in some schemes of work and in a few subjects themes covered include some citizenship

issues. However, it is not made distinctive to the pupils or assessed and reported on, so that there is not a full picture of pupils' achievement. No comments on improvement can be made as the subject was not reported in the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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