

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST HILL SCHOOL

Stalybridge

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106274

Headteacher: Mr R Hewitt

Lead inspector: John Godwood

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 April 2005

Inspection number: 268511

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Male
Number on roll: 830

School address: Thompson Cross
Stamford Street
Stalybridge
Cheshire
Postcode: SK15 1LX

Telephone number: 0161 338 2193
Fax number: 0161 338 8293

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mr S Fildes
governors:

Date of previous November 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

West Hill School became a specialist science college in September 2004. It gained the DfES schools achievement award in 2003 and the Investors in People award in 2004. In 2003, it opened a new sports centre that is managed as a self-financing resource for the community. The school's socio-economic context is average, although the number of adults with higher education in the school's catchment area is below average. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Pupils' attainment on entry is average overall, although their numerical skills are above average and their verbal skills are below average. One in nine pupils have special educational needs, including 15 who have statements of special educational needs; these figures are average. The most common needs are emotional and behavioural difficulties; smaller numbers of pupils have learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British heritage; one in sixteen come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Asian. There are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Lead inspector	
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector	
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Special educational needs, history
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Geography, religious education
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology, information and communication technology
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English
24891	Jackie Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education, citizenship
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design, business studies
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	21
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	24
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	45

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

West Hill School is a good school. It has a very good ethos that encourages mutual respect and hard work. Pupils respond well, with very good attitudes and behaviour. Teaching is good and, as a result, pupils achieve well and reach standards that are above average for boys. Leadership is good, particularly in setting very high expectations for behaviour and achievement. Management is satisfactory, although the school has been slow to respond to statutory requirements for the curriculum. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are polite and respectful and generally behave very well in lessons.
- The school's leaders are very effective in establishing the school's positive ethos.
- Teaching is good, and there is a high level of care for individuals.
- Pupils achieve well, though achievement is not as good in Years 10 and 11 as in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement is very good in science and art, but unsatisfactory in modern languages.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for citizenship, ICT or careers.
- Senior staff do not monitor and support the work of departments systematically enough.
- Staffing and timetabling arrangements have a negative impact on teaching in some subjects.
- There are very good links with parents and other schools and colleges.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE results have risen in line with the national trend, while Year 9 results have risen at a faster rate. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. In response to the key issues, the school has made good progress in improving assessment and the accommodation, but only limited progress in meeting statutory requirements for the curriculum. The school has achieved specialist science college status.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall. Year 9 test results are well above average: they are above average in English and mathematics, well above average in science. They are above those of similar schools. In the current Year 9, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Achievement is good in most subjects and very good in science and art. However, it is satisfactory in ICT, design and technology, religious education and music, and unsatisfactory in modern languages. GCSE results are average but are above average for

boys. They are below those of schools with similar Year 9 results, although pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is in line with that of other boys nationally. Current standards in Year 11 are similar to the GCSE results and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory in most subjects. It is good in geography, history, music and business studies; very good in science and art. It is unsatisfactory in citizenship, however, because pupils do not study this subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at least as well as others.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The school has a very good ethos: attitudes and behaviour are very good; there are very good relationships between pupils and teachers. Attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good. It is good in most subjects and very good in science and art. It is satisfactory in religious education, design and technology, citizenship and music, but unsatisfactory in modern languages. In most subjects, pupils learn well because they are well managed and expectations are very high. Most lessons are well planned and interesting, but pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT. Most teachers are expert in their subjects, but there are too many non-specialists teaching history and religious education in Years 7 to 9.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory because in Years 10 and 11, a quarter of pupils do not learn ICT and there is no organised course in citizenship or personal, social and health education. The school plans to introduce these from next year. The timetabling of the curriculum reduces the effectiveness of teaching in some subjects. The specialist science college plan has broadened the science curriculum and had a positive impact on teaching throughout the school. Care is very good. Support and guidance are good, but careers education is unsatisfactory. There are very good links with parents and with other schools and colleges. Links with the community are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior staff are very effective in establishing and maintaining the school's ethos of respect, hard work and care for appearance. This provides strong support for teaching and learning, behaviour and achievement. Strategic planning is satisfactory, but is less well developed. Management is satisfactory overall, although administration is very efficient and staff development and financial management are good. The oversight of departments by senior staff is not sufficiently systematic and the results of evaluations are not collated and used in planning improvements. Governance is unsatisfactory. Governors are strongly committed to the school's values and provide support and challenge. However, they have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements for the curriculum. Three statutory requirements are not met: pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not taught citizenship and some are not taught ICT; careers education is not provided in Years 7 and 8.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are very pleased with the school. They particularly like the school's ethos and the approach to discipline. Their sons are happy in the school as a result of high expectations and good relationships with teachers. Parents believe that most teaching is good. They feel well informed and find that any concerns are dealt with well. Pupils are also pleased with the school. They like most of their teachers and are expected to work hard. They feel safe because behaviour is very good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve achievement in Years 10 and 11 to match that in Years 7 to 9;
- improve achievement and provision in modern languages;
- monitor and support the work of departments more rigorously and use the outcomes of evaluations to inform planning;
- ensure that staffing and timetabling are well matched to the needs of subjects;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- introduce National Curriculum citizenship in Years 10 and 11;
- ensure that pupils use ICT in subjects and study National Curriculum ICT in Years 10 and 11;
- teach careers education to all pupils from Years 7 to 11.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards in Year 9 are above average; in Year 11, they are average but above average for boys.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in science and art.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern languages in Years 7 to 9 and in citizenship in Years 10 and 11.
- Year 9 test results are well above average and have risen faster than the national trend.
- Pupils achieve less well in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- In some subjects, achievement is affected by limitations in pupils' literacy.

Commentary

1. Year 9 results have in recent years risen faster than the national trend. In 2003, the last year for which national comparisons are available, the results were well above average and above those of similar schools. They were well above average in science and above average in English and mathematics. In 2004, the results remained similar overall, but improved in mathematics and declined a little in English. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils make better progress than expected in all three core subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.1 (33.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.2 (35.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.2 (34.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 164 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results are average overall, but are above average for boys. Pupils make less progress in Years 10 and 11 than they do in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results are below those of schools with similar results at the end of Year 9, but pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is similar to that of boys nationally. Results have improved in line with the national trend. In science and physical education, GCSE results are well above average; in art they are consistently very high.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (60)	52 (52)

Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (88)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.1 (35.6)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 162 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are above average overall: they are well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Pupils' achievement is good overall. They achieve very well in science and art as a result of very good teaching. They are well taught and hence achieve well in English, mathematics, geography, history and physical education. In ICT, achievement is satisfactory because, although the teaching is good, some aspects of the curriculum are underdeveloped. Achievement is also satisfactory in religious education, design and technology, music and citizenship. In modern languages, however, achievement is unsatisfactory because the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.
4. Standards in Year 11 are average overall but are above average for boys. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Standards are well above average in science, art and GCSE physical education. They are above average in mathematics, geography, history, music, business studies and the non-examination physical education course. Standards are average in English, modern languages, ICT, religious education and design and technology. Pupils achieve very well in science and art. Achievement is good in geography, history, music, business studies and GCSE physical education. In most other subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The subject of citizenship, however, is not taught in Years 10 and 11 and therefore, while aspects of citizenship are well supported by the school's ethos, their achievement in this subject is unsatisfactory.
5. There are several reasons why pupils achieve less well in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Firstly, when pupils join the school, their literacy skills are significantly less well developed than their numeracy and other skills. This remains the case throughout the school and has an impact on their progress in some GCSE courses. Secondly, some pupils have difficulty completing all their GCSE coursework in subjects, and this has an effect on the results. Thirdly, the quality of teaching in some of the GCSE subjects is less good than in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, which are the ones tested at the end of Year 9. In addition to these factors, a minority of pupils become less motivated in Years 10 and 11 and lose interest in some of their subjects. The school is planning to widen the curriculum and introduce more vocational learning in order to maintain pupils' motivation.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in reaching their individual targets and in improving their reading and spelling. In lessons, their achievement is similar to that of other pupils. Their progress in literacy is slowed because testing and target setting are not done systematically enough and the support they are given is not sufficiently well matched to their individual needs. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with additional opportunities in some subjects and achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils; their GCSE results are often higher than those of all pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very good. Their moral and social development is very good; their spiritual development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school sets high standards for pupils' conduct, with clear values and boundaries.
- Relationships are very good and there is mutual respect between staff and pupils.
- Pupils are generally happy to come to school and their positive attitudes contribute very well to their learning.
- Attendance is well above average, which maximises pupils' learning opportunities.
- Compared with other aspects of the school, cultural provision is not fully developed.

Commentary

7. The school has very high expectations for behaviour, politeness and personal appearance. These are made clear to prospective pupils and parents and are one of the main reasons that parents choose the school. The school's expectations are maintained consistently and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a key strength. Teachers treat pupils with respect and know them well. Pupils like and trust their teachers and want to achieve. They understand very clearly what is expected of them and usually comply. As a result, teachers do not have to spend much time maintaining order in lessons and this contributes to productive learning. Most pupils are proud of the school and wear their uniform smartly. They are generally confident and polite to adults.
8. Pupils' behaviour is monitored and supported very well. They are motivated to gain commendations for good work or behaviour and these are recorded in their planners. The planners also record any behavioural problems and are used well to communicate between different teachers. As a result, form tutors and heads of year gain an overall picture of each pupil and can intervene if attitudes become less positive. The planners also keep parents informed. Pupils who have difficulty with their behaviour are sometimes put on report, whereby teachers evaluate their attitudes and behaviour in each lesson. This is a powerful motivator, with some pupils wanting to remain on report because it helps them to stay out of trouble. The learning support unit provides a good environment for pupils to work constructively if they are having personal difficulties or problems behaving in a particular subject.
9. Pupils get on well together and behave sensibly, with due regard for others. They are well supervised at break and lunchtime. There is very little bullying and both parents and pupils are confident that any incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated and there have been no racist incidents. In most recent years, the number of permanent exclusions has been very low. Last year, however, five pupils were permanently excluded for justifiable reasons. The number of fixed-period exclusions is broadly average.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	778	58	4
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	1	-	-

Asian or Asian British – Indian	22	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	12	1	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	-	-
Black or Black British – Caribbean	-	2	1
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	-	-
Chinese	1	-	-
Any other ethnic group	4	-	-
No ethnic group recorded	2	-	-

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

10. Pupils' spiritual development and self-awareness is good. Religious education, English and history contribute well to this area. Assemblies and tutor periods contain daily prayers, but are otherwise limited in their spiritual content. Assemblies are used to reinforce the school's values and provide moments of reflection, although they do not in all cases engage pupils fully. The school's ethos encourages pupils to develop their understanding of themselves and others. It helps them to raise their aspirations and develop a determination to achieve them.
11. Pupils' moral and social development is very good and is very well supported by the school's strong moral framework. Pupils subscribe to this and frequently show respect and care for others. They raise considerable funds for charity each year. Many pupils are confident speakers and listeners who work well together and are able to adapt to others' views, although in lessons there are fewer opportunities to work in groups than is the case in many schools. The school provides a number of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social skills. The prefects, monitors and pupil librarians contribute to the efficient running of the school and pupil technicians assist in science, ICT and music. These pupils take their roles seriously and are good ambassadors for the school. Some Year 10 pupils are trained in peer counselling and support Year 7 pupils with their organisation. The school council provides a lively forum to debate issues of concern to pupils.
12. Cultural development is satisfactory. English and history provide good opportunities to explore British culture, and religious education teaches pupils about the cultural backgrounds of major world faiths. The contribution of some other subjects to cultural development is limited. Art lessons give pupils a very good understanding of artists' work but the curriculum is narrowly focused. Musical opportunities are somewhat limited, with no orchestra or choir at the time of the inspection, although many pupils have instrumental lessons and there are workshops in African drumming and Balinese gamelan. The school does not make enough use of the rich resources in the area to develop pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures.
13. Attendance is well above average. Pupils enjoy school and want to attend. Parents are very supportive, with fewer holidays taken in term time than is the case in many schools. Pupils come to school punctually and as a result there is an efficient start to the school day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

School data	5.0
National data	6.9

School data	0.7
National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and assessment are good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not include all the subjects that are required in the National Curriculum. The level of care is very good and pupils receive good support and guidance. Links with parents and other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teachers have very high expectations and pupils respond very well.
- The majority of lessons are well planned and interesting.
- Classroom management is very good and there are very good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- The quality of teaching has benefited from the use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.
- In almost all subjects, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.
- The use of non-specialist teachers restricts progress in history and religious education.
- In many subjects, marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

14. Teaching is very good in science and art and good in most other subjects. It is satisfactory overall in religious education, design and technology, music and citizenship, though it is good in the music GCSE course and the full GCSE course in religious education. Teaching is unsatisfactory in modern languages, though it is satisfactory in the GCSE course.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 102 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2.0%)	32 (31.4%)	39 (38.2%)	24 (23.5%)	5 (4.9%)	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.

15. Almost all teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and use this to give clear explanations and prepare pupils effectively for examinations. Teachers' expertise in science is excellent. In physical education and design and technology, pupils benefit from good demonstrations of practical activities. In history, most lessons have very clear, lively presentations, but too many non-specialist teachers are deployed in Years 7 to 9, which results in some lessons lacking challenge and depth. This is also the case in religious education. The quality of music teaching is affected in a minority of lessons by a lack of subject expertise.
16. Teachers generally have very high expectations and provide pupils with challenging tasks. Most lessons in almost all subjects are interesting and motivating. ICT, for example, is interesting because it uses real contexts. In English, the best lessons stimulate pupils' imagination through effective use of resources, but a minority of lessons lack variety and interest. Geography and the best history lessons give pupils opportunities to learn independently and think for themselves. Most pupils respond very well and enjoy their learning. In art, they learn rapidly from the teachers' skill and high expectations. However, modern language lessons in Years 7 to 9 lack interest because a narrow range of methods is used, and learning is unsatisfactory.
17. Class management is very good in most lessons and is well supported by the school's high expectations for behaviour and effective procedures for managing difficult behaviour. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in most subjects and there are generally very good relationships between pupils and teachers. These provide strong support for pupils' aspirations and achievement. In some subjects, however, pupils are not given enough opportunities to hold discussions and develop their thinking through explaining to each other. This is the case, for example, in mathematics and history. Pupils enjoy the discussions in citizenship lessons and give presentations to the class in business studies.
18. The quality of teaching has benefited from the school's use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. This has been a successful outcome of the school's specialist science college status, with training provided by the head of science for teachers in all subjects. As a result, most lessons are well structured, with a brisk starter activity, a main section and whole-class review of learning at the end. Teachers generally ensure that pupils are well informed about what they are expected to learn. As a result, pupils

learn at a good pace and are fully engaged. In the weaker modern languages lessons, however, there is not enough focus on pupils' own learning.

19. A common weakness in many subjects is that ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning. This is the case in English, modern languages, mathematics, geography, religious education and art. In many subjects, it is because teachers do not have enough access to computers. They are used well, however, in design and technology, history and physical education. Science college funding has provided laptops and interactive whiteboards in science and mathematics. The use of other resources is satisfactory. History lessons are enhanced by speakers and the imaginative use of resources in the local area. In religious education, however, pupils' insight into religion is not enriched sufficiently by visits or visitors from faith communities.
20. The school's policy over homework is that it is set at the discretion of each teacher rather according to a homework timetable. As a result, some pupils find that their homework is not well spread out and is difficult to manage. Homework in some subjects such as geography and ICT is used well to extend learning and provide opportunities for independent research. In mathematics, however, it is too variable and in modern languages it rarely extends learning. The school does not monitor sufficiently the impact of its policy on the quality of homework.
21. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In most lessons, their learning keeps pace with that of other pupils because teachers plan well for their individual needs. The planning is particularly careful in art, geography, physical education and business studies. However, in mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology, some lessons do not include enough work planned for the highest and lowest attainers. Pupils' learning is enhanced when learning support assistants are present. They have individual education plans that provide clear targets and are kept under regular review. However, the arrangements for testing their attainment and monitoring their progress are not systematic enough and, as a result, the additional teaching they receive in literacy and numeracy is not focused clearly enough on their individual needs.
22. Marking is done thoroughly in English and ICT, giving pupils helpful guidance on how to improve their work. In mathematics, science, geography, history and modern languages, marking is regular but does not include enough constructive comments. In design and technology and some religious education classes in Years 7 to 9, marking is weak because it is not done consistently and is not helpful.
23. Assessment has been a major priority for the school in recent years and is good overall. Detailed records of assessments are kept on all pupils and their progress is monitored regularly. All subjects regularly assess pupils' attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. However, the accuracy of the assessments and the extent to which they are used to monitor the quality of provision and plan improvements is variable across subject areas. Assessment is used well to inform planning in mathematics and science. The senior staff have recognised the need to improve skills in some departments and have provided appropriate support.
24. Assessment is used very well in science and the GCSE ICT course to set pupils targets and monitor their progress; in ICT, pupils also receive very good feedback. Assessment is good in English, mathematics, history, art, business studies and physical education. It is satisfactory in geography, design and technology and music.

Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory in religious education because non-specialist teachers are unfamiliar with the expected levels of attainment, and in modern languages because assessments are inaccurate and data is not analysed for strengths and weaknesses. Overall, however, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not met to teach all pupils citizenship, ICT and careers education. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Curriculum subject of citizenship is not taught in Years 10 and 11.
- A quarter of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study ICT.
- Careers education is not taught in Years 7 and 8.
- The school has firm plans to improve the curriculum for Years 10 and 11.
- Science college status has improved the curriculum in science and mathematics.
- Staffing and timetabling arrangements reduce the effectiveness of teaching in some subjects.
- There are too few learning support assistants.

Commentary

25. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils follow all the subjects of the National Curriculum. However, they have no opportunities to study drama, dance or a second foreign language and the curriculum is therefore not as rich as in many schools. The subjects of art, design and technology and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are taught in rotation throughout the year. This slows learning when pupils have long gaps between sections of the course. There is also too little time for all the elements of PSHE and citizenship to be taught in any depth and the requirement to provide careers education in Years 7 and 8 is not met. The curriculum in science and mathematics has been improved through developments in the science college plan. However, the curriculum in modern languages is unsatisfactory as several of the programmes of study are not covered.
26. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. This is because it is not broad enough and does not meet statutory requirements. The National Curriculum subject of citizenship is taught in Years 7 to 9 but not in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, there is too little use of ICT in other subjects. Three-quarters of pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an examination course in ICT, but the remaining quarter do not cover the National Curriculum in ICT. There is no PSHE course in Years 10 and 11 and, as a result, pupils do not receive their full entitlement to careers education. The school has recognised these weaknesses and is introducing a major revision to the curriculum for Year 10 in September 2005 and Year 11 the following year. By September 2006, therefore, the curriculum should meet requirements.
27. The school has taken some steps to make the curriculum more flexible and better matched to pupils' individual needs. It has introduced vocational courses, including applied ICT, applied engineering, business studies and a BTEC drama course that runs after school. For pupils who have difficulty with GCSE courses there are more

accessible entry level courses in history, ICT and technology. The range of science courses has been broadened. However, the time allocation for the full GCSE course in religious education and the GCSE courses in ICT and engineering is too low and affects pupils' standards. The school's very good links with the local college are used to provide some pupils with vocational courses at the college and workplace learning. The planned new curriculum will be significantly more flexible, with each pupil having an individualised programme based on one of three pathways.

28. The school has been successful in meeting most of the first year targets in its science college plan. The science curriculum has been enhanced by a course in 21st Century science that focuses on applied science. In both science and mathematics, pupils' ability to use and apply their learning has been strengthened. Improved links with primary schools and local companies have broadened the curriculum. Teachers of other subjects have benefited from training in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and assessment, but in other respects science college status has as yet had a limited impact outside science and mathematics.
29. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They follow the full curriculum and are provided with additional support in literacy and numeracy. Their progress is enhanced because they are in smaller classes. Learning support assistants provide good support when they are available, but there are too few to make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from paired reading and the vocational courses at the college. However, the specialist provision is not sufficiently well planned to ensure that teaching is clearly focused on pupils' specific learning needs. Gifted and talented pupils are identified in each subject. They are very well provided for in science through the GCSE courses and the many clubs. Additional challenges are also provided in mathematics, art and physical education. Specific provision in other subjects is limited.
30. The curriculum is enriched by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. These are particularly good in science and mathematics, including masterclasses, clubs and a puzzle day organised for all local schools. They are also very good in history, with visits to France and good use of local museums. Many subjects hold revision classes. In modern languages, however, there are no trips or links with other countries. Enrichment is limited in English, art and music. There is a good range of sports activities after school and on Saturday mornings, though some of these are limited to pupils who are selected for school teams. The Duke of Edinburgh's award is very successful, with over 80 participants, including some who have left school but return to complete their gold award. An annual activities week includes residential and outdoor activities and trips of educational interest.
31. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the subjects they teach is satisfactory overall. Most classes are taught by specialist teachers, but in history and religious education there are not sufficient specialists and many non-specialist teachers are deployed to fill the gaps, which has an impact on pupils' achievement. There is good support from technicians in science, design and technology and ICT, but there are not enough learning support assistants to support pupils with special educational needs in lessons. The library is managed by a teacher with assistance from a member of the clerical staff; the lack of a full-time librarian limits the extent to which the library is able to promote pupils' reading and literacy.
32. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Since 1993, the governors and senior management team have planned and implemented many improvements to the

accommodation through bidding for additional resources. They have taken a creative and strategic approach to the development of the school site. Recent improvements have been the building of an excellent sports centre that is also used by the community and improvements to science and technology accommodation through science college funding. The accommodation is now good in science and technology, but continues to place limitations in some areas. The library is small and there is no drama facility. The outdoor sports facilities are poor. The school has plans for further improvements. There are sufficient computers, though some are old. However, many subjects find difficulty in gaining enough access to the computers. Departments are adequately resourced and have sufficient textbooks. Resources in science and mathematics have been improved as a result of achieving science college status. There are good resources for pupils with special educational needs, including appropriate computer software.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Support, advice and guidance are good. Pupils' own involvement in the school's work and development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive and trusting relationships with their teachers.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed advice and guidance when they need it.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are very effective and help Year 7 pupils settle quickly.
- Child protection and health and safety procedures are very good.
- Careers guidance is unsatisfactory because too little time and resources are devoted to it.
- The school council is enabling effective pupils' involvement in school decisions.

Commentary

33. There are very good procedures to ensure that the school is a safe environment. Risk assessments are carried out for the whole site and for school trips and are properly monitored by the governing body. Staff are aware of safe working practices and pupils are instructed appropriately. Child protection procedures fulfil requirements and are very effective; staff are regularly briefed and comprehensive records are kept. The school works well with other agencies, such as social services, to ensure that pupils get additional help if they need it.
34. Parents and pupils appreciate the effort that staff make to develop positive relationships with pupils. The school's ethos emphasises the worth of each individual, and relationships are characterised by rapport and mutual respect. Most teachers and other staff know pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. Pupils trust their form tutors and heads of year to listen if they have a problem and believe that that senior staff are accessible if they need them. Form tutors check pupils' planners regularly to monitor their work and intervene where necessary. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed in most subjects and pupils receive useful guidance on how to improve. Form tutors have an overall picture of each pupil's behaviour, attendance and academic performance. Each pupil also has regular meetings with his mentor, who is in some cases his form tutor; these meetings provide a useful opportunity to review

progress and set targets. Pupils with special educational needs are well known personally but their progress is not checked closely enough through systematic assessment.

35. The induction arrangements for new pupils are very good. Most pupils are visited in their primary schools by staff and former pupils. They have an induction day when they meet their form tutors and the opportunity to join a sports camp during the summer. During the first few weeks of the term, Year 7 pupils have a separate playground and lunchtime to other pupils. As a result of these arrangements, they settle in quickly and gain in confidence.
36. The personal, social and health education programme covers drugs and sex education, but its contribution to pupils' personal development is restricted by the limited time it is given. The time allocated to careers education is also very low, and Year 7 and 8 pupils have too few opportunities to think about their strengths and weaknesses and how these might influence career options. The only timetabled careers lessons take place in Year 9, when pupils receive an introduction to the Connexions service. This service provides well for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but there is too little time in the curriculum to back this up. All pupils participate in work experience in Year 10. Employers praise pupils for their ability to adapt to the work place and apply their skills. The majority of pupils who left in July 2004 went on to full-time education or training, although by November seven per cent were not in education, employment or training. This is somewhat more positive than the average for boys in Tameside but indicates room for improvement.
37. The school council has recently been re-formed. Its activities are well known to pupils, who have elected their representatives. It discusses areas of concern to pupils, such as lunchtime arrangements and bicycle sheds, and is taken seriously by senior staff. The headteacher routinely interviews sample groups of boys and provides feedback to staff on the impact that school policies are having on pupils' experience.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are very good links with parents and good links with the community. Partnerships with other local schools and colleges are very good. The sports centre is used well to provide extended services to local people and organisations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and what it stands for.
- Information to parents gives them a good picture of how well their sons are achieving.
- Strong links with primary schools and colleges supports pupils' transfer between phases.
- The school supports other schools and the community in line with its specialist college plan.
- The school seeks and responds to parents' views well.

Commentary

38. Parents are very positive about the school; it is popular and considerably oversubscribed. Parents are particularly supportive of the school's high expectations for behaviour, politeness and care for appearance. They are in most cases pleased

with the response they get to any concerns. They believe that the school seeks their views and takes them into account. Most feel well informed about how their child is getting on. Parents provide very good support for the school. Attendance at parents' meetings is high and parents help at sports fixtures and in the learning support department. The parents' association is very active, organising fundraising events and talks on educational topics. It contributed over £15,000 towards the specialist school bid. There is competition to become a parent governor. Parents' views are taken into account through the governing body, the parents' association and occasional surveys.

39. The information provided to parents is good. Pupils' planners are signed regularly by tutors and parents and are used well to communicate between school and home. Parents receive two interim reports and one full report each year; this is published just before the parents' evening, so that parents are well informed when they meet teachers. The full reports give a clear indication of pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels, but some teachers' comments are not specific enough about what pupils have achieved and what they need to improve. The report has recently been enhanced by a separate report from the form tutor and a self-evaluation by the pupil. There are regular letters on school activities and a developing web site. Form tutors, supported where necessary by heads of year, are the parents' first point of contact and provide a good response.
40. There are good links with the local community. It is one of the school's priorities to strengthen its role in the community through its specialist science college status and the recently-opened sports centre. Total Petrochemicals has been very supportive of the science college plan, providing sponsorship for the bid and practical support in its implementation. The plan includes several targets for supporting the community and virtually all of these have been met. A particular success has been the training of prospective laboratory technicians, where the uptake has been twice the targeted number. The sports centre is a self-financing venture; it is run by a committee that is accountable to the governors. It has met the targets in the first year of its business plan. It is a valuable local amenity, being used by a wide range of organisations, clubs and individuals. Many local employers provide work experience for Year 10 pupils. The school has strong links with the army, which assists in activities week and in the Duke of Edinburgh's award. In ICT, pupils gain practical experience of how computers are used in a cinema and a health centre, but in business studies, there are very few links with local companies to provide practical case studies.
41. There are very good links with other schools and colleges. Through the science college plan, local primary schools are very well supported by joint science teaching, using the school's specialist staff and laboratories. Very good links with primary schools support pupils' transfer and provide good data to plan pupils' classes. With regard to special educational needs, however, the links are underdeveloped. Liaison with other secondary schools is productive, particularly in the teaching of mathematics and science. The school co-operates closely with the further education college and sixth form college, both of which are represented on the governing body. These links are used well to support work-related learning and to provide pupils with guidance on post-16 education. The school has close links with local universities for initial teacher training.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership, particularly in establishing the school's very good ethos, and leadership of other key staff is also good. Governance is unsatisfactory because three statutory requirements are not met: pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have a citizenship course; some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not taught ICT; careers education is not taught in Years 7 and 8. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior staff are very effective in creating a positive ethos that provides a very good environment for pupils' learning and personal development.
- Teachers, support staff and governors are fully committed to the school's values.
- Staff development is good and the school is a very effective provider of initial teacher training.
- Evaluation of the school's performance is not sufficiently rigorous or used sufficiently in planning.
- The oversight of departments by senior staff is not rigorous enough.
- Good financial management has enabled significant improvements to the facilities.

Commentary

42. The headteacher provides very strong leadership in establishing and maintaining the school's very good ethos. He is well supported in this by the senior management team. High expectations are clearly communicated for politeness and mutual respect, hard work and achievement, care for appearance. These values, which are summarised in the school's motto 'Aim High', are shared by teachers, support staff, governors, parents and pupils. Senior staff have a strong presence around the school and set a good example in the way that they interact with pupils. As a result, pupils expect to work hard in lessons and this supports the quality of teaching.
43. The school is committed to providing well for all pupils. All pupils are valued and mutual respect is explicitly taught as part of the school's ethos. The level of care for individuals is very good and staff go to considerable lengths to provide support. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated. Their examination achievements are monitored and are at least as good as those of other pupils. There are good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils in some subjects. The support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.
44. The leadership of new developments through strategic planning is satisfactory but is not as strong as the leadership of the school's ethos. Governors and senior staff have been strategic in planning new buildings, including the sports centre, and in gaining specialist school status. The current school improvement plan provides a good focus on improving teaching and assessment and the priorities are well known to all teachers. It has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. However, the process of self-evaluation and planning does not form a fully developed annual cycle, with regular involvement of governors and all staff. Heads of department provide annual reports for governors, but these are not consistent in identifying strengths and areas for development. Performance data is used well to set targets for individual pupils and the whole school, but departments do not have targets, and reports on examination results are not sufficiently diagnostic in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the progress made by different groups of pupils. As a result, there are

not clear links between self-evaluation outcomes and the school's priorities for development.

45. Governors are supportive and subscribe strongly to the school's aims and values. They provide good expertise and links with the local community. They provide good support in finance and personnel, the planning of new buildings, health and safety and special educational needs. Governors are adequately informed through reports from the headteacher and other staff, though the majority do not have any structured opportunities to visit the school and see its work at first hand. They discuss the school improvement plan, but do not have any significant input into establishing the school's main priorities. The curriculum committee sets the school's targets and has recently discussed proposals for curriculum development, but it has not ensured that the school has implemented new statutory requirements for the curriculum. The National Curriculum subject of citizenship should have been introduced in 2002, but is at present taught only in Years 7 to 9. A quarter of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study National Curriculum ICT. Careers education is not taught from Year 7, as is required from September 2004. As a result of these breaches, governance is unsatisfactory. Governors have reviewed their own performance and established priorities for developing their role. Several governors have taken part in training.
46. Teachers are well supported. Administration is very efficient and the school runs smoothly because events are planned carefully and staff, pupils and parents are well informed. Newly-qualified teachers are provided with good induction. Performance management is thorough and its effectiveness is enhanced because teachers' own objectives reflect the priorities in the school improvement plan. Staff training is well organised and well resourced. Training needs are carefully identified; teachers and heads of department are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. Specialist school funding has been used effectively to provide additional training in teaching and assessment methods. The school's commitment to staff development has been recognised through gaining the Investors in People award. It is highly regarded by local universities as a provider of initial teacher training. Trainee teachers are extremely well supported and in some cases become permanent members of staff. The school is up to date with the requirements of workforce reform, which will enable teachers to focus more on their core tasks of teaching and curriculum development. Recruitment and retention is not an issue and staff turnover is low. However, the deployment of staff is in some cases not sufficiently effective, resulting in too many non-specialist staff deployed to teach history and religious education. The school has not adjusted its staffing sufficiently to meet the needs of the curriculum.
47. The work of heads of department is overseen by the senior management team. This is satisfactory, but is not fully developed. There is no regular schedule of meetings, for example, to support and monitor departmental work throughout the year and provide information to the headteacher. Heads of department are expected to monitor teaching, homework and marking, but the records of these are not collected together to provide an overall picture of the quality of teaching through the school. As a result, there is some inconsistency in the quality of work in different departments. Leadership and management are very good in science and good in many other subjects. However, they are satisfactory in design and technology and music and unsatisfactory in modern languages.
48. The management of the provision for special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although there are weaknesses in the clarity of vision and planning. Pupils' statements of special educational needs are completed properly and there are close links with

external agencies, including educational psychologists and speech therapists. Pupils' individual education plans are very clear and most subjects provide well for their needs. However, the provision is not planned well enough and there is too much emphasis on behavioural problems rather than on pupils' learning needs. These are not sufficiently clearly identified. Teachers are informed about pupils' personal circumstances and behaviour, but not guided sufficiently clearly about the support they need for learning. Procedures for assessing progress are undeveloped and there is no systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision.

49. Financial management is good. There are good links between planning and spending and very good day-to-day administration of finances. Projections are made to forecast the implications of decisions and the school has consistently maintained a balanced budget. Through its own initiative, the school has made significant improvements to the buildings and facilities. However, budget planning is not informed sufficiently by comparing the school's expenditure patterns with those of other schools.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,642,724	Balance from previous year	3,139
Total expenditure	2,636,429	Balance carried forward to the next	9,434
Expenditure per pupil	3184		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils take a vocational course in one or more subjects.
- Work experience is well managed and enables pupils to learn well through work.
- WRL is supported by good links with the college and a small number of employers.
- Some subjects make very little contribution to WRL.
- The provision for WRL is at present not co-ordinated.
- There are well-developed plans to improve provision for WRL.

Commentary

50. The school provides a satisfactory range of vocational courses and a number of other opportunities for pupils to learn about work. These are not yet co-ordinated into a policy for WRL, but provide pupils with satisfactory knowledge and understanding about work. The options available to pupils in Years 10 and 11 include vocational courses in ICT, business studies and engineering. At least three-quarters of pupils follow one or more of these courses. Their achievement is satisfactory, and good in the case of business studies. Some pupils follow a course in 21st Century science, which includes work-related science. In addition, a small number of pupils have individual programmes that include WRL at the local college. A vocational drama class is run after school and gives a small number of pupils experience in planning and running productions.

51. The school has strong links with Total Petrochemicals (its principal partner in the specialist science college), the Army and the local further education college. The ICT department makes good use of a local cinema and a health centre. These links provide good support for WRL activities, but other links with industry are not well developed, except for work experience. Pupils on the business studies course, for example, do not have the opportunity to visit real businesses.
52. Careers education is unsatisfactory because it is not given enough lesson time other than in Year 9. However, pupils in Years 9 to 11 are well supported by the Connexions service and feel that they receive good advice on the next stages of education or employment. All pupils have two weeks of work experience. They are carefully prepared for this and their experience is effectively reviewed when they return. Some employers are very complimentary about pupils' readiness for work and the contribution that they make.
53. Subjects vary in the extent to which they provide pupils with the skills they need for work. Science makes good use of its links with Total Petrochemicals and the National Health Service. During the inspection, for example, the school hosted a very successful science fair in which local companies and colleges mounted work-related science activities. ICT lessons give pupils a good insight into the use of computers in the workplace. English, art and design and technology also make a contribution. However, there is very little WRL in geography, history, religious education or modern languages. Staff training is planned to raise teachers' awareness of their role in WRL.
54. WRL is managed satisfactorily by two members of the senior management team. They recognise that the current provision for WRL lacks co-ordination and have begun an audit of its various aspects. There are well-developed plans to extend and rationalise WRL in the curriculum for Year 10 pupils next year. These include a vocational pathway for selected pupils and a weekly lesson for all pupils that will include careers education, enterprise and WRL.

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

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- They are well prepared for tests and examinations.
- Some lessons lack variety and interest and, as a result, pupils' attention wanders and they learn less well.
- Pupils learn how to analyse literature effectively.
- The subject does not contribute much to whole-school enrichment.

Commentary

55. Year 9 results in 2003 were above average and well above the average for boys. They were also well above those of similar schools. Results in 2004 were lower: they were average compared with the 2003 national figures and above average for boys. Over the last four years, results have risen in line with the national trend. GCSE results in 2003 were average and slightly above the average for boys. Results in 2004 were below average, but were average for boys. GCSE results in English literature were below average in both 2003 and 2004, and were average for boys. The Year 9 test results represent good achievement and the GCSE examination results represent satisfactory achievement for those year groups.
56. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are average and above average for boys. Pupils join the school with literacy levels that are below average and they achieve well in the first three years. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good understanding of the range of literature that they study. Higher-attaining pupils can analyse poetry, plays and fiction well, and their own creative writing is effective and imaginative. Some particularly good work was seen in an analysis of George Orwell's satire in 'Animal Farm' and in some poetry based on Shakespeare's 'The Seven Ages of Man'. Middle-attaining pupils understand what they read in a straightforward way. They can write in different styles for different purposes, but have a somewhat casual approach to technical accuracy and this sometimes prevents them from attaining a higher level. Lower-attaining pupils make quite a lot of mistakes in their writing and tend to write shorter, less developed pieces. Year 11 standards are average. Higher-attaining pupils have good, detailed knowledge and understanding of literature that they study. They can analyse characters and themes effectively. Pupils' own creative writing captures the reader's attention. For example, one pupil wrote an entertaining story about a character's first day at secondary school. He told it with an ironic, dead-pan humour that made it enjoyable to read. Middle and lower-attaining pupils understand the literature that they study, but tend to describe events rather than analyse the effects.

One marked feature of pupils' work at all levels is the fact that there are times when clumsy, ungrammatical expressions prevent it from getting a higher grade. This is one reason why achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory rather than good, although achievement overall from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. Standards in speaking and listening are above average across the school. Pupils often speak confidently and fluently, and their speaking is at times better than their writing. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others. There is a little targeted support for those with the lowest literacy levels in the first two years.

57. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subject well; they explain ideas and ask questions effectively. They prepare pupils well for tests and examinations. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive: they usually want to join in discussion and ask questions. In the best lessons, teachers use interesting resources that stimulate pupils' imaginations. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, the class saw the opening of David Lean's film of 'Great Expectations' and this helped them to appreciate Dickens' creation of characters and atmosphere. Also in good lessons, teachers plan well, including a variety of tasks and activities to keep pupils interested. The lessons that are less effective, where pupils learn satisfactorily but not better, tend to be very text-based; pupils are not very actively involved and as a consequence lose interest. Written work is generally well marked and comments help pupils to know how well they are doing and how they can improve. Computers are not used sufficiently to help pupils to learn.
58. Subject leadership is satisfactory and the department is well managed. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards and the recent introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is proving effective. Assessment is used increasingly well to help pupils to understand how they can do better. The head of department is effectively developing the use of data to track progress and identify underachievement. The subject does not currently contribute much to wider school enrichment. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Literacy skills are average across the school. There is some provision in the learning support department to help those with the lowest literacy levels to improve, such as the recently started paired reading scheme during morning tutor time. The learning support assistants are limited in number but do a good job in working with targeted pupils in some lessons. Subject vocabulary is displayed in most classrooms and reinforced by many teachers. Year 10 pupils in physics, for example, were very clearly introduced to scientific terms. Some pupils of all attainment levels, however, are held back from getting a higher grade by clumsy and ungrammatical expressions. This is more apparent in Years 10 and 11, where courses generally require more extended writing. Teachers often neglect to correct poor grammar and concentrate instead on whether the pupil has grasped the key points. These mistakes are a contributory factor to whole-school achievement being less good in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Across the school, pupils speak and listen well, and they can adopt appropriate levels of formality and draw from a wide vocabulary.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were above average for boys, although the entry was small.

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Many aspects of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, so that pupils lose interest.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory; there is a lack of planning to accelerate and enliven learning.
- Some statutory requirements are not met.

Commentary

60. Pupils take French or German in alternate year groups. German results in 2003 and French results in 2004 were average and above average for boys. Pupils did as well as in their other subjects. However, both years' results show a decline from the French results in 2002.
61. Standards in Year 9 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory for pupils of all abilities. Despite a high level of enthusiasm in Year 7, progress in learning is slow. Over-reliance on textbooks and poor use of time lead to pupils being bored by repetitive tasks; they have hardly any opportunities to apply new learning creatively. Very few pupils use past and future tenses in extended oral or written work. Their pronunciation is particularly weak. Standards in Year 11 are average, though fewer than 30 pupils each year opt to take a modern language GCSE. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Some higher-attaining pupils reach above average levels in all skills, whereas those with special educational needs find the GCSE course very demanding. Standards in writing improve because pupils follow models provided by their teacher, but the accuracy remains very variable. In oral work, pupils produce longer answers to specified questions, but produce little spontaneous language and continue to pronounce poorly, especially words that have similar English variants.
62. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The quality is better in Years 10 and 11, where most pupils are committed and teachers make effective use of their knowledge of examination requirements. In general, teachers use too much English to conduct lessons, so that expectations of speaking the foreign language are low. Teachers plan lessons with a starter activity, a main section and a review, but do not ensure that pupils know what they are to learn or reflect on what they have learned. There is no urgency to accelerate learning, as textbook exercises dominate lessons. The range of resources is narrow, with little use of ICT or visual aids. Consequently, pupils are not stimulated and lose interest. Most homework consists of learning vocabulary or finishing classwork; it is rarely used to provide extension opportunities. Marking is unhelpful, with scant constructive advice on how to improve.
63. Unsatisfactory leadership and management contribute to the slow pace of learning. The schemes of work that guide teachers' planning are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of individual pupils within teaching groups. Departmental planning is not sufficiently focused on raising attainment. Examination results are not analysed to investigate the reasons for falling standards at GCSE, and assessment data is not collated at all for pupils in Years 7 to 9, where assessment in relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment is inaccurate. Statutory requirements are not met for the use of ICT, or for providing opportunities for independent reading and communicating with native speakers. The department has recently undertaken some self-evaluation, but has not taken any action as a result of identifying weaknesses. Enrichment is unsatisfactory, with no visits abroad and no use of ICT to establish links with foreign schools. These factors, added to a decline in standards and the quality of teaching, indicate unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well overall.
- Pupils are well motivated and respond positively in lessons.
- Progress is monitored effectively and pupils know how well they are doing.
- Learning is not supported sufficiently by the use of ICT.
- Leadership and management are good and areas for development are being addressed.
- Homework does not consistently reinforce and extend learning.

Commentary

64. Year 9 test results in 2003 were above average and above those of similar schools. The 2004 results were higher still; the trend of improvement is above the national trend. GCSE results were average in 2003 and above average in 2004. They were in line with those of schools with similar Year 9 results. After a decline in performance since the last inspection, standards in GCSE examinations are now improving.
65. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are well above average and their achievement in relation to their attainment on entry is good. Average pupils in Year 9 have secure numeracy skills and calculate percentage increases and decreases accurately. Higher-attaining pupils calculate surface areas of cylinders and use trigonometry to calculate lengths in right-angled triangles. Lower-attaining pupils use percentages to find increases in prices. Improvements in assessment have given pupils a better understanding of their own progress and had a positive impact on achievement.
66. Standards in Year 11 are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is less strong than in Years 7 to 9 because a small minority of pupils become less motivated to learn. By Year 11, average pupils use long multiplication accurately, although some lack security when working with decimals. Higher-attaining pupils use the sine rule to calculate all the lengths and angles in a triangle, for example, while lower attainers use Pythagoras's theorem to calculate the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
67. Teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that challenge and interest pupils. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils were motivated by working in teams to estimate angles on the interactive whiteboard. They effectively applied their skills in using a map to measure the bearing of one town from another. In some lessons, however, there is not sufficient planning for the full range of abilities in the class. Teachers are encouraging and supportive. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they respond conscientiously. They relate well to each other and respect the right of others to learn. In some lessons, however, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to discuss and learn from each other, but rely on one-to-one questioning. Work is marked regularly and pupils know how well they are doing, but they do not get enough guidance on what they need

to improve. Homework lacks structure and is not used well to reinforce and extend learning.

68. Leadership and management are good and have improved since the last inspection. The new head of department has quickly identified areas that need to be developed. She has analysed the GCSE results and introduced improvements to coursework in order to bring the standard up to that of the examination. Extra-curricular activities have been extended to provide additional challenges for gifted and talented pupils. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning, although this has been identified as an area for development. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and the department is beginning to share good practice, although this is made more difficult because the classrooms are not all sited together. Satisfactory progress has been made in meeting the mathematics targets in the science college plan. The department is aware of the need to provide more support for pupils' literacy skills. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. Most pupils have well-developed skills in number, algebra, data handling and shape and use these effectively in other subjects. They use algebraic formulae and graphs particularly well in science, for example, and their grasp of perspective and proportion is very strong in art. Pupils deal well with logic statements in ICT and their numeracy supports their work well in history, geography and business studies. Spelling of mathematical vocabulary is emphasised in English. However, there is no formal plan for the use of mathematics in other subjects and, as a result, some opportunities to use and apply mathematics are missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations and Year 9 tests are well above average.
- Lessons are very well prepared and teachers' expectations are very high.
- Achievement is very good as a result of pupils' enthusiasm and the high quality of teaching.
- Under the very good leadership of the head of department, teachers and support staff work together extremely well in the interest of raising standards.

Commentary

70. Year 9 results in 2003 were well above average and above those of similar schools. The 2004 results were almost as high. Results were higher in science than in mathematics or English. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were well above average and well above those of similar schools. The number of pupils who took separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics was much larger than is the case in most schools, and all gained A*-C grades.
71. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are well above average. Their achievement is very good in relation to their attainment on entry. Year 7 pupils can already work in a scientific way; in a lesson on filtration and evaporation, for example, all pupils succeeded in extracting a sample of salt from rock salt. Pupils make very good progress through Years 8 and 9. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 have a mature understanding of how to enhance plant growth and appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of fertilisers and insecticides. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and achievement is very good. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 have an excellent knowledge and understanding of all three sciences. Pupils on the course in 21st Century science used the internet very competently to research materials that reduce acid in the stomach. Pupils' ICT skills are limited because they lack access to computers
72. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and prepare lessons very thoroughly, making good use of teaching methods from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Learning goals are clear and are usually shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers make good use of praise and humour. Expectations are very high and constant challenge maintains pupils' interest. Pupils have a positive attitude to work and their behaviour is often exemplary. As a result, they make very good progress. In a very well planned Year 10 lesson, for example, average-attaining pupils thoroughly enjoyed a demonstration of the Van de Graaff generator. They eagerly moved on to conduct their own experiments on static electricity. A well-conducted class discussion ensured that all pupils gained a clear understanding of what they had observed. Although pupils with special educational needs make good progress, teachers do not adapt their lesson plans sufficiently for lower and higher attainers.
73. Teachers and support staff work together extremely well under the very good leadership of the head of department. This has contributed to the school's successful bid to attain specialist science college status. The department makes excellent use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and set targets. However marking does not always tell pupils what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen steadily and

the quality of teaching is much improved. The deficiencies in the accommodation have been fully rectified.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is too little curriculum time for GCSE classes.
- Teaching is good; lessons are challenging and interesting.
- A quarter of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their National Curriculum entitlement.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by good feedback and careful monitoring of their progress.
- Pupils enjoy ICT lessons and work hard.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in other subjects.

Commentary

74. GCSE results in 2004 were below average. They declined in relation to the previous years' GNVQ results and pupils did less well than in their other subjects. This was because the requirements of the new GCSE syllabus were underestimated and too little curriculum time was allocated for the course. These results represent unsatisfactory achievement.
75. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are average and are improving. Pupils' skills when using software to control a sequence of traffic lights are above average. Their spreadsheet skills are also above average. However, standards in web page design and graphics are below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils is also satisfactory, but it is not better because teachers do not plan enough different work for them.
76. Standards in the Year 11 GCSE classes are average and are improving. Pupils' skills in the use of communication and spreadsheet software are well above average. Their skills in databases and web page design are below average. Pupils' coursework folders are very well presented, but some work is incomplete or missing. This is because insufficient time has been allocated for the dual award course. As a result achievement is only satisfactory in spite of pupils' hard work and the good teaching they receive.
77. While the majority of pupils take ICT in Years 10 and 11, approximately a quarter do not. These pupils do not receive their National Curriculum entitlement, which is a breach of statutory requirements.
78. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are challenged by the problems they are set and work hard to solve them. They enjoy the work because it is set in an industrial context and is therefore relevant and interesting. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good as a result of teachers' very good class management and engaging presentations. Pupils cover a lot of work because teachers have high expectations and

set clear time limits. Marking is thorough and pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve. Homework is set regularly and extends classwork well.

79. Leadership is good. The head of department and his team are committed to raising standards. Curricular development is very good, with the Key Stage 3 National Strategy well established. Management is very good. Teachers' work is regularly monitored and the outcomes are used very well to improve provision. Assessment is carefully planned and used very well to provide pupils with regular feedback on their standards and how they can improve. Assessment is also used well to monitor pupils' progress and provide additional support when it is needed.
80. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching is now good and standards are rising. A hard-working technician has been appointed who supports the department well. While many aspects of the curriculum have greatly improved, the National Curriculum is still not taught to all pupils and the use of computers in other subjects remains unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. The use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. In design and technology, history and physical education, pupils have good opportunities to apply their ICT skills. However, in English, mathematics, modern languages, geography, religious education and art, pupils do not use computers sufficiently. In science, teachers make very good use of the new interactive whiteboards, but pupils do not use computers enough in lessons. While the school has a well-documented plan for cross-curricular ICT, lack of access to computers prevents its full implementation.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good.
- Pupils achieve well in all year groups.
- Leadership and management are effective and are leading to improvements.
- Most students have very positive attitudes and work hard.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is too limited to enable best practice to be shared.
- Assessment is improving but is as yet rarely used to help individual pupils improve their work.

Commentary

82. GCSE results in 2004 were above average and well above average for boys. Pupils did as well as in their other subjects and better than expected from their prior attainment. This pattern has been the norm in recent years.
83. Current standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils achieve well in relation to their knowledge of geography on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs

also achieve well because tasks and teaching approaches match their needs. Pupils quickly acquire effective skills in map work and can undertake geographical enquiries. They use the internet to do very good research into flooding in Bangladesh. Written work is generally good, although some pupils' progress is hindered by weak literacy skills. Pupils' oral skills and geographical understanding are generally higher than their writing skills. Pupils develop a good understanding of how physical and human aspects of geography interrelate and of the issues surrounding human development.

84. Standards in Year 11 are also above average and well above average for boys. Pupils achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. They gain a good understanding of geographical ideas and issues. Year 11 pupils have a good grasp of international aid and climate change, for example, and are able to relate these to the countries and regions they have studied. They can identify the impact of tourism in Spain and analyse the reasons. Their coursework is good because they plan it effectively and apply the geographical techniques that they have learned. Pupils use computers well to analyse and present data.
85. Teaching and learning are good, with many examples of very good practice. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they are enthusiastic and committed and use imaginative methods that stimulate pupils' interest. They use the interactive whiteboard well to add interest to their presentations. Lessons are well structured and pupils have many opportunities to learn independently and develop their thinking. They have little access to computers during lessons, but develop their internet research skills well in their homework. Lessons are characterised by high expectations, a rigorous pace and a good level of challenge. Higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are provided with appropriate tasks. Most pupils have very positive attitudes and behave well. Marking is a weakness because it does not provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve their work, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
86. The subject is well led. Schemes of work and planning documents are of good quality. There is a clear sense of direction and appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified. Good opportunities for field study enable pupils to relate theory to practice. Staffing problems have slowed the development of assessment, but improvements are now beginning to be implemented. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically enough. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and work is now better matched to individual needs. There is still poor access to computers for whole class use. Improvement overall has been good and the department has good capacity for further development.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and occasionally excellent.
- The quality of teaching is diminished because there are several non-specialist teachers.
- Marking is done regularly, but does not always give clear enough guidance for improvement.
- The department is very well led and deeply committed to high standards.

Commentary

87. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years. In 2003, they matched the national average for boys, having been well above average in 2002. In 2004, they were again well above average, following the introduction of two short GCSE courses. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. Standards in Year 9 have improved steadily over the last three years and are above average, in line with the 2004 teachers' assessments. Pupils' attainment on entry is average and all, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, achieve well.
88. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of events and their causes are good, and very good in the case of higher-attaining pupils. A top set of Year 9 pupils empathised very well with conditions in Britain during the Second World War, confidently explaining the factors that affected people's daily lives. In their GCSE coursework, Year 11 pupils made reasoned judgements on the basis of a very good grasp of events in Northern Ireland. Historical skills develop very well, resulting in independent research of outstanding quality. Year 9 pupils' research into the local industrial heritage and the experiences of local people who served in the world wars showed remarkable effort and maturity in their interpretation of many sources of evidence. In other respects, however, oral work tends to be stronger than written work, which is generally accurate but too often lacks analysis, evaluation, detail and explanation. Literacy and numeracy skills are good, and ICT is used very effectively for research and presentation.
89. Pupils respond very well to the lively presentations, clear explanations and interactive methods that characterise most lessons. Clear learning objectives, high expectations and consistent challenge result in them working with enthusiasm. Year 11 pupils relished the challenge to grasp the big picture when revising the impact of developments in Britain between 1815 and 1851, and Year 9 pupils were alert to bias when interpreting evidence about the Blitz. Learning is constantly reinforced in classwork and homework, and skilled strategies for revision result in pupils being very well prepared for examinations. However, a minority of classes in Years 7 to 9 are taken by non-specialist teachers and in some of these lessons, teaching lacks challenge and depth. Classroom relationships and behaviour are very good. Questioning is effective in testing understanding and involving pupils, but does not challenge them enough to develop extended answers. There are not enough opportunities in some lessons for pupils to take initiative in discussion and the interpretation of sources. Marking is done regularly, but does not always include enough guidance for improvement. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, but the baseline data against which their progress is tracked in Years 10 and 11 is not detailed enough.
90. The head of department gives a very clear and enthusiastic lead. Her own very high standards make her an excellent role model. Her vision for the teaching of history results in very good enhancement through speakers, visits and the excellent use of the community as a learning resource. Management is good. Teachers are well supported and provision is kept under review to ensure pupils enjoy and succeed in history. The monitoring of teaching is being developed, but is made more difficult by the large number of teachers teaching history. Many teach history as a second subject to meet timetable requirements. These arrangements have an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the use of ICT, resources and the library. Improvements are still needed in assessment and in the opportunities for pupils to take initiative in lessons.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the full GCSE course considering the low allocation of time.
- Leadership is good, with clear vision and the capacity to develop the subject.
- Lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development.
- Teaching is satisfactory, with some good and very good practice.
- Progress is limited by a significant amount of non-specialist teaching.
- There are very few links with faith communities to enrich pupils' experience of religion.
- There is little monitoring of teaching or sharing of good practice.

Commentary

91. In 2004, a quarter of pupils in Year 11 took a full GCSE course and most of the others took a short GCSE course. The full course results were above average and well above average for boys. Pupils did less well than in their other subjects, but achieved well considering that they had considerably fewer lessons than in other subjects. The short course results were below average, but pupils achieved satisfactorily. In both examinations, all pupils entered gained a grade.
92. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' attainment on entry. Pupils improve their understanding of religious symbols, beliefs and traditions, but their progress is limited by weak writing skills and a large proportion of non-specialist teaching. In the better lessons, they have the opportunity to discuss issues and develop thinking skills, but too many lessons taught by non-specialists are limited to learning facts. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils, especially when they receive additional support.
93. Standards in Year 11 are average overall. In the full GCSE course they are above average. Standards are limited because pupils have only one hour a week, but pupils achieve well as a result of their positive attitudes and good teaching. Higher-attaining pupils write well and are skilled in enquiry and discussion. In one very good lesson, for example, they effectively worked in groups to investigate and draw conclusions about attitudes to capital punishment. Standards in the short GCSE course are below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good or very good. There is only one specialist teacher and this reduces pupils' progress in classes taught predominantly by hard working but non-specialist staff. Despite good guidance from the head of department, the non-specialist teachers are limited in their knowledge of the subject and its assessment. There is too much use of worksheets and not enough research or extended writing. Marking is inconsistent in quality, with too few constructive comments to help pupils improve their work. Class management and pupils' response are very good and there are positive relationships that support learning. In the most effective lessons, pupils find the tasks motivating and are challenged to think by incisive questions. Most pupils respond positively and are prepared to share their opinions. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils sensibly

discussed the power of peaceful protest in response to prejudice. Marking and assessment in classes taught by the head of department are thorough and helpful.

95. Leadership is good, with a clear vision for the development of the subject. The factors that reduce progress are whole-school issues: staffing and the time allocation for the full GCSE course. Management is satisfactory, but is made more difficult by the large number of non-specialists, who need training in teaching methods and assessment. Religious education contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there are few visits or visitors from faith communities to raise interest and provide insights into how religious beliefs different people's lives. Computers are not used sufficiently to aid learning because there is very limited access for class use. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of practical work are above average because it is well taught.
- Pupils' designing is weaker than their making.
- Pupils are well managed and have positive attitudes.
- A significant minority of pupils do not complete their GCSE coursework.

Commentary

96. GCSE results in 2004 were below average across the subject, though higher than in the previous year. Food results were very low because of staffing problems, and this depressed the overall results. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory in all design subjects except food, where it was poor.
97. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are average. Practical skills are above average: pupils use tools and equipment confidently and accurately to produce high quality products. Pupils' understanding of designing is average, but this is not reflected in their written work, which is generally of a lower standard. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.
98. Standards in Year 11 are average overall but vary in the different subjects. In electronics and graphics, standards are above average. In food, however, they are below average because the school has not been able to resolve the staffing difficulties. Practical work is generally of a higher standard than designing. Teachers have been successful in raising the standard of coursework, but a significant minority of pupils have incomplete design folders. Some of the research that pupils do in preparation for their projects is not relevant and is not used to guide the next stages of design. Evaluations and notes are often rushed or missing. In engineering, this is because too little time has been allocated for the double award GCSE class. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in practical lessons. Here the very well qualified teachers quickly improve pupils' making skills through good

demonstrations and skilled individual help. Good curricular planning ensures that pupils experience a broad range of technologies, including computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. The work is highly engaging and, as a result, pupils are very well motivated and enjoy the lessons. Pupils are encouraged to really think about their practical work, but the design work is not as challenging. Teachers do not generally plan enough different work for higher and lower-attaining pupils and this slows their progress when designing. Pupils always behave very well because teachers insist on high standards. Marking is weak and inconsistent across the department. Assessment is satisfactory and, in Years 7 to 9, pupils are beginning to understand their achievements in relation to National Curriculum levels and what they need to do to improve.

100. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has high aspirations and his teaching provides a good role model. He is well supported by his team. Results are evaluated well, but regular monitoring of departmental work is not established and, as a result, standards of work and marking are inconsistent. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards overall have risen and some aspects of teaching are now good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in painting and drawing are very high and pupils' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning in these media are very good.
- GCSE results in fine art have been outstanding in recent years.
- The curriculum provides pupils with experience of a very narrow range of media.
- ICT resources are unsatisfactory; the subject does not meet National Curriculum requirements for this aspect.

Commentary

101. GCSE results in fine art (painting and drawing) have been consistently very high, with almost all pupils gaining A* to C grades. In 2004, about four in ten pupils gained A* or A grades. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieved well above their predictions and did much better than in their other subjects. The subject is a popular GCSE choice, taken by about four out of ten boys each year.
102. Standards on entry are average for boys and below average overall. Pupils' lessons in Years 7 to 9 occur in blocks of ten weeks each year, with long gaps between each module. This disturbs continuity and results in unhelpfully long lessons. It also contributes to a restricted curriculum, which consists mainly of painting and drawing, with very limited experience of other media. Despite this, pupils often make excellent progress in painting and drawing. Teachers are very skilled at managing the timetable arrangements and pupils achieve very well because the teaching is very good. Standards in Year 9 are above average overall; in drawing and painting they are very high, but in other media they are average. The department lacks ICT resources and pupils seldom use computers, except to present their homework projects. The

department does not fulfil National Curriculum requirements in this regard and standards are below average. Pupils develop a very good understanding of artists' work and use this in their own work.

103. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Teachers are well versed in the requirements of the GCSE course and pupils are well prepared by their work in Years 7 to 9. They enjoy their examination work and grow in confidence. In the limited range of media that pupils use, standards are often technically outstanding. Several pupils have high quality work displayed in a local gallery and in a local company's offices. Pupils' mathematical understanding of shape and space is well above average, because it is very well taught in all years. Their written work is often presented untidily, but its content is very good.
104. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very skilled in teaching a range of styles of painting and drawing. Pupils respond very well to this approach, working diligently as they strive to meet teachers' very high expectations. Class management is very good and pupils behave very well. Teachers' own art skills provide a very good model for pupils' own work. They establish very good relationships and effectively encourage pupils to do their best.
105. Curriculum leadership is good and the department is well managed. The teachers work extremely effectively as a team and maintain very high standards, although there is little curricular innovation. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve well.
- The music department has been slow to respond to whole-school initiatives.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not well balanced.
- All pupils, especially those in Year 11, have positive attitudes towards music.

Commentary

106. Standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils' musical ability is broadly average on entry to the school, and their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. This is so for all groups of pupils, including those who are gifted and talented or have special educational needs. There were no entries for the GCSE examination in 2004 and no pupils are studying music in the current Year 10. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average for boys and pupils' achievement is good. These standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection. Pupils are competent performers, are able to identify musical techniques and use the language of the subject with ease. Composition is a weaker area; pupils do not use complex harmonies or develop melodic ideas sufficiently.
107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Year 11. The good lessons are characterised by high expectations and encouragement given to all pupils. Rigorous questioning, in which pupils are expected to describe their work accurately, leads them to use complex musical terms confidently. In the weakest lessons,

achievement is unsatisfactory because the purpose of the lesson is not made clear to pupils, or the non-specialist teacher is unsure of the musical content. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils spend more time writing and listening to music than composing and performing. As a result, not all aspects of the music curriculum are developed systematically. There are good working relationships in many lessons, especially in Year 11, where the content is relevant and pupils work hard.

108. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and works hard to provide a rich musical environment for pupils, supporting the non-specialist teacher whenever possible. Management is also satisfactory, but has some significant weaknesses. Whole-school initiatives are slowly being embraced and pupils' performance is now monitored through a structured assessment system. New assessment methods are being introduced, but as yet do not involve pupils enough for them to know how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory: standards have been maintained, but the resources, particularly keyboards, need updating to provide more sophisticated sound sources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and leads to good learning.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have very good attitudes: they are enthusiastic and behave very well.
- Information on how well pupils are progressing is not used to best effect.

Commentary

109. GCSE results are well above average and have risen steadily over the last three years. Pupils have done much better than in their other subjects.

110. For current pupils, standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils achieve well in relation their average standards on entry to the school. This is because they are well taught and have very good attitudes. They are enthusiastic and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve equally well. They improve their skills in a wide range of physical activities. Year 8 boys, for example, developed an effective technique for the off-drive in cricket as a result of the teacher's good modelling and coaching.

111. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow a core course in physical education and about four out of ten choose to take a GCSE course. Standards in the core course are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is less good than in Years 7 to 9 because, although pupils have positive attitudes, they are not as enthusiastic as younger pupils are. Standards in Year 10 badminton are rising rapidly, as pupils are now able to practise their skills in suitable surroundings with an expert teacher. On the GCSE course, standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.

112. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are carefully planned and well structured, with clear explanations and good demonstrations. Most of the teachers are specialists who have a very good knowledge of the subject. In the best lessons, pupils know what they are going to learn and how they will be expected to do this. Teachers set challenging tasks to meet the needs of all pupils. They maintain a brisk pace and work hard to raise pupils' self-esteem. In an excellent Year 9 lesson, for example, boys grew rapidly in their confidence and ability to execute a Fosbury Flop high jump because the teacher used a perfect balance of demonstration, guidance, practice and competition to ensure that pupils of all abilities were fully engaged and enjoyed their learning. In the best lessons, pupils' performance is evaluated in relation to National Curriculum criteria and this encourages them to offer suggestions for improvements.
113. Many pupils achieve significant success in school teams and individually, gaining local, regional and national recognition. A good range of extra-curricular activities and fixtures with other schools provide many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills.
114. Leadership and management are good. The teachers form a well-balanced team with a shared commitment to improvement. The balanced and well-structured teaching programme meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and ensures that the quality of pupils' learning is maintained throughout their school careers. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly and their progress is monitored. The outcomes of assessments are beginning to be used in planning what is taught. However, discussions between staff about pupils' performances are not recorded in sufficient detail. There is no reliable method for measuring pupils' standards on entry to the school. The accommodation provided by the new sports centre is excellent, but outdoor facilities are poor by modern standards and present a barrier to curriculum development. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. All the many areas identified for improvement have been addressed.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
 - Pupils learn to do independent research and to work constructively with others.
 - There are very few links with real businesses.
115. GCSE results in 2004 were above average and well above average for boys. Pupils did as well as in their other subjects and about one in five gained A* or A grades. In other recent years, results have also been above or well above average. The course is assessed entirely through the final examination, with no coursework.
116. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. Most pupils are of higher ability, but pupils of all abilities, including a few with special educational needs, achieve well. In the Year 11 lessons, pupils had undertaken their own research for a case study on marketing and were presenting their conclusions to the rest of the class. Pupils were confident and, while their presentational skills were variable, their knowledge and understanding of marketing were above average. The department has too few computers and, as a result, pupils' understanding of the use of ICT in business is weak. The lack of computers also affects the presentation of their written work. There are very few contacts with local businesses and, as a result, pupils' work includes fewer links between theory and practice than is found in most schools.
117. Teaching and learning are good. The teacher knows the pupils well and the curriculum suits pupils' aptitudes and interests. Lessons include a good balance of expert input from the teacher and independent learning. Pupils assess each other's work and this helps them to understand the examination criteria. The feedback they give is sensitive and accepted well.
118. Business studies is well led and managed by a senior member of staff. The provision was more extensive at the time of the last inspection, but standards have been maintained and the department has made satisfactory improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled.

119. **Personal, social and health education** is known within the school as the individual development programme (IDP). In Years 7 to 9, pupils have a lesson of IDP for ten weeks each year in rotation with art and design and technology. Year 8 pupils also have a weekly lesson of IDP. The school intends to introduce a weekly lesson of IDP for Years 7 to 10 in September 2005 and for Year 11 in the following year. Statutory requirements for sex and relationships education and drug education are met, as in Years 10 and 11 these are covered in science. However, statutory requirements for careers education are not met in Years 7 and 8.

120. Three lessons were seen, in which teaching and learning were good overall. The course is well planned and lessons are well structured. However, the course is inadequate to meet pupils' needs because insufficient time is allocated to it in all years except Year 8.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The requirements for teaching and assessing the subject are not met in Years 10 and 11, and are partially met in Years 7 to 9.
- Detailed lessons plans provide a firm basis for teaching and learning.
- There is an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to experience active citizenship.
- School managers have not monitored or evaluated the programme well enough.

Commentary

121. The teaching of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject is not established across the school. This should have happened in September 2002. The school has been very slow in meeting requirements and this represents unsatisfactory progress.

122. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have some citizenship lessons within the IDP programme, although not enough time is allocated to cover all the programmes of study in full. Some citizenship themes are also covered in other subjects and in the school's enrichment programme. Standards in Year 9 are average in terms of pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are able to discuss issues that are directly related to their daily lives with sensitivity and understanding. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. The teachers have good subject knowledge and effectively encourage pupils to voice their opinions in discussion.

123. In Years 10 and 11, there are no citizenship lessons and hence pupils' achievement in terms of their knowledge of what it means to be an informed citizen is unsatisfactory. It is planned to introduce citizenship lessons for Year 10 in September 2005 and Year 11 the following year.

124. Pupils have some opportunities to develop their skills of participation and responsible action through the school's enrichment programme. A school council has recently been formed; all pupils know of its activities and it is well regarded. Pupils elect their representatives, whose views are taken seriously by the senior staff. Some pupils represent their forms on the eco-school committee and others represent the school at the regional pupil assembly. The school's very good ethos supports the skills of responsible action well. Year 11 prefects assist in the smooth running of the school and older pupils provide support for Year 7 pupils. Pupils give talks in primary schools and considerable funds are raised each year for charity.

125. Records are kept of which aspects of citizenship pupils have covered in lessons, but there is no reliable method of measuring how much they have learned. The school is

therefore unable to report to parents with any reliability how well pupils have progressed in the subject.

126. The leadership and management provided by the citizenship co-ordinator are satisfactory. He has good expertise and has planned a well-structured teaching programme. Its implementation, however, has been irregular and too slow as a result of whole-school staffing and timetabling constraints. The intention to teach much of citizenship through other subjects has made it very difficult for the school to check quality or assess pupils' progress.
127. The school has firm plans to improve the provision for citizenship from September 2005. The plans include regular citizenship lessons for most pupils taken by a team of specialist teachers, as well as improved arrangements for assessment and reporting.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
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	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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