

INSPECTION REPORT

WEAVERHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Weaverham, Northwich

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111414

Headteacher: Mr David K Charlton

Lead inspector: Mrs Eveleen P Gillmon

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 3rd March 2005

Inspection number: 268507

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1079
School address:	Lime Avenue Weaverham Northwich Cheshire
Postcode:	CW8 3HT
Telephone number:	(01606) 852120
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs W Oakley
Date of previous inspection:	25 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Weaverham High School is a co-educational comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It is a specialist Technology College and is of average size, having 1079 pupils on roll. It is situated on the south-west outskirts of Weaverham. Pupils come from more than 40 primary schools, mainly serving the surrounding rural villages but also including some wards in which there is a relatively low level of educational aspiration. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2001 and has been awarded Sport England and Investors in People status. Attainment of pupils on entry at age 11 is above the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is very small, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is significantly below the national average for similar schools, although it comprises a wide range of learning difficulties, including Downs syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder, specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and hearing and visual impairments.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10 - 16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16 - 18
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	19 - 37
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	38

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Weaverham High School is a **good** school with some **very good** features and it is moving forward rapidly.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the governance and the leadership of the headteacher and senior management team;
- above average standards of attainment by pupils;
- excellent extra-curricular provision with exceptionally high pupil participation;
- very good behaviour and attitudes to learning;
- very good provision in mathematics, art, music and physical education;
- insufficient time allocation for religious education;
- inadequate provision for citizenship;
- monitoring of cross-curricular provision is not secure.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been good, although not as fast as might have been expected, and rapid acceleration has been evident in the last three years. The key issues raised have been addressed, but there remain areas which require continued attention, notably the implementation of cross-curricular information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision of religious education. The scope of inclusive provision for pupils with special educational needs has widened considerably and is effective. As at the time of the last inspection, the school provides good value for money.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Results attained at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004 were well above average when compared with schools nationally and with schools with similar social backgrounds. Based on recorded above-average attainment on entry, this represents good progress and achievement by pupils.

GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were also well above average in comparison with other schools. Girls generally achieve better than boys, but the difference is not significant. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good throughout the school.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are generally very good. The standards set for pupils are appropriate and behaviour management systems are well understood. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils respond well to teaching about moral, social and cultural issues and demonstrate mature attitudes, but there is less evidence of development of spiritual reflection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning outcomes are good overall and assessment is satisfactory. Examples of very effective teaching were most consistently observed in mathematics, art and English. Examples of excellent teaching were

observed in mathematics, art, music and physical education. Pupils' response to the school's ethos and the high standard of teaching is a significant contributor to the high standards attained.

The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements, with the exception of religious education for which insufficient time is allocated to enable the Agreed Syllabus to be covered. The provision for citizenship is also unsatisfactory due in part to time constraints but also because the learning of pupils is not adequately assessed or monitored. Existing deficiencies in the provision and assessment of ICT in Year 11 will have been rectified from September 2005. The school has good partnership arrangements which contribute to vocational pathways in Years 10 and 11, and these are available to all pupils. A significant contribution to the quality of education is made by the extensive programme of enrichment activities in which large numbers participate.

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good, and the school involves pupils very well in seeking and acting on their views through a school council. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring of pupils' individual achievement, is very good, and very good careers advice is also provided. Systems for communicating with parents are good and close partnerships with other schools through the specialist school programme also contribute to pupils' welfare. The very good arrangements to support pupils in the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 enable pupils to make a positive start to their secondary education and contribute significantly to their self-confidence.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher provides clear direction linked to the school's published aims and leads the school with integrity and commitment. He is supported by a strong senior management team. Day-to-day operations within the school are efficiently managed and with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. The quality of middle management is more variable – it is mainly good, and occasionally very good, but greater consistency in the monitoring of pupil experiences is needed. Governance of the school is effective and supportive, and provides the necessary focus on strategic development. Financial management is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the quality of education being provided. Of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, the majority considered that the school is well led and managed. Concerns were expressed by some parents about lack of action taken to prevent bullying and about the quantity of homework. The inspection team found no evidence to support the views about lack of response to bullying, but agree with the parents about lack of consistency in the monitoring of homework. Pupils are very positive about the school and recognise the high quality of care and teaching that they receive. Both parents and pupils expressed strong appreciation of the extra-curricular enrichment activities provided.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that programmes of study in citizenship are in place, are taught, and that outcomes are monitored;
- rectify the time allocation for religious education in Years 10 and 11;
- develop secure systems to ensure that any planned cross-curricular provision is monitored effectively;
- further develop the leadership skills of middle managers to secure greater rigour and consistency in monitoring and self-evaluation processes.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are above average. They maintain these standards as they move through the school and in five subjects improve on them, especially during Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils' achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Year 9 national test results in 2004 were well above average in English, and above average in mathematics and science
- GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above the national average
- standards of work seen by Year 11 are well above expectation in mathematics, science, art and design, modern foreign languages and physical education
- standards are well below expectation in citizenship throughout the school and in religious education at Year 11
- the achievement of pupils in relation to their perceived capability is mostly good; it is very good in mathematics, science, art and design, music and physical education
- pupils underachieve in religious education by Year 11 and it is not possible to judge achievement in citizenship; both shortcomings are a result of inadequate curriculum time.

Commentary

1. The school helps pupils to add satisfactory value to their overall standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average overall and was well above average in the 2004 GCSE results. Since the previous inspection, results in tests and examinations have been maintained at well above average levels and the achievement of pupils is now good compared with satisfactory in 1999.

Tests in English, mathematics and science at the age of 14

2. In comparison with all schools nationally, test results were well above average overall when compared with all schools and with those schools from similar social backgrounds. When compared with schools with similar attainment at the point of entry to the school in Year 7, results were above average; this comparison suggests some underachievement in all three subjects at the upper ability level in 2004. Predictions would expect pupils' actual results in English at Level 5 or more to be high rather than well above average, and those in mathematics and science to be well above average rather than above average. Improvement over recent years has followed the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.5 (37.1)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	37.0 (38.2)	36.5 (35.4)
science	35.1 (36.1)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 217 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

GCSE examinations at the age of 16

3. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were well above average and maintained the levels of recent years, in comparison with all schools nationally, with those from similar social backgrounds and with schools whose pupils had attained similar results in tests at the age of

14. Subjects that stand out as having significantly better than average GCSE results are art and design, French, mathematics, physical education and science. Results in religious education fell below the national average in 2004, particularly for boys. Improvement in GCSE results in recent years is broadly in line with the national trend.

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	66 (63)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	8 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average points score per pupil	395.0	340.3
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	326.4	282.8

There were 221 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards of work seen during the inspection

- Standards observed were above expectation overall by Year 9. Very high standards in Year 9 were seen in English, mathematics, music and art and design. They were broadly in line with expectation in design and technology and religious education but well below this in citizenship. In Year 11, very high standards were seen in mathematics, science, art and design, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were broadly in line with expectation in English (although girls' performance is good in English literature) and ICT, but again well below expectation in citizenship and religious education.

Pupils' achievement

- On entry to the school, overall attainment is above average. In relation to this, standards in lessons, together with test and examination results, indicate good achievement overall between the attainment on entry and the above average and often well above average attainment by the end of Year 11. The level of achievement is a result of good and often very good teaching. The best teaching uses assessment techniques during lessons and in the planning of lessons to ensure that they meet the learning needs of individuals and groups. Work matches the challenge and expectation teachers have of pupils. The best achievement in relation to previous standards is in art and design, mathematics, music, physical education and science where pupils improve on their previous best. Achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education at Year 11 and small pockets of underachievement related to lack of motivation were observed in modern foreign languages.
- Across subjects there is little significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. However, in English literature, modern foreign languages, religious education and science, girls achieve significantly better than boys by Year 11. In art and design, girls achieve better than boys by Years 9 and 11. Achievement levels vary between subjects, but overall they are good. Some pockets of underachievement were identified in music and modern foreign languages in the 2004 GCSE results.
- The achievement of the pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good throughout the school and in line with that of the other pupils. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **very good**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. The way the school promotes moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Spiritual development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils
- above average levels of attendance and good monitoring arrangements
- the quality of relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils
- the strong moral and social code promoted
- there are limited opportunities for spiritual development.

Commentary

8. The school is very successful in creating an environment in which the great majority of pupils are highly motivated and behave very well. Attendance is a prime indicator of whether pupils enjoy coming to school. Being well above the national average, it confirms that they do. Conversations with pupils further demonstrate that they have a high opinion of the school, its staff and the rich curriculum. They make particular reference to the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the support for these, which is excellent. A direct consequence of this positive atmosphere is the effect it has on behaviour. In the great majority of lessons observed, it was very good, with pupils demonstrating enthusiasm and an ability to concentrate for prolonged periods of time. This is a result of the predominantly good teaching and a climate for learning in which high expectations are the norm. In the communal areas pupils are generally considerate and helpful and the result is a calm and well-ordered community in which pupils feel secure. The school acknowledges that it is not entirely free from bullying incidents and it has recently conducted a thorough review of its anti-bullying policy. Effective systems are in place to deal with the relatively infrequent incidents, and most pupils consider that when they occur they are dealt with well.
9. Very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. A recurring theme in lessons observed was the quality of the interaction between teachers and pupils, with humour being used on numerous occasions to very good effect. When given the opportunities pupils collaborate well in lessons, both during group work and in peer assessment. In discussions they articulate well and show respect by listening.
10. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are included well in lessons and feel valued and well supported by the teachers, learning support assistants (LSAs) and other pupils.
11. This positive environment has evolved from close adherence to the school's strong moral and social code. Throughout all year groups, pupils understand the rewards and sanctions which the school applies and feel that these are administered fairly. They particularly support the system of merits and form rewards, which encourage them to do their best in a range of situations. These include attendance, behaviour and attitudes to work. It is noteworthy that the school consulted widely with the pupils in drawing up a code of acceptable conduct in classrooms, to which there is very good adherence. The strength of relationships is at the heart of the school's aim to produce well-rounded individuals. Social interaction at break and lunchtimes is harmonious and the emphasis on teamwork in much of the extra-curricular provision is a further avenue by which they can promote this aspect.
12. Whilst planning for the promotion of spirituality is satisfactory, there are shortcomings in the way opportunities for reflection on the spiritual dimensions of life are offered. A 'thought for the day' system is planned to stimulate the statutory daily corporate act of worship. This is well resourced but is inadequately followed through and is not monitored with any degree of consistency. As a result, its impact is less than that intended.
13. The school's extensive programme of enrichment contributes significantly to the cultural development of the pupils, as do the creative arts subjects in particular. This is enhanced by the school's international links and many pupils have benefited from foreign exchange visits.

Attendance

14. Average attendance in the previous school year, at 94.3 per cent, was very good and is being maintained. It is clear that this has a positive impact on pupil attainment and progress. Systems to monitor absences are good and parents respond to them well. Punctuality is also good, with the majority of pupils arriving on time for the start of the school day. The school has devised very effective strategies for reducing absenteeism and works closely with the education welfare officer and the *Connexions* service to support pupils who are at risk of becoming disengaged from their education. Incentives, in the form of individual certificates and awards for the best-attending tutor groups, are much sought after.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.3%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.2
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.

Exclusions

15. The number of exclusions was low in the year prior to the inspection, relating mainly to fixed-period disciplinary incidents involving verbal abuse to adults, mainly by boys. Where permanent exclusions have been instigated, these have been for serious and sustained incidents and a refusal to engage with the school's core purpose.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1060	34	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** quality of education.

Teaching and learning

The qualities of teaching and learning are closely interdependent and they are both **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the positive attitudes which pupils bring to lessons
- the clarity of learning objectives shared with pupils
- a wide range of teaching strategies employed
- good planning for the needs of different groups
- inconsistent use of assessment data to support planning
- insufficiently systematic monitoring of progress being made by pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

16. There is a culture of high expectation amongst pupils in relation to learning and the great majority of pupils demonstrate an unusual level of self-reliance and independence in its pursuit, both within and beyond the classroom. They come to school expecting to learn and they do. The above-average attainment of the majority of pupils in the school is undoubtedly the result of the combination of good teaching and the very good attitudes of the great majority of pupils.
17. Good and very good teaching was observed in 80 per cent of lessons overall, and some excellent teaching was also observed in mathematics, physical education, design and technology and music. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. It is clear that the school-wide 'Lessons for Learning' structure has had a positive impact, but within some lessons teachers do not always provide the sort of structure needed to enable lower ability pupils to access the learning intended, as for example in enabling note-taking.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 106 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (6%)	32 (30%)	46 (43%)	20 (19%)	1 (1%)	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. Of the 20 lessons which were less good, although satisfactory, the majority were in Years 10 and 11. In these lessons, learning objectives were not made sufficiently clear to pupils and this reduced the effectiveness of the teaching. Differences in prior learning and attainment were not always taken into account and sometimes resulted in insufficient challenge to more able pupils and low expectations of some others. Pupils' views about the teaching they received were overwhelmingly positive, and they frequently described lessons as exciting, interesting and enjoyable.

19. Planning for the needs of different groups within lessons is predominantly good and a wide range of strategies is employed. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and pupils are given very clear instruction. The use of ICT as an aid to support teaching and learning is satisfactory, but inhibited in some subjects by lack of access. During the inspection, homework was observed to be set in accordance with an agreed timetable, and to have been marked. However, a significant proportion of pupils and parents commented on the fact that homework was not always worthwhile, nor was it set regularly. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and contribute significantly to the pupils' achievements.
20. Most teachers use a wide range of approaches in order to include pupils with special educational needs and disabilities: they use different kinds of questions, activities or materials; they make good use of praise and encouragement and they use grouping effectively in order to help the pupils. As a result of this, the pupils make good progress and are engaged and motivated and behave well. Withdrawal groups and one-to-one sessions also provide well-focused support which enables these pupils to make good progress.

Assessment

21. Overall, the school has satisfactory assessment procedures and uses them constructively as a means of raising standards and achievement. The school has introduced an effective mechanism for tracking the progress of each individual pupil. Progress is tracked in all subjects and reported three times a year to parents in jargon-free terminology. Through a Pupil Review Day involving pupils in one-to-one discussion with their tutors, the pupils are involved in their own progress tracking and it was notable how many were able and willing to describe their strengths, weaknesses and development targets to the inspectors.
22. The use of assessment data to support planning of day-to-day classroom work is less effective, largely because it is applied inconsistently. The school has introduced '*Assessment for Learning*' in-service training, but has yet to see this consistently implemented throughout departments. The quality of everyday marking is variable between teachers and between departments. Where good practice exists, it is having a positive impact upon standards, and where '*Assessment for Learning*' techniques are being consistently applied the impact is reflected in pupils' ability to discuss their work and how they need to improve. Overall, its use has improved since the previous inspection.
23. Few teachers systematically monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities towards meeting the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). Although the learning support assistants (LSAs) monitor the progress of these pupils informally, they do not do this systematically and rigorously or involve the pupils sufficiently. As a result, they are not made sufficiently aware of what they need to do to meet their targets. The school is aware of this and has already taken action to remedy the situation.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good overall**. It is good in Years 7 to 9, and good with some shortcomings in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation to support the curriculum is **satisfactory**; staffing and resources are **good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the provision and quality of curriculum enrichment are excellent
- the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has a good blend of academic and vocational options
- the curriculum arrangements in mathematics, design and technology, music and physical education are very good
- provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus
- provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory due, in part, to inadequate time allocation

- work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 needs further development and co-ordination.

Commentary

24. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, except in citizenship and in religious education. In citizenship, the fragmented delivery is insufficiently co-ordinated and does not enable the programmes of study to be adequately addressed. In religious education, less than half of the time allocation recommended for Years 10 and 11, and agreed locally, is made available for teaching the subject. This means that all the necessary elements cannot be covered appropriately, with consequent impact on standards achieved.
25. Following the previous inspection, the school has successfully addressed most curriculum issues, including the time allocation for design and technology, history, and geography. The scheme of work for physical education is now very good. The issue of the provision of ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been partially addressed.
26. In Year 7, pupils are set by ability for English and mathematics and within banded groups for all other subjects. All pupils study at least one foreign language. In Year 8, pupils are set for English, mathematics, science, languages, and design and technology, and taught in mixed-ability groups for all other subjects. In Year 9, the same arrangement obtains except that humanities is banded. In Years 8 and 9, pupils who do not study a second language take additional ICT lessons. The recent introduction of banded groups has enabled subject teaching to be more appropriately targeted towards the pupils from the outset. This arrangement has yet to be evaluated against impact, but initial indications are that the rising trend in standards over the previous four years is being maintained.
27. In Years 10 and 11, a wide range of provision ensures that the needs, aspirations and ambitions of all pupils can be met well. All pupils study English, mathematics, science, one design and technology subject, and a block of core subjects which includes physical education, religious education, careers and work experience. They can then opt for additional subjects from a range of 11 academic subjects, the ASDAN award, three vocational subject delivered on site, and seven vocational subjects delivered off-site at either Mid-Cheshire College or Reaseheath College. Certain pupils who find the traditional educational process difficult to follow can undertake bespoke courses, often with individual tuition. Some of the most able mathematicians are entered for GCSE a year early, and those with special aptitudes for design and technology have a wide range of provision to ensure that all their particular talents can be developed to the fullest extent. This overall wide range of provision ensures that the needs, aspirations and ambitions of all pupils can be met well, and that standards, already well above average, continue to rise in line with the national average.
28. Curriculum enrichment is excellent, and includes opportunities for additional or extended study in school, and large-scale residential or off-site experiences for classes, groups and year groups, in addition to very many sporting, artistic and cultural activities. The school is a hive of activity after school hours, with an excellent range of sporting and musical activities taking place. Very large numbers of pupils, always well over 100, from all year groups, are engaged in structured and staffed competitive team and individual games and practices every day. In addition, many styles of instrumental bands and groups, and choirs, ensure that the site does not fall silent for hours after the normal closure time of the school.
29. The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. In Years 7,8 and 9 it is delivered by form tutors during three sessions a week, supplemented by year group assemblies, but the time is too short for worthwhile learning in all the elements of the course. The programme covers required topics including those on careers, relationships and sex and drugs. The addition of some citizenship teaching within these periods has further reduced the ability of tutors to adequately cover the planned course. In Year 10 and 11, time is less pressured as there are discrete health and careers lessons in addition to the form periods. The programme is heavily workbook-based in order that non-specialists can deliver it. As a consequence, a number of pupils have a low regard for the subject and lack the motivation to get fully involved in lessons. Each element of the course is under the direction of a separate

co-ordinator, but form tutors have discretion on how to teach the topics, resulting in a wide variation in practice. The tutors lack a clear enough set of expectations about what pupils should achieve in these sessions. The careers programme benefits from the expertise of the *Connexions* service with which the school works closely, and includes work experience for all Year 10 pupils.

30. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities experience a curriculum which is not significantly different from other groups of pupils. Access to the curriculum is assisted by careful grouping, which concentrates support in the smaller groups of lower-attaining pupils.
31. The school is at an early stage in implementing work-related learning for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Vocational course opportunities are available to all, as is work experience in Year 10. Other contributions to learning and understanding about the world of work are expected to derive from within subject teaching and this has been audited. At this stage of development, lack of tracking of individual experiences is a barrier to ensuring that all pupils in this age group receive adequate exposure to work-related learning.
32. There is a good match between the number and quality of teachers, and the needs of the curriculum. The overall quality of accommodation is good, although some subjects housed in temporary buildings are limited in the amount of display and use of ICT to support teaching that is possible. The school occupies a large, open site and buildings are well maintained both inside and out. The general display around the school is good and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning by providing a stimulating and pleasant environment. The most recent refurbishment and re-building programme, following major fire damage, has resulted in considerable improvements in mathematics and design and technology. Most subjects benefit from suited rooms, although some specialist lessons are still taught in general classrooms around the school. The specialist outdoor accommodation for physical education is very good compared to indoor provision, which is small and in need of redecoration. ICT has benefited from a significant expansion since the last inspection and music benefits from a discrete ICT suite. The school has made strenuous efforts and is continuing to resolve problems associated with access for non-ambulant students to all areas.
33. Learning resources are good overall. They are very good in mathematics and music. Computer numbers have increased in recent years and the ratio of pupils to computers is a little more favourable than the national average. Departments, however, cannot always gain ready access to ICT equipment, for example in art and mathematics, and in special educational needs where the use of laptops for individual use is limited. The school has a small number of interactive whiteboards, all of which are well used by staff. The library is a good resource, an oasis of calm and is well used by pupils. It is attractive, user friendly and effective in developing independent learning. It is well managed and open to students during lunch break and after lessons. Effective use is made of the ICT facilities to support homework and research activities.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare and safety are **very good**. The support, advice and guidance provided for pupils are **good**. There are **good** arrangements for seeking pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the role of tutors and year heads in providing pastoral support
- the high level of care, particularly in regard to health and safety
- the way in which pupils are encouraged to play a role in the running of the school
- the use of 'Targeter' progress reports and involvement of pupils in progress reviews
- the careers advice on post-16 options.

Commentary

34. This is a caring and inclusive school and during the week of the inspection there were numerous examples which demonstrated this. Across the age ranges, all pupils have the opportunity to earn rewards for academic work, effort, behaviour and achievements outside school. Pupils talked enthusiastically about these merits and felt that they encouraged them to do their best. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities feel well supported and fully integrated into the life of the school.
35. Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are very effective. A recurring theme in conversations with pupils was the respect they had for their teachers. Form tutors and year heads were invariably praised for the way they listened to pupils' concerns and acted upon them. The result is generally confident pupils, who feel comfortable confiding in their teachers. They also speak highly of the co-operation and mutual support which exists between pupils, particularly with regard to the Year 10 anti-bullying mentors and the Year 11 pupils who support Year 7 pupils at the start of term. This has a positive impact on the way new pupils are integrated into the rhythm of school life.
36. The high level of care is particularly evident in the approach to health and safety. The school is well served by its site manager and caretaker who ensure all legal obligations are complied with and that the buildings are maintained in a good condition. Risk assessments are all in place, as are the necessary annual checks on equipment. Within the departments where there are particular safety issues, staff constantly remind pupils of the need to work safely when carrying out tasks and the school has made considerable progress towards complying with the need to provide disabled access to all buildings. The school receives good support from the Local Authority in regard to annual audits of the premises and recommendations for improvement. First aid provision is good and there is regular analysis of accidents to identify trends and implement alternative arrangements.
37. For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, the care, guidance and support offered by the school are very good. They are not treated differently by other pupils or by the subject teachers and feel part of the whole community. Good use is made of the available external support agencies.
38. The school successfully involves pupils in its day-to-day management. Since the last inspection, a school council has been established through which pupils' views are sought. The senior management team place great value in the views of the council and regularly use it as a sounding board to gauge pupils' opinions. Other ways in which pupils are involved in the running of their school occur through the anti-bullying mentors and the 'Review Day' which is becoming an increasingly important means by which pupils can plan their own learning. By giving pupils this responsibility the school has created a very good way of engaging them in their own learning. The review day works in tandem with the 'Targeter' progress reports supplied to parents and together they provide an effective means of assessing pupils' achievements and providing them with necessary advice and guidance.
39. Pupils benefit from the careers advice they receive from the *Connexions* service. All pupils are seen by a *Connexions* adviser before they leave the school. The majority choose to go on to further education and this is where most of the advice is directed. Advisers will also provide support for pupils who are at risk of being lost to the education process in Years 10 and 11. Working in conjunction with the education welfare officer, a more appropriate curriculum pathway is devised, invariably involving some form of work experience. This flexible approach has ensured that a number of pupils have been successfully re-engaged with their education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established **very good** and effective links with parents. There are **good** links with the community. Educational support programmes are **very good**, as are the links with other educational establishments.

Main strengths

- the quality of information provided for parents about the school and their children
- the induction programme provided for Year 6/Year 7 transition
- the links with primary schools, including Technology College outreach work
- the support from parents for the work of the school.

Commentary

40. The information received by parents on the work of the school is very good. The prospectus and the governors' annual report are comprehensive and both fully meet requirements. To this is added an informative monthly newsletter, pupil planners and the school website which is being used increasingly as a means of consulting with parents. Heads of year and members of the senior management team are in regular contact with parents and there are good systems in place to ensure that parents are kept well informed about the progress their children are making. Once a year they receive a full report, which gives clear information on the level at which their child is working, on effort, on personal development and on the targets that need to be addressed to secure improvement and progress. Within the reports pupils are also asked to complete a self-review which is beneficial to both them and the school. Annual parents' evenings and two 'Targeter' reports add to the very good information that parents receive during the year.
41. The arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary 'feeder' schools into Year 7 are very good. New pupils spend a whole week in the school during the summer term when they follow a full timetable of lessons. Not only does this induction provide them with the time to become familiar with their surroundings and the type of teaching they are going to receive, but it also gives tutors the opportunity to make some initial assessment of pupils' capabilities. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting were glowing in their praise of this and interviews with pupils confirmed this view.
42. The very good liaison that takes place with the primary schools over pupil transition is enhanced through the school's Technology College outreach work. The links it has developed are having an impact by helping to raise attainment in a number of subjects. In science, Year 6 pupils have been involved in a project to produce a training DVD on investigative work. Members of the science, maths modern languages, music and design and technology departments regularly teach lessons to pupils in feeder primaries and Year 6 pupils attend a weekly 'Maths Masterclass' at Weaverham.
43. The school's partnership with parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities is very good. Annual reviews of statements give good feedback to the parents and carers.
44. The great majority of parents are very supportive of their children's education and the school builds on this goodwill by encouraging their involvement. Parents support the school in a wide range of contexts: they ensure that their children attend regularly; attend parent consultation evenings in good numbers; provide support in finding work experience placements; help with homework and support fund raising through the Weaverham High School Association. Through the latter they organise a range of events and raise significant sums of money which has contributed significantly to the school's resources.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- governance and leadership by the senior management team
- the drive to maintain and improve on already high standards is at the forefront
- the governing body is supportive of the school and has systems in place to hold it to account
- day-to-day management is good at all levels
- planning for the delivery of some cross-curricular provision is inadequate
- monitoring of cross-curricular elements needs greater consistency and rigour
- inconsistencies in the levels of monitoring by pastoral managers.

Commentary

45. Strong and supportive governance ensures that the school fulfils statutory requirements, although there are weaknesses in allocation of appropriate time, mechanisms for delivery, and monitoring of outcomes in non-examination subjects and activities – for example, the consistency of quality in the daily collective act of worship and the programmes of study in citizenship.
46. Governors hold the school's management to account systematically and effectively, using a committee structure. They have a strong sense of the needs of their own community. They know the school well, are sensitive to parents' concerns and are prepared to question the relevance of some national and local initiatives in the context of their school. The governing body has a strong partnership with the senior management team and undertakes conscientious monitoring of financial control and management. Training opportunities are taken up, and through these governors are able to keep abreast of national developments.
47. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school he leads. He is a man of strong conviction and has led the school through a phase of rapid improvement in recent years during which he has created an ethos and built a new leadership team which shares his high aspirations for the pupils. His continual drive for consistency and high standards is manifested in the trend of rising and above-average examination results achieved by many pupils and he provides an excellent role model for staff and pupils alike in his determination to uphold standards in all walks of school life. He is highly visible about the school, knows individual pupils well and delegates effectively, thereby drawing the best performance from individuals through a combination of high expectation and trust.

Senior management team

48. The school's senior management team, led by the headteacher, is compact, enthusiastic and committed to the future development of an already high achieving school. There are sound systems in place to ensure that statutory requirements are in place. They are active about the school and take a full share in this. There is a clear sense of direction, and an energetic pursuit of initiatives designed to improve the quality of teaching, assessment and pupil learning experiences. They monitor the work of teachers and the learning of pupils well, and they have instituted and are developing new approaches to teaching and learning, and have used opportunities such as the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy to provide all staff with professional development. Appropriate procedures are in place to link performance management to training needs of individuals.
49. The senior management team monitors carefully the attainment and progress of individual pupils and analyses the achievements of all sub-groups and any minority groups. The very small group of pupils who find conformity to school and school expectations difficult are closely monitored through the overall pastoral care system, and within the learning support

department, which supports these pupils well. The relatively small team of learning support assistants is well deployed to maximise benefits to pupils' progress.

Middle management

50. The middle tier of management is good overall. Heads of department and heads of year are afforded considerable autonomy and generally use it professionally and to good effect. An emerging culture of self-evaluation is evident, and departments are well led but there is a need for greater awareness of the full aspects of accountability for devolved responsibility. Pastoral managers are inconsistent in following through on monitoring of compliance with school policies and procedures and in securing consistent experiences for groups of pupils in learning which is delivered through the pastoral framework. Where there are shortcomings, these can sometimes be traced to infrastructural and provision failures at a higher level, as for example in the allocation of curriculum time. Morning registration periods are usually used for 'Thought for the Day', stimulus for which is provided by the religious education department, but this is not monitored and pupils' experience is therefore wholly dependent on the tutor's interpretation of what is required. Afternoon tutor periods on three days per week are devoted to the PSHE and citizenship programmes, but the monitoring and evaluation of this form of fragmented delivery are weak and the school has not moved rapidly enough to rectify the situation.
51. Weaverham High School is an efficient and orderly place. Parents and pupils consider the school to be well managed, and the staff culture is one where all contributors to the life and work of the school feel valued. The systems which underpin its routine operation of teaching and extra-curricular activity are effective but unobtrusive. Communication within the school, and with external partners, is very good. The cycle of formal meetings is appropriate and efficient and a strong teamwork ethos is evident amongst the middle managers. Effective checks on departmental expenditure are in place. The principles of best value are well understood and applied throughout the school.
52. There is a good match between the number and quality of teachers, and the needs of the curriculum. Almost all teaching is undertaken by subject-specialist teachers, who are confident in their delivery of the specific syllabus. When delivery is by non-specialists, as in citizenship, teachers feel insecure, and this leads to variations in the quality of provision. The level of technical support staff in science, ICT and design and technology is appropriate. Site maintenance staff keep the building and its immediate environment clean and safe. Lunchtime supervision and catering staff ensure that the short midday break is handled quickly and efficiently, and provide high quality meals for the pupils. ICT is well used to support the administration of the school, which is efficient and effective. It is used effectively to support the production of regular reports on pupils' progress and achievement.
53. The leadership and management of the school's provision for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are good overall. Involvement of governors and senior managers in monitoring this provision is rigorous.

Self-evaluation

54. The school is clear about its strategic intent and the quality of development planning is good. Governors are closely involved and strategic priorities are shared with middle managers to inform their own short-term development plans. The school leadership has a good understanding about self-evaluation but has been over-optimistic about the translation of training initiatives into classroom practice. For example, in-service training provided in 'assessment for learning' practice has yet to reach the quality and consistency throughout the school to justify its own judgement of 'good'.
55. The school is very well placed to continue its drive for further improvement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,540,000
Total expenditure	3,672,960
Expenditure per pupil	3,345

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	206,558
Balance carried forward to the next	73,598

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- well above average results in national tests at the end of Year 9
- above average GCSE results in 2004
- pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9 is very good because of teachers' high expectations and very good teaching
- a culture of reading is well promoted and aided by well-developed links with the school library.
- the difference between boys' and girls' attainment is significantly wider than that seen nationally
- marking and individual target setting is variable across classes and year groups.

Commentary

56. In 2004, test results at the end of Year 9 were well above average. The trend over time is one of improvement. GCSE results are above average in English and in line with the average for English literature, with girls performing better than boys in both subjects. The attainment of girls is well above the national average, with a large percentage gaining the highest grades. In English literature, the attainment of pupils at the highest grades was significantly lower. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is significantly wider than that seen nationally.
57. During the inspection, the standard of work seen in Year 9 was well above expectation. Pupils are able to speak confidently, explain ideas and justify opinions. They listen well to teachers and each other, showing interest and independence. These skills are developed through the frequent opportunities in lessons to discuss, extend their thinking, collaborate and explore ideas. Many pupils read aloud with expression and confidence; they respond to teachers' high expectations of independent working and pupils in need of additional support benefit from specialist staff and a range of intervention programmes. Pupils use the library regularly for reading for pleasure and for research. In all years, pupils write in a wide variety of forms and in response to a range of stimuli. Many pupils write articulately, showing control of ideas, sentence structure and a wide vocabulary. They write in a wide range of genres which include advertisements, critical essays and play scenes. All are encouraged to write extended pieces. Some pupils still struggle with grammar, spelling and punctuation. Pupils of all abilities achieve well because of the range of support and opportunities provided for them, but the use of ICT during lessons is limited.
58. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 was above expectation overall, and an indicator that above average results at GCSE can be maintained. Most pupils confidently contribute to teacher-led discussions which serve to develop the wider understanding of the group. They read a wide range of texts with understanding and engagement. Pupils of all abilities write extended pieces that are structured and organised appropriately. Teachers' expectations are generally high and many pupils work independently and with confidence. However, in some classes, a limited range of teaching approaches and a lack of structure in developing class and revision notes result in a significant group of Year 11 pupils, mainly boys, showing limited progress and an over-reliance on the teacher.

59. The quality of teaching and learning is predominantly good, and some very good teaching was seen. There has been good use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to support it. Where it is very good, teachers plan effectively for all pupils and provide the appropriate challenge and support for pupils' learning. They use a range of engaging activities that interest and motivate pupils. They use open questions to extend their thinking and plan for a range of opportunities for discussions. Where teaching is less good, it does not fully address pupils' learning needs and makes insufficient use of interactive teaching strategies.
60. Pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils are aware of the overall quality of their work. At best, teachers encourage pupil self and peer assessment and provide precise guidance on areas for improvement. However, this is currently inconsistent across classes and year groups and pupils are therefore not always aware of what they need to do to improve.
61. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. There is a clear focus on subject development, with regular analysis of performance. There has been good use of initiatives to develop teaching and learning and plans are in place for future development of key areas. The commitment to collaborative working supports the development of team approaches but also limits the pace of change that is required. Roles and responsibilities are appropriately organised. Monitoring systems to ensure consistency in approaches to teaching, marking and target setting are not sufficiently robust.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Standards of literacy throughout the school are above average. The range of opportunities pupils are given to explain and justify their opinions has produced good speaking and listening skills. Reading for information is strongly promoted, with high expectations that pupils will research independently. Reading for pleasure is encouraged through activities such as author week in Year 7, regular whole-class visits to the library, and promotion of World Book Day. Standards in writing are also good, with most pupils by Year 11 structuring responses appropriately, using technical language and showing control over grammar and punctuation.
63. Teaching of language and literacy skills is good. Many teachers use a range of open ended questions and require pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary in their responses, while pupils' confidence in presenting to large groups is well developed through participation in the pupil-led assemblies. Support for writing is well developed in design and technology, geography, mathematics, modern languages, physical education and religious education. Word walls, models of writing, writing frames and collaborative writing are used in both key stages.

Areas for development:

- develop a wider range of strategies to engage the interest of boys;
- improve access to ICT in support of teaching and learning in the classroom;
- develop more robust monitoring systems.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and pupils achieve well
- very good pupil attitudes to work and good teaching promote good achievement
- a small number of pupils of middle ability underachieve, due to negative attitudes to language learning
- the quality of teaching and assessment is too uneven.

Commentary

64. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average in French and German for all pupils, and were well above this for girls. This represents a significant improvement from 2003, when results were already above the national average. Girls' results improved sharply and higher attaining pupils achieved well. GCSE results in French and German in 2004 were well above average, as in 2003, but a small number of boys under-performed in relation to their prior attainment.
65. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9. This year group has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than other year groups, which explains the slight drop in standards from the previous year. Higher attaining pupils reach well above average standards and pupils with special educational needs achieve well. A small number of middle attaining pupils, who do not enjoy language learning, underachieve. By Year 11, standards are well above average, particularly in German. Achievement is good throughout the school as a result of very good pupil attitudes and good teaching.
66. Many pupils read fluently, accurately and with understanding. Very good knowledge, understanding and use of grammar is reflected in well-constructed writing, particularly by higher attainers. Literacy skills are above average. Most pupils are confident communicators in topic work but are less proficient in using French and German for spontaneous conversations. Listening skills are not as highly developed as other skills, particularly in lessons where there is insufficient use of the foreign language. Pupils use their very good skills in ICT to enhance their work.
67. The quality of teaching is mainly good, although not consistently so. It is better in German than in French. Teachers use their expertise to motivate pupils and to ensure they are well prepared for examinations. Most lessons are well planned to cover a range of skills and to match the needs of pupils. Homework which consolidates and extends learning is set regularly and as a result, pupils' learning is secure. Support staff, such as foreign language assistants, are managed effectively and encourage keen participation.
68. The best lessons seen were characterised by a high level of expectation, a demanding pace and exacting questioning. This ensures pupils communicate extensively in the foreign language, with good pronunciation. Pupils respond eagerly to the range of intellectually challenging activities and reach high standards. In contrast, a fairly large number of lessons were conducted at a comfortable pace, with a lower level of demand placed on pupils. Mistakes were not consistently corrected and approximate pronunciation accepted. Frequently there is too much use of English, depriving pupils of the opportunity to develop listening skills.
69. Use of assessment procedures is satisfactory overall, but displays the same inconsistency as in the quality of teaching. Some assessment practice and marking involves pupils in knowing what to do to improve their work in relation to GCSE grades or National Curriculum levels. Pupils set precise targets which help them to improve their work. In other classes, marking and assessment are thorough, regular and positive, but do not provide sufficient guidance on how to improve.
70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recently appointed staff bring new ideas and skills. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the department is not capitalising on existing strengths. Some use is made of the analysis of data, but this is not fully developed.
71. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory: standards overall have risen slightly and the difference between the achievement of boys and girls has reduced a little as a result of departmental strategies. The quality of teaching has improved.

Areas for development:

- increase the use of target language in teaching;
- monitor more closely marking and use of assessment procedures to achieve consistency of practice.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- above average standards of attainment throughout the school
- very good learning reflected in the quality of pupil response
- very good leadership and management, supported by a committed and experienced team, good enrichment and support opportunities
- the use of ICT to aid learning is limited by access to resources
- there is some inconsistency in the implementation of marking and assessment policies.

Commentary

72. Pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry is well above the national average. Standards attained by the end of Year 9 in national tests were well above the national average in 2004. When compared with similar schools, standards overall were again well above average, although, as a result of special circumstances, they were lower than in 2003. Trends over the last five years are broadly in line with national trends, with no significant difference between boys and girls. Standards of work seen in lessons and within books are well above expectation.
73. In 2004 the proportion gaining GCSE grades A*-C and grades A*-G was well above the national average. Girls and boys performed equally well. The most able pupils obtain outstanding results and are entered early in Year 10, before continuing with additional mathematics in Year 11. Standards seen were again well above national expectations with no significant gender differences. Pupils with special needs make good progress.
74. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 is very good overall. It is good for lower attainers. These pupils have particular difficulties retaining information and memorising and reliably using multiplication tables. Their achievement is hampered because of this. By the end of Year 11, achievement is very good overall, and good for lower attainers for similar reasons. Most pupils are very confident in algebraic manipulation and in expressing mathematics verbally.
75. The quality of teaching and of learning is very good. Experienced and effective teachers plan lessons thoroughly and are well organised. Their effective use of starter activities is well embedded and by maintaining a fast pace, providing clear explanations and giving very good support to individuals they enable pupils to progress well. Skilful questioning draws out the reasoning and ideas so that pupils gain a good understanding of new concepts. However, greater differentiation within lessons would further increase achievement.
76. Homework is regularly set and used to extend and reinforce learning. ICT is routinely used to present lessons. However, its use to enhance learning for individual pupils is limited by the unsatisfactory access to computers.
77. Pupils are able to clearly explain their mathematical thinking and high achievers have a high level of independent learning. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils are a contributing factor to the very good behaviour seen, and the equally good attitudes of pupils.

78. Leadership in the department is very good. There is a clear focus on further continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The management of the department is also very good. Appropriate training is arranged to meet identified development issues. Monitoring of the department takes place within the whole-school systems and the outcomes are shared and discussed within regular team meetings.
79. Since the previous inspection the department's improvement has been good and the majority of issues raised at that time have been addressed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Standards in numeracy are good overall. The mathematics department has responded to the national numeracy strategy in the past by providing training for staff working in other subjects across the curriculum. They also produced at that time a useful and detailed booklet to assist other subject areas. However, there is currently no co-ordinator responsible for numeracy development across the school and there needs to be a cross-curricular review to ensure that all curriculum areas and recently appointed staff are able to contribute.

Areas for development:

- greater differentiation within lesson planning;
- monitoring of marking and assessment procedures to ensure consistency.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- above average attainment in GCSE results compared with other schools
- very good leadership and management
- an experienced team of teachers and technicians who work well together
- predominantly good teaching
- access to ICT needs to be improved.

Commentary

81. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Pupils attain above average results in national curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. In 2004 the number of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 grade was average, with slightly higher than average at Level 6 and higher than average at Level 7. The numbers achieving Level 5 in 2004 does not reflect the higher standards seen in the classroom during the inspection. Very good achievement was seen in Year 7. This was evident where pupils were developing advanced ideas about physical and chemical change.
82. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average, with the number of A* and A grades being nearly twice the national average. Slightly more girls attained higher grades than boys. Work produced in class and in pupils' books is of a high standard.
83. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. Lessons are well planned by the specialist teachers who have good knowledge of the subject. Teachers identify pupils with special educational needs in their planning. These pupils achieve well because of the support they receive from the teacher. The best lessons are characterised by clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils and revisited at the end of the lesson. There is usually a range of activities in lessons and good resources. Where classrooms are provided with digital projectors, teachers make good use of them. This serves to engage the pupils and support their progress. Where lessons were less than good, this was because the learning objectives

were less clear and as a result pupils were less focused on their work. In one lesson observed, learning was unsatisfactory due to poor motivation of pupils. The use of ICT to support learning needs to be extended to a wider number of pupils.

84. The assessment process is good. Information on pupil progress is collated and used effectively. The department also uses an interactive ICT system to collect some end-of-unit test data and pre-test scores. Pupil peer assessment is at an early stage of development. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but greater consistency is needed in informing them about their standards and how to improve them.
85. The learning environment created by teachers is very good with high status given to pupils' work and high quality display. Pupils show good understanding of the lesson content. Most pupils show motivation to learn, are well prepared for lessons, work well together and are aware of the high expectations of the department. The positive working relationships between teachers and pupils are a key factor in supporting the learning in the classroom.
86. Leadership and management of the department are both very good. There are clear objectives and a strong sense of teamwork. Departmental development is focused on improving teaching and learning. All teachers in the department have access to appropriate training and development, and monitoring has been effective in developing consistency of approach to teaching. The very good accommodation and resources are well maintained, with very good technical support.

Areas for development:

- improve access to ICT resources for a wider range of pupils;
- achieve greater consistency in the use of constructive marking.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- a clear vision of what is required to improve ICT both within the department and across the whole school
- innovative use of wireless technology in some curriculum areas
- the dedication and work ethic of the teaching team
- limited monitoring of the provision for the 30 per cent of pupils not taking subjects with an ICT core in Years 10 and 11
- an over-rigid application of the national framework for ICT which has reduced opportunities for self-directed learning in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

87. Standards overall are satisfactory. Current assessments indicate that standards on entry for the majority of pupils are above average. By the end of Year 9, they continue to be above average. The number of pupils estimated to have reached Level 5 is above that set nationally and broadly in line with the targets established by the local authority. Whilst the majority of pupils in Year 7 readily gain appropriate skills and knowledge, they show limited invention in their application of this learning. By the end of Year 8 most pupils can use spreadsheets to predict profit and loss. In Year 9 the highest ability pupils can combine software packages to produce accurate flow diagrams of open-looped computer control systems.
88. The overall standard of those pupils entering Year 10 examination groups is just above average. An open entry policy allows any pupil, regardless of ability, to study the GCSE course. Standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average but well below the school average for the number of pupils obtaining A* to C grades in full GCSE

courses. There is no marked difference in the performance of boys and girls, despite the disproportionately higher number of boys choosing to do this subject at GCSE in the past. The folders of pupils in both Year 10 and 11 are well organised and accessible and indicate satisfactory progress over two years. The most talented pupils can apply sophisticated relational databases to highly realistic business scenarios and, when given the opportunity, learn independently.

89. Teaching is mainly good. The team members come from a wide range of backgrounds, are well qualified and make excellent role models. Objectives are clearly identified at the start and, in most cases, referred to at the end of lessons. Discussion is widely used to encourage pupils to make a whole-class contribution. Summative assessment is consistently undertaken, although more formative and self-assessment in Years 7 to 9 is lacking.
90. Pupil learning is satisfactory. In Years 7-9 pupils understand what they are expected to do. The tasks they have been set keep them focused, although behaviour is inconsistent. Pupils in both Year 10 and 11 consistently work hard and collaborate well with their peers. They approach set tasks methodically and meet exam deadlines.
91. The quality of both leadership and management is good. Deficiencies in staffing and lack of co-ordination which had previously affected results have been addressed. Teaching is monitored and evaluated and good practice shared. The department is efficiently managed and has a clear sense of identity.
92. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Improved provision for ICT across the curriculum has raised attainment of those pupils in Year 10 and 11 and the statutory requirements for all pupils are now being met.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. Provision is satisfactory. Good practice is evident in most subjects, particularly in using the Internet as a source of information. In design and technology, computer-aided design and computer control is taught successfully. Wireless networks are employed in food technology to reduce dependency on teaching in fixed locations. The science team have developed a DVD on data logging for use in primary schools and end-of-unit tests are monitored by a computer-based integrated learning system. In music all pupils are comfortable using software for composition. The physical education department uses computers to monitor performance. In geography there are excellent examples of very sophisticated coursework produced on a computer. However, in English, history and art, there is limited provision.
94. Regular meetings of curriculum leaders are held to co-ordinate whole-school development of ICT. A reporting system for those in the final two year of school, who are not taking subjects with a substantial ICT component, has been recently introduced along with a subject review and a whole-curriculum audit. The monitoring of this provision is as yet limited.

Areas for development:

- improve assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9;
- provide more opportunity for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to explore the potential application of new learning.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- good teaching and learning across all years
- a wide range of topics covered, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11
- above average number of pupils opting to take history in Year 10
- pupils need to make better notes in some classes to enable them to consolidate their learning
- the use of ICT by pupils in lessons is limited.

Commentary

95. Year 9 teacher assessment in 2004 was well above average. Standards of pupils' work observed during the inspection were also above expectation. Assessments identify the well above average literacy skills of pupils rather than their historical knowledge and skills which, whilst above average, are less developed than their literacy skills. Levels of attainment represent good achievement for pupils who enter the school with above average levels of literacy but with less well-developed historical knowledge and skills. Pupils of all abilities make this good progress because they cover a wide range of topics, develop skills in chronology and the interpretation of sources as well as producing very good pieces of extended writing, particularly in Year 9.
96. GCSE results in 2004 were above average, although the number of A* grades attained was below the national average. The performance of girls was better than that of the boys. Standards of work observed during the inspection were above expectation. This represents good achievement by pupils who maintain their above-average standards from the end of Year 9. Pupils of all abilities are able to write sensitively and perceptively about Nelson Mandela and apartheid. They produce good coursework on the development over time of Weaverham Church and are able to understand cause and effect when writing about incidents such as the Battle of the Little Bighorn in studying the American West. The attainment and achievement of pupils with special educational needs are good. They benefit from a variety of tasks which are well structured and suited to their abilities.
97. Teaching and learning are good overall across all years. Teachers are generally experienced and very knowledgeable. They are very well prepared and use a number of teaching methods, including the use of ICT. Lessons are well organised in line with the current national strategy and pupils organise and present their work well. Pupils are encouraged to think and form opinions based on evidence. One Year 7 class of lower attaining pupils made good progress understanding the development of castles by thinking up defences in response to a series of weapons introduced by the teacher. They were able to understand difficult terminology, including the idea of 'anachronism'. Pupils' learning benefits from their very good behaviour in class and their enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to history. This is reflected in the numbers opting to take GCSE history in Year 10. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to the consolidation of pupils' knowledge and skills by ensuring that summaries and notes are accurately completed. This is having a negative impact on the learning and understanding over time of lower attainers in particular. Good use is made of ICT at home by pupils to research and complete assignments but the use of ICT in school is more limited.
98. Leadership and management are both good. In a short time an effective and supportive team has been created which works co-operatively, recognises the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is focused upon raising standards. The evaluation of teaching and the monitoring of pupils' work are in place. Schemes of work are under review and assessment

procedures are helping pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Significant changes have been made over the past year but these have yet to impact on raising standards.

Areas for development:

- develop a structured approach to note-taking and recording to enable lower-attaining pupils to access the learning intended;
- extend the use of ICT to support classroom teaching.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- good achievement overall and very good achievement by boys at GCSE
- good teaching and learning that engages pupils' interest and encourages them to work hard
- very good attitudes to learning by all pupils
- fieldwork opportunities are too restricted in Years 7 to 9
- marking procedures are inconsistent.

Commentary

99. Standards on entry are average although, as pupils come from a large number of primary schools, they display widely varying levels of knowledge and skills in geography. By the end of Year 9, standards of work of both boys and girls are above average, with 75 per cent of girls and 71 per cent of boys reaching Level 5 or better. The gap between the standards of boys and girls is narrower than the national pattern.
100. GCSE results have been consistently good in recent years. In 2004, the number of pupils attaining A*-C grades was above the national average, with boys performing better than girls. The proportion of boys attaining A* grades was twice the national average. Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that these above average standards are being maintained.
101. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Boys' achievement at GCSE level is very good whilst that of girls is still above the national average. Higher attaining boys do particularly well whilst middle and lower ability pupils achieve results that are in line with expectations.
102. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was most effective when lessons offered opportunities for pupils to learn in a variety of ways. Pupils display a well-developed capacity to work collaboratively and to review each other's learning in a mature and responsible fashion. The most successful lessons were those in which the pace was demanding and tasks were accurately matched to the range of learning needs. Boys made particularly good progress when teaching was carefully structured to emphasise the correct sequence of facts and explanation in writing answers to examination questions. Teachers recognise and provide for the differing needs of pupils and combine to form effective teams with teaching assistants, although the extent of such support is limited. Some very good use of ICT by teachers was seen and there were excellent examples of pupils' use of ICT, especially, in GCSE coursework. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and pupils are aware of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. However, there are some inconsistencies in marking across the department and comments to enable improvement to be made are not always provided.
103. Pupils' attitudes are very good and particularly so in Years 10 and 11. They respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and the atmosphere in classrooms is enhanced by mutual respect.

104. Leadership of the department is good. The acting head of department has worked very hard and successfully to maintain standards and departmental morale and the take-up for the subject at GCSE is higher than the national average. Teamwork is good, with productive sharing of ideas and mutual support. Management of the department is also good. Development planning addresses clear priorities for the improvement of teaching and learning, particularly in increasing the range of teaching strategies. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are well established. Very good displays in classrooms celebrate pupils' work and provide exemplars that are used to support teaching and learning. Although there are good opportunities for fieldwork in Years 10 and 11, those available in Years 7 to 9 are restricted to on-site activities.
105. Resources are satisfactory overall although accommodation in temporary rooms limits the amount of display space and the use of ICT.
106. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Above average standards in Years 7 to 9 have been maintained and GCSE results, especially those of boys, have improved. The inadequate time allocation for geography identified in the last report has been remedied and secure arrangements have been put in place to monitor the quality of teaching.

Areas for development:

- increase the range of teaching strategies to meet the different learning styles of pupils;
- develop consistent use of 'Assessment for Learning' practice throughout the department.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**. Some of the strengths identified at the time of the last inspection remain but provision overall has not improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the school fails to allocate enough time to the subject to enable coverage of the locally agreed syllabus
- the standard of pupils' work in Year 11 non-GCSE groups is well below expectation
- teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE course
- leadership within the department is knowledgeable and effective
- the contribution to pupils' personal development is good.

Commentary

107. Pupils in Year 9 reach the standard required by the locally agreed syllabus. They know the beliefs, practices and values of the religions they study. They understand how religious commitment influences people. They make informed judgements about religious and moral issues. They also reflect on their own personal beliefs and values. During Years 7 to 9, pupils are positive in attitude and make steady progress.
108. Results for pupils on the GCSE course have been either at or above the national average in recent years. In 2004, however, results were well below the national average, with boys' results particularly disappointing. On the present course, the standard of pupils' work at least matches the national average. Pupils have the requisite knowledge and understanding. They acquire the skills they need for success in the examination and achieve well.
109. The standard of work of non-GCSE pupils in Year 11 is well below expectation. What pupils write in Years 10 and 11 is brief and often unfinished. Extended writing with descriptive detail and explanatory depth is entirely missing and in their consideration of social issues pupils give insufficient attention to the role of religion. Attitudes in lessons are satisfactory but the lack

both of time and continuity leads to poor achievement. Achievement is satisfactory overall, with higher attaining pupils making the greatest learning gains.

110. As at the time of the previous inspection, the quality of both teaching and learning is good. Pupils were observed to benefit from specialist teaching and from the careful planning for intended learning outcomes. Teachers are good at engaging the interest and attention of pupils. In most lessons teachers achieve positive attitudes and good behaviour.
111. The curriculum is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and for those on the GCSE course. For other pupils in Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is inadequate. The agreed syllabus requires 40 hours of teaching per year. In Year 10, however, pupils have only 18 hours and in Year 11 only 14 hours. The school's failure to provide enough time for pupils to reach the expected standard has resulted in unsatisfactory levels of pupil learning.
112. Leadership is knowledgeable and effective. The head of department shows clear vision and high aspirations, providing a good role model to pupils and to other teachers. The three teachers work well together as an effective specialist team. Management is satisfactory. The department recognises the need to develop the use of data, collected from more systematic assessment, as a way towards better departmental self-evaluation.

Area for development:

- provide 40 hours of teaching per year in Years 10 and 11, in order to enable pupils to reach the standard expected in Year 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- innovative partnerships with other schools and colleges
- very good relationships between staff and pupils contributing to pupils' positive response
- standards consistently above average in graphics at GCSE
- good accommodation and resources
- inconsistencies in the monitoring and evaluation of different curriculum disciplines
- assessment practice is not monitored closely enough to ensure good achievement in all areas.

Commentary

113. Current standards in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations and closely reflect teacher assessments. Good progress is made overall and by the end of Year 11, standards are just above the national average, as at the time of the previous inspection.
114. There are broad variations between the subjects that collectively deliver the national curriculum. Standards are consistently good in 'graphics' and those in 'food' are often good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make similar progress in lessons and throughout Years 7 to 9 because they receive high levels of individual support and guidance. Rates of improvement are sometimes slowed because pupils do not always recognise and use knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly more demanding design and make activities in new situations. The impact of ICT, used as a tool for designing and making, is beginning to show in standards of work produced across all areas.
115. In recent years, GCSE results at the higher grades A*-C have slipped and remain below the school average. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally, but where boys' results have

declined since 2003, girls' results have improved. Very few girls take the resistant materials, electronics, systems and control, or manufacturing courses, whereas in graphics the numbers are now very similar. Since 2002, results have remained similar in graphics; in resistant materials they have slipped steadily and are now below and well below the national and school averages respectively. In 2004, results in electronics and manufacturing were disappointing, but in 'food' they have improved and are now above the national average. There have been long periods of disruption as a result of the re-building programme, resulting in limited access to some specialist facilities. This lack of continuity and consistency in pupils' learning has adversely affected the achievement of some groups.

116. The range of courses available for Years 10 and 11 is wide and provides many opportunities for pupils to choose a style of learning that suits them. Pupils are motivated in the highly practical vocational course and achieve well in the practical aspects, compared to the written and test elements of the course. The learning environment is now much improved and includes permanent displays of high quality examples of work to extend and raise standards and expectations further.
117. The quality of teaching and learning overall is at least satisfactory and in some areas good and very good. The department has been recognised by the Specialist Schools Trust for its good practice in the teaching of manufacturing. Many lessons benefit from a clear structure, with teachers using established routines to ensure pupils settle quickly and are prepared to work. Pupils value having their opinions taken into account and this has led to higher levels of motivation and learning. In all lessons observed, pupils worked quietly, but on occasions without a sense of urgency, and they were not asked to reflect on or look critically at their work as it progressed. Similarly, during practical activities design folders were rarely used to record modifications and therefore better inform progress and develop design fluency. Relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils' behaviour in class, were rarely less than very good.
118. Leadership is good. The department has recently undergone significant changes in the appointment of specialist key personnel, all of whom are well deployed. There is a need to further define roles and responsibilities in terms of monitoring and evaluating the work of the different disciplines and to secure consistent practice. Documentation is thorough, well designed and focused on addressing the valid issues identified for development, for example provision for gifted and talented pupils. The department is also well managed, although the monitoring of marking and assessment requires more rigour to ensure consistency. The technicians are very effective in assisting the smooth running of the department.
119. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Accommodation and resources have improved, time allocation in Years 7 to 9 has been increased to match that nationally and curriculum development extended to meet the needs of all pupils. Partnerships with other schools and colleges along with the developing industrial partnerships reflect the school's outreach work as a specialist Technology College.

Areas for development:

- secure consistent approaches to monitoring and evaluating outcomes across all disciplines within the subject area;
- ensure consistency in application of agreed marking and assessment practice.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above average
- results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are well above average
- the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good
- provision for ICT is minimal.

Commentary

120. At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above average. In teacher assessments in 2004, girls gained a larger proportion of the highest grades than boys. In work seen during the inspection, this general level of attainment is confirmed and constitutes very good achievement during Years 7, 8 and 9 in relation to standards on entry. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is also very good.
121. Results in GCSE examinations in Year 11 show a well above average level of attainment and continuing very good achievement and progress. Girls continue to gain better results than boys, and pupils with special educational needs sustain their very good progress.
122. The very good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is supported by very good teaching which, in turn, promotes very good learning. All lessons are prepared carefully and delivered with sensitivity to individual pupil need. It is this factor, linked with excellent pupil and teacher relationships, which underscores the noteworthy progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with special talent.
123. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also very good. At this stage, the high level of teacher subject expertise is an important element in preparing pupils for examinations. The quality of learning at both stages matches the quality of teaching and is helped by excellent pupil behaviour in class. Pupils show sustained concentration and develop the confidence to work independently. Teachers successfully develop creative self-confidence in pupils through design work from objective studies, developing into strong composition with bold colour. By the end of Year 11, most pupils are producing confident, well-presented work with very good balance of formal elements such as line, tone, texture and colour.
124. The quality of leadership in the subject area is very good. The head of department plays a full role in the teaching and possesses a high level of enthusiasm for the subject. Management is good; very effective teamwork stems from very good relationships within the department. A richly diversified curriculum is provided and is evident in excellent displays around the school. A particular strength exists in the provision for extra-curricular classes, which are very well attended by pupils. There is, however, a need to develop more knowledge and confidence in the analysis of standards, particularly in relation to the award of National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9. A relative weakness exists in the provision for ICT, which currently is minimal.
125. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Provision for special educational needs is much improved and the quality of teaching and learning, from being good, is now a major strength of the department.

Areas for development:

- increase provision for ICT within the subject;

- improve the standard of assessment in relation to National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Drama

126. The provision for drama was sampled. Overall results in the 2004 GCSE examination were in line with the national average; girls' results were above average and better than those of boys. The teaching and learning in two lessons observed were very good with the result that the pupils achieved well. In Year 8, students quickly understood and practised the dramatic convention of comic clowning, recognising the importance of timing. In a Year 11 GCSE drama class, pupils were engaged in self-evaluation of their rehearsal of an examination scene to fine-tune it for the pending examination. There was clear evidence of the application of prior learning and the group was very well supported and challenged through the expertise and knowledge of the teaching. Drama contributes significantly to the arts activities of the school, notably through large and small-scale production and workshop projects.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE results in 2004 were just above the national average
- very good teaching and assessment that ensures pupils achieve very well
- very good leadership has enabled all pupils to enjoy music through to Year 11
- ICT is used very effectively for musical composition in Years 10 and 11
- very good relationships amongst staff and pupils create a very good climate for learning
- a very good range of extra-curricular activities
- some underachievement amongst a small number of higher and lower attaining pupils at GCSE in 2004.

Commentary

127. Current standards are above average throughout the school, but slightly higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This represents very good overall achievement: good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The standards of over 100 pupils are enhanced by their achievement whilst learning instruments and participating regularly in the school's musical groups and bands.
128. In teacher assessment of Year 9 in 2004, pupils attained levels that were higher than most other subjects in the school and above the national average.
129. At GCSE in 2004, results were just above the national average. There was a comprehensive entry of 33 pupils, all of whom attained a grade; this is higher than that found nationally, even when the number of entries does not reflect the comprehensive nature of schools. However, a few higher attainers are judged to have been capable of achieving more A*/A and B grades and most lower attainers of attaining results closer to the C/D borderline. Almost twice as many boys took the examination than girls: 52 per cent attained the higher A*-C grades compared with 75 per cent of girls.
130. Teaching and learning are very good overall and occasionally they are excellent. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is evident and infectious. As a result, pupils enjoy their music-making activities and learn very effectively. In each lesson there is variety and pace and pupils are rarely bored but are responsive to challenge and success. They develop their composing, performing and listening skills with good levels of motivation. Their work is aided by individual workbooks adapted skilfully by the teachers to meet the particular learning needs of pupils and the demands of the National Curriculum and GCSE examination. All pupils in

music lessons are catered for and their learning needs met. The quality of instrumental teaching in the school is also good and as a result pupils do well.

131. In Years 7 to 9, pupils respond well to opportunities to play keyboards and percussion instruments. They have very positive attitudes to their learning and benefit from the good support given them by teachers. They play simple scores accurately and some are very adept at improvising, for example, within the framework of 12-bar blues. Learning during these sessions is imaginative and within an atmosphere of creative workshops; pupils respond well to a lively learning environment. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils are very accomplished composers and all work hard to attain high standards in their composing and performing. They make very good use of computer software and are well supported by teachers who have a significant knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge, the teachers' high-level musicianship and constant use of assessment ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are challenged and stretched.
132. The department successfully provides a wide range of musical ensembles which are expertly led by teachers within the department and visiting instrumental teachers: choir, training band, jazz band, concert band, steel pan group. A group of Year 11 pupils has set itself up and meets twice weekly as a clarinet ensemble. Further enrichment activities are regular, some designed to meet the needs of the highest attainers and many to enrich the musical experience of all: performers from the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and other professional performers hold regular workshops for pupils.
133. The leadership of the department is very good; it is visionary, has a sense of purpose and has a direct impact on standards being achieved. Most of all it is committed to including all pupils in the opportunities the department provides. Management is also very good, especially in the work undertaken to share good practice, monitor teaching and learning, set targets, and moderate pupils' work to ensure pupils are achieving standards in keeping with what might be expected of them. These are aspects of very good improvement since the previous inspection. In addition, results are better and teaching is now very good so that pupils achieve more. Assessment practices have been established that improve the quality of pupils' learning.

Area for development:

- encourage greater participation by boys in enrichment choral activity to match their interest in instrumental work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- very good teaching which leads to very high standards in examinations
- strategies which develop literacy have a clear impact on the pace of learning
- very good leadership and management ensure that highly motivated pupils make very good progress
- the lack of a reliable way to measure and record the standards attained by pupils on entry to the school.

Commentary

134. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in line with national expectation. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. In Year 11, standards of all pupils are well above the national expectation. This represents very good achievement over the five years spent in the school.

135. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above average. Fifty per cent of pupils entered gained A* or A grade passes. Standards reached by pupils taking the examination were very high when compared with their results in other subjects. The standard of work seen in lessons was very good.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and some excellent teaching was seen. All teachers are specialists, and are enthusiastic in their delivery. They manage their classes very well, and this ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to learn skills quickly, and to gain secure understanding of the rules and tactics of a wide range of sporting activities. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to work without direct supervision, and the pupils respond well to this responsibility. Pupils are always clear about what they are expected to do. The quality of literacy development is exceptional, as teachers use open-ended questions routinely to draw out detailed and technically accurate answers from pupils. This leads directly to very good understanding, and therefore to very good achievement. Teachers expect pupils to work hard, and pupils meet this challenge. Lessons are exciting, interesting and enjoyable experiences. Assessment of what pupils know is clear and robust, and provides accurate information on pupils' performance. Pupils know at what level they are working in language they can understand.
137. The department provides opportunities for very large numbers of pupils from all year groups to take part in an exceptional range of physical activities outside normal school time. Major and minor games, both inter-form and inter-school, played in competitive and non-competitive formats, are clearly benefiting pupils as they consolidate and extend their skill and understanding.
138. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They arrive promptly at lessons, with the correct kit for either indoor or outdoor lessons. They listen carefully to the guidance given by teachers, and work safely and sensibly, with energy and enthusiasm. Relationships are very good, and this contributes strongly to very good overall progress that all pupils make. The curriculum offer made to pupils has very good breadth and balance, although it is constrained by the available indoor space. The potential for innovation is being exploited through a sports leader award programme working very successfully with Year 4 pupils from a nearby junior school.
139. Leadership is very good. The department has a clear and shared vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach them. Relationships within the staff group are very good, and they make a well-balanced team. There is a clear imperative to improve on previous best. Management of the department is also very good. Detailed lesson plans support very well laid out and comprehensive schemes of work. Teachers are well deployed to meet the needs of the curriculum and the pupils. Regular monitoring ensures the quality of lessons. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. Outdoors spaces are very good. Resources to support learning are good. Improvement since the last inspection is good. High standards have been raised further, and most weaknesses have been addressed successfully.

Area for development:

- develop a system to measure the all round competence and physical ability of pupils when they first enter the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

The PSHCE programme covers required topics including those on careers, relationships and sex education and drugs education. The **careers** programme is good and benefits from the expertise of the *Connexions* service with which the school works closely and includes provision of work experience for all pupils in Year 10. In Years 7,8 and 9, PSHCE slots are too short for really worthwhile learning. In Years 10 and 11, time is less pressured as there are discrete health and

careers lessons in addition to the form periods. The programme is heavily workbook-based in order that non-specialists can deliver it. As a consequence, a number of pupils have a low regard for the subject and lack the motivation to get fully involved in lessons. Each element of the course is under the direction of a separate co-ordinator, but the delivery is with form tutors who have discretion on how to teach the topics, resulting in a wide variation in practice. The tutors lack clear expectations about what pupils should achieve in these sessions.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- the curriculum is not fully in place and there is no clear vision for the subject
- the monitoring of teaching and learning is ineffective
- assessment is insufficiently developed
- the active school council is providing valuable experience of the democratic process
- pupils' involvement in citizenship activities is not sufficiently monitored.

Commentary

140. Standards at Years 9 and 11 are poor. There were no lessons observed due to the nature of the delivery of the subject but the work scrutiny offered showed poor standards at Year 9 and Year 11. The workbooks are rarely marked and no attempt is made to assess each unit and comment on the standards reached or how the work can be improved. There is no clear expectation of the standards required.
141. It was not possible to make judgements on the quality of the teaching and learning due to the nature of the delivery of the subject, and no teaching of aspects of citizenship were observed within other subject areas. Consequently, it is not possible to make a judgement on achievement.
142. The active school council is democratically elected by secret ballot and enables pupils to learn how to vote and of the importance of the responsibility of using this civic right. It enables pupils to learn how change can be brought about and of the challenges, frustrations and time these take. They can see the success of their efforts in the litter bins they requested that enable the site to be remarkably free of litter. Other opportunities to acquire learning about citizenship occur within the curriculum and through school assemblies via visitors, but these are very *ad hoc* and insufficiently co-ordinated. Pupils are involved in self-evaluation of their learning about citizenship issues through the process of reporting to parents, but this is inadequately linked to any systematic review of learning or experiences.
143. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory at this stage of development of this subject. The requirements of the National Curriculum for citizenship are not fully understood. The units within PSHCE are well thought out, but opportunities for all pupils to take part in school- and community-based citizenship activities have not been adequately provided. Nor is there evidence that all pupils are developing skills of enquiry and communication on citizenship issues through planned teaching throughout the curriculum. Although the school has undertaken an audit of where this might occur, management does not monitor teaching and learning in all aspects of the course rigorously enough to identify problems and take effective action.

Areas for development

- ensure the national curriculum for citizenship is fully in place for all pupils;
- ensure that teaching and learning of citizenship are monitored systematically.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- open access to vocational courses in Years 10 and 11
- a well-managed work-experience programme for all pupils in Year 10
- good opportunities for extended work placements within an alternative curriculum pathway for some pupils
- good links with further education.

Commentary

144. The school is at an early stage in developing its work-related curriculum for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. It offers a choice of vocational courses within the Key Stage 4 option programme, including Applied Business, Manufacturing, and Health and Social Care, and a small, targeted group of pupils have opportunities to attend extended off-site courses in local colleges. Work-related learning opportunities within GCSE subjects have been identified through an audit, although the implementation of these has yet to be monitored in any systematic way. Through its Technology College status, the school has useful links with business and industry, which are being developed to further support WRL. All pupils follow courses in design technology through which they experience projects contributing to their learning about teamworking and batch production processes. Further elements are addressed within the developing PSHCE and citizenship programmes and through assemblies via visiting speakers. Opportunities to engage in enterprise activity occur within the enrichment curriculum. Involvement in school drama and musical productions also provides insights into the world of work for some pupils through participation in all aspects of behind-scenes practical work. In addition, activities during a residential experience for Year 11 pupils at Menai are designed to promote skills and attributes for effective teamwork.
145. The emerging programme is wide-ranging, but needs further development to ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 experience the full scope of the programme in a planned way. In particular, the school has recognised the need to provide more opportunities for all pupils to undertake a business challenge, problem-solving or enterprise activity.
146. Pupils, when questioned, reported gains in confidence, independence and self-esteem through their work experience. Drawing on their Year 10 placements, pupils in Year 11 were able to display a sound knowledge and understanding of career opportunities, the qualities and skills needed for the jobs for which they will be applying, and other essential matters such as workers' responsibilities, and health and safety in the workplace. Some pupils following business studies and ICT courses have a more complex grasp of the labour market and are able to relate this to their own experiences.
147. Pupils' learning through work is a strength of the programme. All Year 10 pupils take part in the very well organised, and carefully monitored, two weeks' work experience arranged by the school and Connexions/careers staff, which, wherever possible, is tailored to the pupils' needs and aspirations, and some pupils have benefited from work experience placements abroad. In preparing for and debriefing their work placements, they receive structured guidance, although a greater emphasis on drawing out the learning is needed and the school will need to review the time allocated for debriefing the pupils in the light of guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
148. Links between WRL, citizenship, PSHE and careers are evident, but not as yet properly structured into an overall scheme of work. Many opportunities arise within the curriculum, including through visits to places of work such as laboratories, links with organisations such as orchestras and input from invited speakers at school assemblies, but the school has yet to develop systematic tracking of individual pupils' experiences in this area.

149. The overall leadership, management and co-ordination of WRL are satisfactory at this stage in its development. However, monitoring of the quality of provision needs improvement, particularly in relation to those pupils who are not following vocational courses. Planning for future curricular development or regular opportunities to update all teachers and to share good practice in relation to work-related learning opportunities across the curriculum is also in need of attention.

Areas for development:

- introduce a process to track and evaluate work-related experiences to ensure that all pupils receive adequate coverage;
- ensure that opportunities to engage in enterprise activity are widened and available to all pupils;
- raise awareness and provide guidance for all teachers about explicit WRL responsibilities within subjects.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

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