

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**CASTLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL**

**Brinnington, Stockport**

**LEA area: Stockport**

**Unique reference number: 106172**

**Headteacher: Mr M E Marra**

**Lead inspector: Adrian Simm**

**Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

**Inspection number: 268545**

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school:              | Special  |
| School category:             | Community special                                    |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 – 16 years  |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed  |
| Number on roll;              | 141  |
| School address:              | Lapwing Lane<br>Brinnington<br>Stockport<br>Cheshire |
| Postcode:                    | SK5 8LF  |
| Telephone number:            | 0161 494 6439  |
| Fax number:                  | 0161 406 6592  |
| Appropriate authority:       | The Governing Body                                   |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Philip Harrison                                      |
| Date of previous inspection: | June 1999  |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle Hill High School educates 92 boys and 49 girls aged 11 to 16 years who have moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Whilst the number of pupils in the school has fallen steadily in recent years, those pupils with more challenging behaviour are increasing. These pupils currently account for around 22 per cent of the pupils on roll, which is higher than at the last inspection. Pupils come from across the local Stockport area, which includes areas of high social deprivation. Thirty-one per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. Pupils' attainment on entry is low in comparison to their chronological age. Ninety-eight per cent of pupils are from white British backgrounds. The school does not hold information for the remaining two per cent. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is finding it increasingly difficult to appoint permanent teaching staff because of the growing complexity of pupils' special educational needs. This is at a time when the local education authority is considering re-defining the role of the school. During the inspection, twenty-five per cent of teachers were employed in a temporary capacity.

The school is involved in a range of initiatives that include:

- Outreach and inclusion work with local mainstream schools
- Pathfinders

The school has achieved the following awards:

- Investors in people in 2003
- School Achievement Award in 2003
- Basic Skills Quality Mark 2003

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |               |                | Subject responsibilities   |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| 21138                          | Adrian Simm   | Lead inspector | Mathematics<br>Citizenship<br>Geography<br>Modern foreign language<br>(French) |
| 9039                           | Bernard Eyre  | Lay inspector  |  |
| 10782                          | Henry Moreton | Team inspector | Information and communication<br>technology<br>Religious education<br>Music    |
| 30142                          | John Morris   | Team inspector | English<br>History<br>Physical education<br>Special educational needs          |
| 7994                           | Pam Weston    | Team inspector | Science<br>Art and design<br>Design and technology                             |

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>       |           |
| <b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>                             | <b>8</b>  |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities          |           |
| <b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>              | <b>10</b> |
| Teaching and learning   |           |
| The curriculum  |           |
| Care, guidance and support                                      |           |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community       |           |
| <b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>                                | <b>15</b> |
| <b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> |           |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>               | <b>17</b> |
| <b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>        | <b>27</b> |

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school. The headteacher ensures constant improvement in provision and is very clear about what more needs to be done. The school has a very strong community spirit, which shows in the very good relationships pupils have with staff and their attitudes to learning. Pupils' achieve very well. This is a clear reflection of the high quality of teaching and learning that they have experienced throughout the school. During the inspection, the high incidence of temporary teaching staff had an impact which resulted in teaching and learning being good rather than very good. However, much about the school is very effective. The school's income is less than the national average. The school offers very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, with good support from governors, sets out very clearly important priorities for development. This process results in all staff with responsibilities working well towards agreed goals for improving pupils' achievement.
- Provision for pupils' social and moral development is outstanding.
- Pupils achieve very well, particularly where subject specialists teach lessons. In general, learning is not as strong where non-subject specialists or temporary staff take lessons.
- The number of teaching assistants is low. Where they are deployed, they are very effective in supporting high quality teaching and learning. Lessons without teaching assistants tend not to be as effective.
- Although recognised by the school as an area for improvement, the involvement by subject leaders in checking on the quality of teaching and learning is not fully in place. This delay is part of a wider process of re-defining the roles of all staff with responsibilities, which has come about because of the reducing number and changing special educational needs of pupils.
- Very strong links with the community, other schools and colleges have a significant impact on curriculum provision. These contribute significantly to pupils' preparation for life after they leave school. The personal development of all pupils is very good. A high majority wants to learn.

The school has moved on well since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained in pupils' personal development, care and welfare, and in their achievement in art and design. Achievement in most other subjects has improved well with very good improvement in science and multicultural provision.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, achievement is **very good**. All pupils, regardless of their age and differing special educational needs, achieve very well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), personal development, art and design and design and technology. They achieve satisfactorily in religious education. Pupils' achievement in 2004 by Year 9 in national assessments and by Year 11 in accredited courses, such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), was the fifth most effective in the country when compared with all schools with similar aged pupils. Outstanding within this were nine pupils who gained A to C grades in three-dimensional design and C grades in art and design.

| Pupils' achievement at the end of: | in relation to individual targets in: |                               |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                    | Subjects of the curriculum            | personal and social education |
| Year 9                             | <b>Very good</b>                      | <b>Very good</b>              |
| Year 11                            | <b>Very good</b>                      | <b>Very good</b>              |

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Pupils develop very good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in the broad range of subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' attitudes to work and each other are **very good**. Generally, they behave **very well**. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed **very**

**effectively.** Attendance is **very good** in comparison with similar schools. A measure of the school's very strong ethos for learning is the outstanding level of attendance of Year 11 pupils.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Overall the quality of education provided by the school is **very good** for all pupils regardless of age or special educational needs. Pupils experience a highly effective curriculum. This includes very good links with other schools and very effective learning within the local community and beyond. Links with parents are good. Pupils benefit very well from their work related learning courses. A very broad range of opportunities exists to accredit pupils' work regardless of their level of attainment. Currently, all staff provide very effectively for the small but increasing number of pupils with more complex behaviour difficulties. The current staffing situation led to teaching and learning during the inspection that was **good**. Pupils are expected and encouraged to join in and, as a result, they do well. Lessons taken by permanent staff tend to be very good because of their knowledge of pupils' day-to-day needs. Also, good or very good teaching and learning occurs generally where subject specialists teach lessons and where teaching assistants are in support. Where non-specialists take lessons, temporary staff without the intimate knowledge of pupils' needs that permanent staff display and with the absence of teaching assistants, lesson quality is less than good. The shortage of teaching assistants and the current numbers of temporary teachers means that permanent staff are working continuously at 'full stretch'. This is to overcome the weaknesses of the current staffing situation and accommodation design in providing for pupils with more complex difficulties.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall leadership and management are **very good** because of the highly effective leadership of the headteacher who challenges staff and pupils to improve continuously. Very clear plans are in place to support this. As a result, many strands of provision are very effective. Currently, leadership is slightly stronger than management. Staffing issues have meant the re-scheduling of some initiatives and resulted in the slower progress of others. As a result, the awareness of subject leaders of the quality of teaching and learning from temporary staff and non-subject specialists is not as clear as it could be. Strengthening this important area of school self-evaluation would lead to very good management. Governance is **good**. Governors have a very clear understanding about the school's strengths and what else needs to be tackled to improve more. They support the school well in turning policy into practice. All statutory requirements are in place.

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

**Parents are well pleased** with the school. Pupils are very happy attending the school. They speak highly of staff and of how well they are taught and cared for. Parents are particularly pleased with how well the school is led and managed, the good quality teaching and how well pupils are encouraged to become mature and independent. Most parents acknowledge that instances of poor behaviour and bullying that happen very occasionally are dealt with quickly and effectively.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Improve the consistency of good and very good teaching and learning by extending the subject expertise of teachers, the availability of teaching assistants and the way in which subject co-ordinators are directly involved in checking on the success of teaching and learning in their subjects.

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

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Boys and girls, regardless of their differing special educational needs, achieve **very well**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do very well in an extensive range of courses.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do very well in national assessments in English, mathematics and science;
- There is a strong link between pupils' achievement and the strengths in teaching and learning, particularly those of the subject expertise of subject specialists and the high quality of support from teaching assistants.
- Overall, there is a strong upward trend in achievement since the last inspection.
- All pupils achieve very well in their personal development throughout the school.
- The school takes part in a very broad range of initiatives that benefit pupils' achievement significantly.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit very well from courses upon which they show how well they do on nationally recognised levels of work. This was a strong feature of provision at the last inspection, which has developed much further. In 2004, 87 per cent of pupils achieved at least an entry-level qualification by the end of Year 11. Twenty-six per cent of pupils gained five or more GCSE grades A to G. The high level of achievement shown by these pupils in the two years since the end of Year 9 placed them fifth in the country as a group in comparison with other schools nationally. A broad range of subjects contributes very effectively to this impressive picture. Fourteen pupils in science and nine pupils in mathematics gained GCSE grades E to G. Two pupils gained C and D grades in English. Seven pupils gained grades C to E in art and design whilst in three-dimensional design, 12 pupils gained GCSE grades A to D. Seven of these gained grades A to C, which was outstanding. Nine pupils gained grades D to F in their General, National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course on health and social care. Because the school also offers units of work accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), all pupils regardless of their ability achieve very well on courses matched closely to their needs and levels.
2. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 also achieve very well. In national assessments in English, mathematics and science in 2003, the improvement Year 9 pupils made from their levels on entry to the school placed the school in the top 25 per cent in the country when compared with all schools with similarly aged pupils. In 2004, results contributed to the school's overall position of fifth in the country. During the inspection, evidence from lessons showed there is a strong link between pupils' achievement and the strengths noted in teaching and learning. This was particularly evident where lessons were taken by permanent teachers with subject expertise and where high quality support was forthcoming from teaching assistants.
3. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement has improved well in English, mathematics, ICT and design and technology. Achievement in these subjects is now very good whereas previously it was good. Achievement in art and design and personal development has been maintained at a high level. Pupils' achievement in science has improved very well because at the last inspection, pupils' progress was satisfactory overall. Pupils' achievement in religious education remains satisfactory. All pupils achieve very well in their personal development. The whole school ethos ensures that pupils' confidence, social and moral understanding, desire to learn and their ability to work individually or in group situations, blossoms as they get older and move towards leaving school. Lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) contribute to this acceptably. However, the main strength of achievement is in staff-pupil relationships throughout the school. Also in the broad range of social, moral and



vocational provision such as the school council, ECO committee, work experience, college courses and other very effective work related provision.

- The school's ways of setting appropriate but challenging targets for pupils to achieve are becoming more and more precise. Pupils in Year 11 are well on line to achieve the targets expected of them by the end of Year 11 in 2005. The school has introduced a new system for targeting achievement in small steps across the whole school. This is by using a computer spreadsheet that is available to all staff to consult and for senior managers to update. Although in its infancy, this will add to the good systems already in place including targets set in individual educational plans for all pupils. Analysis of these targets points to pupils with more complex learning and behaviour difficulties making very good progress against their targets.

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

Overall, the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Attendance is **very good**. Punctuality is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils respond very well to the high expectations of all adults. In particular, pupils' response in the areas of moral and social development is outstanding.
- The pupils who find some aspects of lessons difficult are very well supported despite the design of the school building adversely impacting on the support of pupils with complex behaviour difficulties.
- The work undertaken to produce self-confident individuals is very effective.
- High attendance confirms that most pupils enjoy school life.

### **Commentary**

- This is a successful school where adults encourage pupils to try very hard to succeed. Consistent and high quality support is provided when on rare occasions, emotions get out of hand. Everyone is regarded as an important individual regardless of his or her background or personality. In the best lessons, teachers and teaching assistants effectively create a 'team teaching' environment so that overall, all pupils, including those with complex problems remain fully engaged in the lesson. A productive and calm atmosphere is evident.

### **Exclusions**

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

| <b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b> |
|--|
| White – British                                    |
| No ethnic group recorded                           |

#### **Exclusions in the last school year**

| <b>No of pupils on roll</b> | <b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b> | <b>Number of permanent exclusions</b> |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 119                         | 5  |                                       |
| 22                          |  |                                       |

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

- Behaviour is managed in a consistent manner with patience and understanding being well balanced with an insistence of high standards. Consequently pupils are fully aware of the rules and sanctions, which they accept as fair. They are tolerant and understanding when other pupils act inappropriately. Much emphasis is put onto pupils to recognise their own difficulties and to come to terms with them. This is working very well although the design of the building is not suited to those pupils with the most complex behaviour difficulties. A sprawling building on three floor levels means that staff and the headteacher expend much time in ensuring the care and welfare of the very small number of pupils who are out of the classroom from time to time.

Even so, fixed period exclusions for between one and four days are low because of how well staff deal with pupils' emotional outbursts. Exclusions are lower so far this year.

- The opportunities pupils have to develop an understanding of how to live in a community, to develop respect and to provide support are woven into school life. Assemblies, at the commencement of each school day, are used very well to develop a sense of belonging and spiritual awareness. On these occasions adults and pupils meet together to celebrate each other's successes, to be informed about the day's routines and to be set on course to meet the challenges of the day ahead. During the course of the day discussions with form tutors including personal, social and healthy living topics combine to produce very well rounded, sensible individuals. The pupils understand that it is important to respect other peoples' beliefs and traditions. They know that religious symbols are used to demonstrate allegiance to faiths and cultures and that they should not be defiled. Assembly themes, citizenship lessons and the promotion of the importance of tolerance, regardless of a person's background, origin or social standing all add significantly to the pupils' strengths in personal development. These aspects are interwoven into the fabric of the school day. Occasional theme days, for example, when European traditions, languages and food are studied, enhance this provision very well.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/2004*

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data:       | 9.0 | School data:         | 1.2 |
| National data:     | 8.2 | National data:       | 1.8 |

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

- Pupils' attendance is very good and improving. A particularly impressive feature is the attendance of 93.2 per cent for pupils in Year 11. Any lateness arises because of travelling difficulties of taxi provision for the pupils who travel a long way. Also some bus timetabling problems add to this for those who travel independently. The school has very good arrangements for supporting and improving attendance for any pupils with difficulties.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Curricular opportunities, the school's links with the community and other schools and colleges, the standard of care, and the support, advice and guidance offered to pupils are all **very good**. Because of current difficulties in recruiting effective permanent teaching staff, teaching and learning are **good** overall. Partnership with parents is good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment of pupils' work is **good** with all year groups and with pupils who have different special educational needs.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Generally where teaching is carried out by subject specialists and teaching assistants are present, pupils learn very well. Alternatively, learning tends not to be as strong where non-subject specialists are involved or teaching assistants are not present.
- Pupils and staff have very strong and trusting relationships, particularly with the permanent staff. This encourages pupils to work hard and concentrate very well in lessons.

- Pupils' individual needs are met well and challenging behaviour is effectively and consistently managed.
- Teachers use assessment well to plan their lessons and to help pupils learn well. Overall, IEP targets are built effectively into lesson planning but some examples fall short of the impressive practice of the school's special educational needs co-ordinator.

## Commentary

Lessons seen during the inspection are summarised in the table below.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good    | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
|           | 17 (29%)  | 21(36%) | 16 (28%)     | 3 (5%)         | 1 (2%) |           |

*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.*

- Teaching and learning are good overall with nearly one in three lessons that are very good. The small number of lessons that were less than satisfactory tended to be where two or more of the following characteristics were present. That is, a non-subject specialist teacher, a temporary teacher who did not know the pupils very well or a lack of teaching assistant support in the lesson. Overall, teaching and learning in English, mathematics and ICT are good. They are very good in science, art and design, design and technology and personal development overall, which includes PSHCE. They were satisfactory in religious education. The subjects of art and design, design and technology and science have benefited from stable and uninterrupted teaching by high quality subject specialists. Careful planning of lessons and the very interesting range of activities contributes to the strengths of teaching and learning.
- The number of teaching assistants in the school is low in comparison with similar schools. This reflects in part, the school's income that is lower than similar schools. As a result, the school rightly prioritises teaching assistant support. This is firstly to those classes where there are potential risks such as design technology, food technology and to some extent science. Secondly to support groups of pupils with more complex needs and thirdly in a way that spreads support as equitably as possible for other staff. The school is in the process of re-defining staffing responsibilities. Senior staff are considering the costs and possible effectiveness of different staffing models, some of which include an increase in teaching assistant support.
- In those subjects where teaching and learning are very good overall, a very high proportion of lessons are taught by subject specialists, invariably with the support of a teaching assistant. In these lessons, staff know the pupils' learning needs very well. They know how best to support each pupil in their learning and in behaviour support where this is necessary. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is very good because staff work out from lessons what pupils know and find difficult to understand. They explain to pupils how to improve. One very good example of this was in a Year 11 science lesson, where pupils were expected to make predictions about the spread of acid rain and draw conclusions based upon the results obtained. The lesson started with a very clear 'powerpoint' presentation to check on pupils' recollections from the previous lesson. The focus of activities was then pitched just right for pupils' individual levels. Activities changed flexibly to retain the concentration of all pupils. Overall, subject specialist teachers are very well able to stretch pupils academically and spark the imagination of those pupils taking GCSE courses.
- Relationships with pupils are of a high quality. This results in pupils working hard and wanting to learn. There is a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and pupils are happy. Overall, at the start of lessons, staff explain to pupils what they are about to do. Where teaching assistants are available in lessons, they are deployed very well to ensure that each pupil gains the maximum benefit from the teaching. Teaching assistants challenge and question pupils and help them to

succeed. Staff manage challenging behaviour calmly and effectively by consistently using agreed strategies. These place emphasis on the pupils recognising their own needs and learning how to control themselves.

13. The school is amassing more and more information about how well pupils are progressing. Pupils have good quality IEPs that set appropriate targets for them to achieve. Very good examples exist in the school where targets are set out very clearly on lesson plans and where those targets applicable to the lesson are highlighted so that all staff are working in unison. This precise approach although agreed with staff is not yet consistently in use. Also, pupils are set targets against national expectations and are assessed in a very broad range of ways. These include National Curriculum tests, specific teacher assessment set against National Curriculum levels and a nationally recognised approach to assessment, known as 'P' scales, for those pupils working below National Curriculum levels. Before they leave school, pupils are accredited in GCSE, entry level certificates, GNVQ or units of work leading to awards by ASDAN. To improve upon this process, the school has recently introduced a computerised tracking system with more precise ways of setting targets and measuring pupils' achievements. This is in its infancy but is a clear example of very good leadership by the headteacher who is continuously looking for ways to improve provision.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. Extra curricular activities and enrichment of provision are **very good**. The school accommodation and resources are **good** overall.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information and communication technology supports learning very well.
- The curriculum supports the personal development of all groups of pupils very well. Pupils' learning is greatly enriched by opportunities provided outside of the school.
- Learning resources are of a high quality.
- The number of support staff is low.
- Work related learning is very effective in supporting pupils' very good attendance and personal development.

## Commentary

14. The school's imaginative curriculum covers all of the requirements of the National Curriculum, including religious education and collective worship. Since the previous inspection the school has reviewed and improved its provision. This has ensured a better balance of time to all subjects and development of the curriculum in design and technology and science. The provision of greatly improved ICT facilities and very relevant staff training has resulted in ICT being very well incorporated in all aspects of the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on developing leisure interests such as swimming and walking. The school has made a great effort to bring the curriculum alive by providing resources of a high quality.
15. A heavy emphasis is placed on personal social, health education and citizenship education (PSHCE). The subject is taught in lessons and during planned activities at other times. Sex education with personal relationships and drug misuse is skilfully included in the programme. The school has developed means of supporting and encouraging personal development through the curriculum by providing physical and creative activities beyond the school day and investing in a programme of work related learning in collaboration with other schools and colleges. Lunchtime and after school clubs are well attended and offer support to more vulnerable pupils. A particularly popular lesson and club, is the steel band. Participation in this provides opportunities for pupils to socialise with the wider community when they perform for example at homes for the elderly. There are many visitors into school, which include, people in connection with some pupils' involvement in a local Police Forum, theatre groups and an artist in residence. This, along with ready access to residential and educational visits for most pupils,

promotes high personal and social skills and a positive self-image. Overall the curriculum has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development through building pupils' interest, self-confidence and social skills.

16. There are usually a good number of experienced teachers. However, during the inspection, six temporary teachers were employed because of staff absence and a small number of recent resignations. Teaching assistants are very well trained and make a significant impact on lessons although in comparison with similar schools, their number is low. Their time has to be prioritised. This leaves teachers with less than ideal support. The accommodation is good overall. It has some very good features such as the library, ICT and specialist practical rooms suites plus conservation and allotment areas, which provide useful outside interests within the school day and at break times. However the design of the building is not helpful in the management of pupils with more complex learning difficulties. There are also shortcomings in provision for drama and some physical activities because the school uses an adjoining sport and activity centre over which it does not have management control. The school has made every effort to minimise shortcomings, which arise from their inability to use the accommodation from time to time. However, ongoing difficulties with the quality of the shared accommodation and boundary fencing to the site impacts adversely on drama, physical education and games provision.
17. Provision for work related learning is very good. Pupils find it very interesting and this aids high attendance. The school begins to approach the move from school into work and training as pupils reach Year 9. Here it is made clear to pupils that school is a preparation for work. The school runs comprehensive link packages with two local colleges. These include building trade, motor vehicle maintenance, beauticians' courses, basic food hygiene certification and courses in hotel and catering. The school also provides an extensive programme of work experience in Years 10 and 11, access to modern apprenticeships and other work related courses. These form an integral part of the school's vocational education focus and demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion. The range of vocational courses attended by pupils is increasing because of the flexibility of provision used to best match courses to pupils' needs.

### Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils is **very good**. Provision for the support, advice and guidance of pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development is **very good**. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, very good policies and procedures designed to care for pupils' welfare are followed thoroughly.
- Pastoral support provided is of a high standard.
- High levels of trust and mutual support exist at every level.
- Pupil's opinions are sought, valued and acted upon very well.

### Commentary

18. High standards of care and guidance are made possible because everyone in the school is committed to the wellbeing and academic progress of the pupils. Expertise and commitment ensures regulations and guidelines are followed. Agreed approaches to giving medication, child protection and other safety arrangements are in place. Adults undergo the correct training.
19. Pastoral support, advice and guidance are generally very good because the school has comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure the needs of each individual pupil. Pupils settle quickly into the school because of very good induction arrangements and taster sessions.

Comprehensive briefings for parents and carers complete the picture effectively. Pupils who come into the school at varying times during the school year are equally well treated.

20. Trusting relationships between adults and pupils ensures that day to day worries and emotional problems are handled sensitively. Pupils who find their lessons difficult have additional support, for example in after school homework clubs. Formal consultation arrangements include a school council and a very active ecology committee. Additionally the school recognises fully the importance of the promotion of good dietary practices and it is looking forward to the re-introduction of a breakfast club in the autumn for those pupils who arrive early each day.
21. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils with more complex needs has increased. In response, the school has developed effective practices, which include a designated teaching assistant with the Year 7 additional needs group. This helps promote consistency of practice and relationships as pupils start at the school. It works very well and is enhanced by the work put in by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who liaises closely with the schools referring pupils. Support from outside agencies to promote inclusion and more effective learning for pupils with additional needs is good. For example, the school nurse, physiotherapist, educational psychologist, education welfare officer and Connexions adviser provide focused support. The school has recently appointed a peripatetic counsellor to work individually with a small number of pupils with complex and emotional difficulties.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a comprehensive range of information to parents.
- Consultation and review procedures are effective.
- The school is fully involved in the life of the community.

### **Commentary**

22. The school does all it can to encourage parents and carers to be part of school life but because they are dispersed over a wide area this is difficult to achieve. Despite this, consultation and periodical review procedures work effectively. A recently established parent support network has been well received by a core of parents. The school prospectus, parent support leaflets, letters home, telephone discussions and messages sent home via escorts ensures that a regular flow of useful information is available. The school produces a comprehensive report about pupils' progress that is shared annually with parents at their child's review meeting. This ensures good involvement for those parents who attend. These reviews are highly valued. Parents are effectively included as part of their child's target setting process. The relationships developed with parents and carers are important factors in the partnership to improve the pupils' educational provision and opportunities for more effective independent living.
23. The school is immersed into the life of the community. For example, musical entertainment by the highly regarded steel band has been provided outside local shops and pupils and the band attend a local carol service. Elderly people living locally come to the school for a Christmas lunch. The pupils are enthusiastic supporters of local, national and international charities. Local businesses provide good work experience opportunities. Local colleges offer an extensive range of work related training courses, many of which lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are **very good** because of the headteacher's very effective leadership. Leadership of other key staff is **good**. Overall, the effectiveness of management is currently **good** and strengthening. Governance is **good**. The school is effective in overcoming current identified barriers to pupils' learning.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher gives very good leadership.
- The school adopts a positive approach to constant improvement.
- The school is well placed to continue developing.
- Subject co-ordinators are not as involved as they could be in monitoring and evaluation of their subjects. The school recognises this and is reviewing practice.

### **Commentary**

24. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He brings his knowledge and experience to bear in a very effective way. The headteacher keeps a high profile around the school and is very accessible to pupils and staff. He has a very good understanding of what the school must do to meet the changing demands and pressures. Barriers to learning are effectively overcome as they arise. Members of the management team support the headteacher well. As a result, pupils' achievement, personal development and much of what the school provides for the pupils and their families are very good. The process of redefining roles for all staff with responsibilities in the light of the school's reducing numbers and the increase of pupils with more complex difficulties is yet to be completed. Staff share a clear sense of teamwork and values. The school is inclusive and has a very strong ethos. The school improvement plan focuses on appropriate priorities and is critically evaluated.
25. The school adopts a positive approach to the emerging complex needs of pupils. The accommodation has been modified and developed and a separate recreational area brought into use. Break time and lunchtime arrangements have been modified to accommodate more vulnerable pupils with access to a quiet area. For those displaying challenging behaviours, modified timetables have been introduced. The school has improved its professional skill base. Performance management reinforces this and all teachers now have a target that recognises the need to change teaching practices in focusing on complex needs. Several teachers have been involved in autism awareness training and all teaching assistants have followed an ICT course to enable them to use the same data as the teachers.
26. Governance of the school is good. Governors are supportive and work hard on the school's behalf. They bring a wide range of personal and professional expertise to the school. Governors are directly involved in school life and challenge the managers to improve the school. The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has given appropriate priority to the remodelling of the school workforce and intends to spend an increasing proportion of the school's budget on this. The governing body is involved in setting the strategic direction of the school, including decisions about the place of the school in meeting the needs of pupils with more complex needs. All statutory requirements are in place.
27. Management is good. The school's performance is evaluated carefully. Performance management is well organised and successfully implemented. The outcomes are used effectively to determine training needs and link to school priorities. The school recognises that subject leaders are insufficiently involved in monitoring the effectiveness of non-subject specialist teachers, in order to improve further the quality of teaching and learning. With this in place, management would be very good. Workforce reforms are advanced and well on the way to being fully implemented. The headteacher works well with the finance assistant and the school's financial procedures are good. This enables teachers to concentrate on teaching and governors to be active in fulfilling their role of monitoring the budget and planning improvements. There is strong financial control and resources are harnessed to achieve the

priorities of the school improvement plan. The carry forward from one year to the next has been excessive over recent years. However, this money is scheduled in part to cover the costs of the school's plans to re-define the roles and responsibilities of teaching staff and possibly increase the number of teaching assistants. Senior managers currently have a range of options under review, which when implemented, will reduce the underspend to an acceptable level. Finances for the year 2003/2004 are shown in the table below.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |         |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income               | 1,334,040 | Balance from previous year          | 124,059 |
| Total expenditure          | 1,298,901 | Balance carried forward to the next | 159,198 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 9,020     |                                     |         |

28 The strengths evident at the time of the last inspection have been embedded. Leadership of the headteacher is very good, with effective school improvement planning and tight financial control. The school rightly recognises its strengths in teamwork of the staff, very motivated pupils and an effective internal learning environment. The staff team is a strong one in spite of current difficulties in recruitment, which the school recognises as the most obvious drawback to learning. The school's evaluation of teaching and learning, currently being good rather than very good, is accurate. Given the overall high quality of education provided over time, the school provides very good value for money. The school is ambitious for its pupils and is well placed to develop further.



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

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

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

Separate judgements were not made on provision in French or Spanish because they were not part of the main focus of the inspection. One lesson seen in French incorporated ICT well but whilst satisfactory overall, was short on the use of spoken French.

#### **English**

Ten lessons were observed covering all year groups.

Provision in English is **very good**

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

- Pupils achieve very well in speaking, listening and reading.
- Opportunities are very good for pupils to develop writing in a range of styles.
- Teaching assistants support the development of reading and communication skills very well.
- The subject leader is effective but does not have the time to check fully on the quality of teaching in lessons so as to promote even more effective teaching and learning.
- The impact of accreditation at Year 11 is good.

#### **Commentary**

29. All staff make every opportunity to promote speaking and listening skills both within the classrooms and in social situations. This results in very good achievement. Staff have worked hard on using the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, for example, in developing speaking and listening skills through questioning. In one Year 7 English lesson the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss work on 'The Witches'. Pupils had a 'partner whispering discussion', which developed their listening skills and confidence very well. In a Year 8 art and design lesson, very good group discussion supported pupils' achievement very effectively in making quality 'masks' by the end of the lesson. This promoted both vocabulary development and self esteem because of group praise. During discussion with pupils it was clearly evident that they recognise and are pleased with their progress. One year 11 pupil remarked, "I have developed considerably in my ability and confidence to speak with people. I am on the Eco committee in school. My parents are really pleased because I communicate much better at home and in the community".
30. Pupils at all levels and ages develop skills to write in a range of styles. Their achievement is very good. This is good improvement since the last inspection when there was on occasions an over reliance on work sheets and some pupils' independent learning and research was restricted. By Year 9, pupils develop skills of writing for a number of purposes. There are very good examples of pupils writing to inform, explore, entertain, explain, describe, persuade, argue and advise. By Year 11, pupils are developing projects linked to research on the Internet, writing for their own interest, presenting facts and expressing opinions. They have examined a range of articles from newspapers, magazines and on the Internet on drug related crime. The work creates a high level of interest and challenges them to develop and express their opinions. Higher attaining pupils follow the GCSE syllabus. They develop skills in free writing by writing reviews, for example, with work on 'Oliver Twist' and poetry from different cultures. There is evidence of very good improvement in grammar and punctuation skills. Pupils are encouraged to improve their handwriting skills and progress is good. However, on occasions, staffs' written comments on pupils' work are not precise enough to support improvement in pupils' skills and understanding.

31. Pupils' enthusiasm to improve their reading is very clear. All staff encourage pupils to read in class and, in particular, teaching assistants have a major role in listening to and encouraging reading. For example, lower attaining Year 9 pupils develop their reading and spelling skills through an effective programme of phonics. The teaching assistants support each pupil individually and good records are kept of pupils' achievement. Pupils gain in confidence and enjoyment in reading. Pupils who start at the school as non-readers become very pleased with their achievement. One pupil commented, "I have really improved my reading because I now know how to use letter sounds. I have started to read Harry Potter. My Dad reads it with me and gets me to read it back. I am really pleased with my progress". Pupils' enthusiasm for reading is encouraged by the range of texts used by teachers to promote their interest and involvement. The school library provides very good resources for pupils of all abilities. Year 11 pupils were keen to talk about their improvements. One pupil stated, "My reading has improved a lot. I have had a lot of help and this has encouraged me to read. The books in the library are good. I read newspapers at home and on the train coming to school".
32. Overall teaching and learning are good. In good and very good lessons, teaching is effective because teachers plan well, they are enthusiastic and they identify clearly what they want the class and individual pupils to achieve. In one very good lesson with Year 10 pupils, there was a high level of interest from the pupils because the text chosen was closely linked to their own experiences. Teaching is stimulating and consistently challenges the pupils. When teaching is less effective, the teaching fails to capture the pupils' interests and enthusiasm. Activities are mundane and fail to develop key skills of learning and restrict understanding.
33. The co-ordinator for English is enthusiastic and has developed the curriculum well. Very good records of pupils' achievement in speaking and listening, reading and writing are kept for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and are linked to school certification. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a range of accredited courses that are appropriate to their age and needs. Improvement in the accredited courses offered to pupils since the last inspection is good. In 2004, two pupils successfully passed the GCSE course in English Language at grade D. One pupil who was integrated to the local secondary school also passed English Literature at grade C. Eighteen pupils successfully passed the Entry level certificate, two at level 2, and sixteen at level 3. In the current year, six pupils are following the GCSE course in English. However, the subject leader has no specified time to observe, monitor or support other staff in improving the quality of provision. This is an important area of management that could be stronger. Leadership and management by the subject leader is good overall.

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

34. The development of language and literacy skills within other subject areas and within the school is well planned. Speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are encouraged in all lessons. The school has implemented the National Key Stage 3 Strategy well and there are colourful displays to promote literacy skills in classrooms and corridors. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Charter Mark for language and literacy development across the curriculum.

## MATHEMATICS

Seven lessons were observed covering both key stages.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for accreditation and pupils' success in mathematics have improved very well since the last inspection.
- Overall, teaching and learning are more effective when teaching assistants are in support and lessons are taken by experienced teachers with subject expertise.
- Pupils' use of ICT in lessons is very good by the time they reach Year 11.
- Numeracy is taught effectively in a broad range of subjects.
- The subject leader has insufficient time to check on the quality of teaching and learning during lesson time.

### Commentary

35. There has been very good improvement in provision since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is stronger and is now very good. For example, of the Year 11 pupils in 1998, one pupil achieved a grade 'F' in GCSE whilst others gained certificates of achievement. In 1994, nine pupils gained grades 'E' to 'G' in GCSE whilst all other Year 11 pupils gained entry level certificates levels 1 to 3. All pupils achieved their predicated grades or better. Pupils are on track to achieve their targets for 2005. The level of accreditation in mathematics contributed significantly to the school's overall position where the strength of pupils' achievement placed it fifth in the country in comparison with all schools with pupils of similar age. Standards by the end of Year 9 are also strong in comparison with similar schools. From attainment on entry to the school at Year 7, which is low, pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 9. There is an improving trend in pupils' achievement since the last inspection. Pupils clearly and consistently throughout the school acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding across a very well planned curriculum. This is as a result of effective leadership by the subject leader.
36. Pupils' very good achievement reflects high quality teaching and learning that they have experienced. However, the high number of temporary teachers employed during the inspection led overall, to good teaching and learning. In the best lessons, learning objectives are shared with the class so pupils know what to expect. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils succeeded well because they knew and were reminded as necessary that they had to consider the correct units of measure for different items. This encourages them to listen and attend. Discussion and questioning by the teacher is suitable for every pupil's needs by adjusting the level of difficulty and time to reply. This helps pupils to fully understand what is expected and ensures everyone is included. The management of pupils' more complex behaviour is generally positive, astute and effective so that the learning of others is not disturbed. In a Year 9 lesson about identifying and continuing patterns, one restless pupil eventually settled to work because of the calm and clear way in which staff explained that working was 'the best option'. Class sessions, group and individual work are well organised and allow for relevant, practical activities that challenge pupils at their level of learning. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils had opportunities to make their own decisions about working on their own or with others, which was a very good example of how pupils' personal development is extended. Pupils went on to decide how best to spend £300 on a range of items for a hospital's children's ward. Pupils' realistic estimates and level of computation were very good. Overall, the strongest lessons are where teachers know the pupils' special educational needs very well, have built strong relationships with the pupils, have subject expertise and have teaching assistant support. The weakest lessons are where staff have inconsistent subject knowledge, are reasonably new to the school and have not had time to build strong relationships with the pupils and where teaching assistants are not available to support the lesson. There are far more strong lessons than weak ones.

37. Throughout lessons there is good reinforcement of literacy skills. Pupils become familiar with key mathematical language and more confident pupils volunteer to read out instructions to the rest of the class. In a very good Year 11 lesson, pupils working towards their GCSE accreditation responded very maturely and effectively to accessing the web site of a major store. The higher attaining pupils in the group quickly accessed data about the cheapest and most expensive household items on offer and worked out what change they would have left from £500. Other pupils were successful but took slightly longer. This is very good achievement from their low attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 when, for example, pupils work on simple money sums involving low value coins, interpret simple block graphs and struggle to understand the difference between simple fractions.
38. Procedures for checking pupils' achievement are strengthening further with the introduction of a new and more precise computerised tracking system. Whilst the current 'paper-system' is mostly effective, recent changes in staffing has resulted in some inconsistency in the data collected by the subject leader. Other inconsistencies creep in related to how well pupils' IEP targets are built into lessons. Where it is exemplary, planning clearly shows each pupil's targets and which one(s) are being addressed in the lesson. The school recognises these inconsistencies from their own checking of provision. They also recognise that the subject leader's involvement in this is not as effective as it could be, because of shortage of time set aside for this by senior managers.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

39. The school provides very good opportunities to promote pupils' numeracy skills through other subjects of the curriculum. Examples were seen in counting, grouping and recording of results in science, spreadsheets in ICT, the use of a broad range of different graphical recording and interpretation in PSHCE and accurate measurement in design and technology. These opportunities frequently arise deliberately and are planned into pupils' learning. They are complemented by other examples that are less deliberately planned but arise naturally and are equally effective, such as counting and scoring in some physical education activities.

## **SCIENCE**

Six lessons were observed covering all year groups.

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy science and are very well motivated and interested.
- Learning resources are well organised in advance of lessons and match very well the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils.
- The subject leader ensures that the pupils are given activities that are challenging, relevant and are very well matched to their own learning styles.
- Very good systems are in place to celebrate pupils' achievement.
- The subject leader takes a pivotal role in teaching.

### **Commentary**

40. Teaching and learning across the school are very good. As a result pupils achieve very well. This represents very good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where it was previously judged unsatisfactory. The subject leader takes a lead role in teaching throughout the school. Lessons are very well planned and prepared with clear learning objectives identified. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson, so that all know what they will be learning and what they will have achieved by the end. Lesson objectives are revisited at the end of the lesson when pupils are encouraged to discuss what they have learned. Planning, support and resources take account of the varying needs of

individual pupils so that all are fully included. Through effective questioning, pupils are encouraged successfully to think for themselves in order to improve their investigational skills. Literacy, communication and numeracy skills are regularly reinforced in science lessons.

41. An imaginative curriculum promotes very good achievement. The subject develops expertise in other areas of the curriculum such as literacy when for example the teacher emphasised the vocabulary to be used in a Year 7 lesson. Words such as reptile, mammals and amphibians became part of the discussion as the pupils' classified vertebrates into groups. In this lesson the use of the interactive whiteboard added another dimension of interest for the pupils. Work is progressive and matched to individual pupils' ability. Assessment is very good, pupils know what they have to achieve at the beginning of each unit of work and are eager to do well and receive their merit awards so that they can progress through bronze, silver and gold levels.
42. Pupils enjoy their science lessons because lessons are so interesting and motivating. Pupils show great interest in their work. Consequently they behave very well. A very good example of this was when Year 10 pupils tested a wide variety of substances to establish whether they were acidic, alkaline or neutral. On this occasion, the pupils took on the role of a 'scientist' with great dedication, behaving immaculately as they moved around the room completing their various tests. Pupils are keen to learn and want to know how well they are achieving. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 all achieve units of the award scheme Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). This is a very good way of recognising the achievement of all pupils. A good number of pupils also achieve well at GCSE.
43. The subject leader is very effective and has made considerable improvements since the last inspection. For example, a portfolio of sample assessed work has been introduced to assist staff in levelling pupils' work. This has also helped staff identify opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons. Science is a strength of the school. Learning resources are matched very well to the needs of the pupils and are always very well organised well in advance and easily accessible during lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Nine lessons were seen and inspectors noted where ICT was used in other subjects.

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision has been developed very well to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Good quality planning and assessment is evident with clear objectives for pupils to achieve.
- Information and communication technology is used very well across the curriculum to improve presentation and further develop the pupils' learning.
- A lack of teaching assistants in lessons such as those for younger pupils generally hinders their achievement.

### **Commentary**

44. The subject has improved very well since the last inspection. Two ICT suites have been developed well to meet the needs of the pupils and are very well equipped. Subject teachers regularly use these suites, over and above the timetabled ICT lessons. There are three interactive whiteboards with a further four on order. Those available at the moment are being used well, particularly in science. There is a good number of up to date computers available in all classrooms and all are linked to the Internet.
45. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with very good teaching taking place with Years 10 and 11. Work is carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Permanent teachers know the pupils' ICT needs and take account of individual learning

difficulties when planning lessons. All lessons are focused on enabling pupils to have 'hands on' experience. As a result all pupils usually learn very well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 in particular, benefit from the presence of teaching assistants during lessons. When this is not available pupils do not always do as well as they should. Relationships in class are very good. Because of this, overall pupils behave very well and build up confidence and self-esteem.

46. Information and communication technology is very well led and managed. The assessment of pupils' achievement is now very good and work available during the inspection showed that they achieve very well by the end of Year 11. During the inspection the pupils in Years 7 and 8 did not learn at this high level, mainly due to the lack of additional support in their lessons. Year 9 pupils made good progress in their lessons and were able to demonstrate their ability to produce a piece of text, change the font and use bold and capital letters when needed. By the end of Year 11, pupils appreciate the many functions of a computer for example by using a database program to input information and to search for specific information. All pupils achieve units of accreditation through taking part in the AQA external examination for ICT.

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

47. Pupils are given many opportunities to gain an understanding of the significance of ICT in many aspects of life. Digital and video cameras are used effectively to record pupils' achievements for inclusion in their records of achievement. They are encouraged to access the Internet to research topics in for example English and art and design. In science the interactive whiteboard is used very well, for example, to engage pupils when explaining the various strengths of acidic and alkaline substances. There is a very good supply of software and hardware across the school.

## **HUMANITIES**

Separate judgements on the subjects of geography and history were not made because they were not part of the main focus of the inspection. Geography and history are taught as an integrated programme up to Year 9. Good photographic evidence shows the enjoyment pupils gain from very practical learning opportunities. Visits to a broad range of places and, for example, productions in school by a theatre company bring the subjects alive.

### **Religious education**

Four lessons were observed covering both key stages.

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- Written tasks are not always challenging enough.

### **Commentary**

48. Pupils across the age range achieve acceptably. They learn at an appropriate rate and gain a secure knowledge and understanding of world faiths, festivals, signs and symbols, and remember stories associated with these. Through their work over time, pupils have developed a sufficient vocabulary to enable them to discuss, meaningfully, a range of concepts and customs associated with world religions. Pupils recall their previous learning and make use of this in trying to understand their lessons. Their thoughtfulness is impressive. They enjoy discussions and listen to each other's views and opinions. They reflect carefully on beliefs and values. The subject makes a good contribution to moral education and citizenship when it addresses issues such as in Year 7, the Red Cross society and in Year 11, capital punishment and the holocaust.

49. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good. Issues are dealt with sensitively. Management of classes is effective because teachers know their pupils well. Most pupils try hard and are keen to offer their thoughts. The questions that they ask show that most are interested in their lessons. Teaching is less successful when the tasks set are undemanding and do not take into account the differing abilities of pupils in the class. Teaching assistants were not present in lessons during the inspection and as a result, pupils' learning was not as strong as it could have been.
50. The subject is soundly led and managed. An appropriate programme of work for pupils across the age range is in place. Teachers have sound knowledge of the requirements of the new locally agreed syllabus for religious education. They understand that a balance is required between teaching facts about world faiths and providing opportunities for pupils to learn from, as well as about, religion. A satisfactory range of resources including videos and DVDs has been built up to support teaching. Pupils have the opportunity to visit places of worship to give the substance of experience to their learning about faiths. Representatives of faith communities visit the school in the past but no further visits are in present plans. Provision for religious education was satisfactory at the last inspection. This has not changed.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Judgements on music and physical education were not made because they were not part of the main focus of the inspection and insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection. It was not possible to observe any teaching in music or to speak to the two peripatetic subject specialists who teach the subject. Discussion with senior school managers indicates that, as at the time of the last inspection, the focus of provision is in performance. In physical education, there is a well-planned scheme of work but currently no subject leader, which impacts detrimentally upon subject development. Since the last inspection, provision has strengthened well for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Options now include archery, basketball, swimming, football and the use of a 'multigym'.

### **Art and design**

Five lessons were observed covering all year groups.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy art and design very much.
- Two subject specialists teach the subject.
- Very good teaching gives pupils confidence to achieve at all levels of ability.
- There is very good leadership of the subject and has retained its strengths since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

51. Throughout the school all pupils achieve very well in art and design. This is reflected in the very good displays of pupils' work and in their lessons. Pupils enjoy lessons in art and design because they are active in their learning and are fully involved in a rich curriculum that involves working with many different materials. Their attitudes to their work are very good. The very good relationships that they have with teachers and support staff makes them confident learners who are prepared to experiment with their work. Pupils obtain accreditation units in the award scheme AQA and a good number obtain good levels in GCSE, including three pupils with grade C passes in 2004.
52. Very good teaching ensures pupils gain a wide experience of art and design. They become increasingly aware of colour and texture, shape and size and learn to express themselves in a

variety of ways. They achieve very good results in a wide range of activities. Teachers use artistic language very well by enhancing pupils understanding of their work. They spend time preparing pupils for their external examinations so that they fully understand the examination terminology. They draw attention to for example, exam expectations of words such as analyse, evaluate and connections and discuss with the pupils what they think these words mean. A main strength of teaching and learning is that two specialist teachers teach the subject throughout the school, which leads to the very good achievement that the pupils make. Very good relationships allow staff to challenge and stretch pupils to improve their work. In one lesson seen, relationships were excellent. Pupils worked independently on their own portfolio of work totally engrossed in the wonderful ethos prevailing in the studio. In this lesson one boy described how he had photographed a bridge and liked the detail and interesting structure so much that he had decided to sketch it.

53. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader plans the curriculum and lessons very well. This is enriched through studying famous artists such as Picasso, Hockney and Van Gogh. Information and communication technology is used very well by staff for example, to help pupils access the Internet to find work of famous artists and to download images. Both staff and pupils use the digital camera and scanner very effectively to record work, which acts as an accurate informative system of recording and assessing pupils' work. The subject has maintained its very clear strengths since the last inspection.

## **Design and technology**

Six lessons were observed covering both key stages.

Provision for design and technology, including food technology, is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The results in GCSE accreditation are outstanding.
- There is very good teaching and learning across all ages.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons thoroughly.

### **Commentary**

54. Pupils' achievement is very good throughout the school and in all aspects of the subject. By Year 11, many pupils succeed in design and technology by gaining a certificate in the entry level examinations. In their work in three-dimensional design, several of the higher attaining pupils work assiduously, achieving very well in the GCSE examination. For example, in 2004, none of the 12 pupils attained lower than a D grade, with eight of the 12 pupils attaining C grades or above. Four pupils gained A or B grades, representing excellent achievement taking into account their low attainment on entry to the school.
55. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are subject specialists with a very clear understanding of pupils' learning needs. They have very high expectations of the pupils and of what they will achieve. The teaching assistants who support in lessons are a vital part of the subject teaching team. Together, they take great care to present lessons in a manner that fully engages pupils' interests. Pupils' attainments are assessed fully and accurately and they are given very clear information on what they must do to improve. As a consequence of the very good teaching, pupils enjoy their lessons. Pupils are eager to work in the design and technology rooms. They act responsibly and feel mature. They enjoy being active in their learning. They especially enjoy making their own project from a design brief and explaining what they have done and why they did it that way. This was particularly obvious in lessons with Years 8 and 10 during the inspection. They take care as they work and are clear about they should do and how they should behave. Irrespective of their learning needs or capabilities, they complete work of high quality of which they are rightly very proud. Pupils make very good use of the opportunity to channel their developing capabilities into practical achievements.



56. Leadership and management of the various aspects of the subject are very good. Planning is comprehensive and subject leaders provide very good role models. The subject has a high profile within the school. At the last inspection provision was good. This has improved as a result of very effective leadership. Overall improvement is good.

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

Seven lessons were seen covering both key stages. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning in PSHCE lessons is supplemented by very good opportunities for learning during the school day and outside of school. These permeate the whole school.
- A range of initiatives such as the school council, ECO committee, healthy eating and a broad range of residential experiences support pupils' development very well.
- Standards have been maintained at a high level since the previous inspection. Pupils continue to understand their responsibilities for living within a community.

### **Commentary**

57. Staff are very aware of the importance of promoting pupils' personal development. Because the high number of permanent staff understand the pupils very well, they are very good at doing this, in lessons and in other activities. Each pupil has at least one target for personal development in his or her IEP. Strong emphasis is placed on helping pupils achieve their targets although not all lessons consistently refer to the targets in planning. Good quality teaching and learning consistently promotes the development of social and self-help skills very well. For example, in a school assembly, pupils were taught the importance of each of them having something very worthwhile to give to the school community. Staff and pupils celebrate instances of pupils helping each other during the week. Because teaching and learning are very good when taking into account the broad range of provision, pupils achieve very well.
58. The school runs a very successful school council and ECO committee. Pupils' views are taken very seriously and acted upon. Pupils are very proud of their work in the councils. Council members are identifiable around the school by the particular colour of their sweatshirts. Parents report that younger children aspire to be part of these groups because of their high profile in school. For example, ECO committee members have considered and implemented action to improve the school grounds, to re-cycle materials, to fundraise for charities and to 'clean up' a local park. These 'practical-action-initiatives' complement very well the learning objectives of PSHCE lessons, which focus, for example, on personal cleanliness, homelessness and healthy lifestyles. In Year 7, for example, pupils investigate their neighbourhood and consider its strengths and weaknesses. They identify their own likes and dislikes about it. Higher attaining pupils record their work independently. However, because staff do not annotate pupils' written work consistently well enough, it is not always clear just how much help lower attaining pupils have received in completing their work. This is a weakness of assessment. Work builds carefully throughout the school so that by Year 11, pupils carry out very good case studies, which lead to GNVQ accreditation in health and social care. They also work on unit awards, for example, in 'Young people and crime'. In this course, higher attaining pupils show a very good understanding of 'reported crime', name examples of and reasons for youth crime, understand how offenders are sentenced and the range of crimes relevant to their area.
59. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have remained high. Personal, social, health and citizenship is well established on the timetable in both strands

of PSHE and citizenship. Each area is well led and managed by separate subject leaders. There is clear accreditation of pupils' standards. However, the co-ordinators do not have time during the year to check on how well subject planning is turned into practise by other staff. For example, inspection evidence points to less effective teaching and learning where teaching assistants are not present in lessons. This lack of self-evaluation is a weakness of current provision. The subjects are well supported by the school's Connexions (careers) adviser. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to build on their understanding of different jobs and courses, which are available to them. Work related learning is provided for very well. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are built very well into pupils' work. For example, pupils are consistently expected to read instructions, compile and understand a broad range of different graphs, compute the prices of goods and word-process their work in improving its presentation ready for accreditation. Whilst personal development is very strong throughout all subjects, those strands of citizenship that can be taught or extended through other subjects have not been identified.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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