

INSPECTION REPORT

BRIGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL

Brighouse

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107580

Headteacher: Mr G H Soles

Lead inspector: Mr R Holmes

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th November 2004

Inspection number: 268756

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11 – 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1263

School address: Finkil Street
Brighouse
West Yorkshire
Postcode: HD6 2NY

Telephone number: 01484 710408
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr J Jones

Date of previous inspection: 17th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brighouse High School is a mixed comprehensive school with a sixth form. It has grown steadily over recent years and has more applications for places than it can accommodate. There are now over 1260 pupils and students on roll, making it larger than most schools. The school serves the small town of Brighouse, where it is the only secondary school. A significant, but decreasing, number of more able pupils from the area go on to one of the three local grammar schools after their primary education. As a result, the overall attainment on entry to the high school has been below average in recent years. However, the school's reputation has grown over the years and this leakage has reduced with the result that the current Year 7 pupils show the wide range of attainment found in many comprehensive schools, although not as many have reached the higher levels of achievement.

The sixth form is housed in a separate building nearly a mile away from the main school. About half of the pupils leaving Year 11 stay on to become students in the sixth form and they are joined by about 10 per cent from other schools. Overall, attainment on entry to the sixth form, as indicated by GCSE performance, is lower than in most schools.

In the main school, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is lower than in most schools, although the proportion with statements is about average. The school also has a special unit for pupils from the surrounding area who have visual impairment.

The school has been awarded Business and Enterprise status and this has had a significant impact on the way it works. It has also received School Achievement Awards, School Curriculum Awards and Investors in People status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2632	Roger Holmes	Lead inspector	
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector	
3758	Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English
5985	Mike Holland	Team inspector	Mathematics
17799	Tony Stoddart	Team inspector	Science
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design
21803	Laura Ramsay	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	Business education
32774	Barry Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
33324	Joanna Fullwood	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music; citizenship
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
10275	John Cosgrove	Team inspector	History; religious education
31701	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	21
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	23
Work-related learning	
Visual impairment resource	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26
SUBJECTS COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	55

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Brighouse High School is a **very good** school. Excellent leadership has established a distinctive ethos in which everyone is valued and encouraged to do well. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes, make very good progress in their learning and grow in maturity. In the sixth form, students benefit from equally strong personal development and make good progress in their studies. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils make very good progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Personal development and behaviour are very good throughout the school
- The atmosphere for learning is excellent and this helps everyone to perform well
- The headteacher's leadership is excellent and he is very well supported in the school
- Teaching is thoroughly good and pupils and students respond well
- The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils very well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and makes very effective use of the school's business and enterprise status

The school has made **very good** progress since its last inspection. Performance at the end of Year 11 has risen dramatically as a result of developments to the curriculum and of even better teaching. Provision for the sixth form is better than before and standards are poised to rise.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	C	B	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E	n/a**	

Key: A - in the top5 %; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

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

***National figures at Year 13 are not yet available.*

Pupils **achieve very well**. The number who get five or more passes at grade C and above in their GCSE examinations is much higher than in most schools. In 2004, 67 per cent of pupils managed this, compared with 51 per cent nationally. Considering that these pupils also had a lower starting point than in most schools this means that about 40 pupils reached this standard who would not have done so in an average school. The performance of those pupils who achieve five or more lower grades or at least one pass at GCSE is also well above average. Hardly anyone leaves the school without some qualification. Results in the Year 9 national tests have been around the national average for the last few years. This is better than would be expected from pupils' attainment on entry to the school, with boys and girls performing equally well. Results are rising at this stage faster than the national average. In the main school, achievement is very good in art, modern languages and business studies; it is satisfactory in science and good in all other subjects. Ideas from

business and enterprise are used in many subjects and help to lift standards, as does the high quality art work on display around the school.

Examination results in the sixth form are well below average. However, the great majority of students achieve well, getting better results than would be expected from their performance at GCSE. Although good, progress in the sixth form is not as rapid as in the main school.

Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is **very good**. Attendance is above average and pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes to work. This is a major factor in the success they achieve.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**.

Teaching is **good** throughout the school and particularly good in art, business studies and modern languages. The curriculum is very well matched to pupils' needs, especially in Years 10 and 11, so that they find the work relevant. Pupils and students respond well to the way they are treated by teachers. They feel well supported and because many lessons are lively and interesting, they learn well. These are such consistent features of the school that pupils make very good progress.

There are very good opportunities for pupils and students to extend and enrich their learning through extra-curricular activities. The quality of care, support and guidance is good. The school has productive links with parents and very good links with other schools and the community. These have been strengthened by the use the school makes of its business and enterprise status.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by senior staff. The determination of this group to provide the best education for all the pupils and their skilful use of resources to bring this about are the main reasons for the school doing so well. The very positive atmosphere in the school is a result of the headteacher's leadership over many years and is continually reinforced by his personal example and approach. Everyone understands their role in helping the pupils to learn, whether they work in the classroom or elsewhere in the school. Governors are well informed and support the school well. They share the vision for the school's role in the community and commit considerable energy and talent to achieving it. Management is very good, with the school running smoothly and efficiently. Procedures for measuring how well the school is performing are very effective and are used very well to inform improvements. Finances are managed very well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Pupils overwhelmingly say it is a good, well-run school. They have high expectations of good behaviour and express their concerns when these are not matched by a few pupils. Behaviour was judged to be very good during the inspection. Parents are even more positive and are very happy with the work the school is doing.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no significant weaknesses. In order to raise its performance even further it should consider the following issues, which have already been identified in the school's development plan.

- Raise attainment in the sixth form by ensuring that students continue to make progress at the same rate as in the main school.
- Improve the performance of the few areas in the main school where pupils do not do as well as they could.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Look for ways of providing a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT BRIGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **good** and cost effective. Although standards at A-level are well below the national average, students do better than their GCSE results would predict. Consequently, a great many are able to go on to further study who would otherwise have left education. Leadership is good and ensures that the very positive environment for learning continues from the main school.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students make good progress in their studies and in their personal development
- Teaching is good and students respond well
- Students are given considerable responsibility, which supports their growing independence, but there is little support for their private study
- There is a wide range of courses on offer, but the curriculum is not as well matched to the learners as in the main school
- Leadership and management are good

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English in the sixth form is good . Results in English language are above the national median. Students' oral work is a particular strength. Teaching is very good overall
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Students are taught well and make good progress, but not enough use is made of ICT.
Science	Provision in physics is satisfactory . Teaching is securely based on good subject knowledge and relationships are good, but resources are inadequate.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is good . Students make good progress as a result of well-focused and committed teaching.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good . Students achieve well compared to their attainment at GCSE. Teaching and learning are good because lessons are well planned and work is closely matched to examination requirements. Students have very good attitudes to learning.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is good . Good teaching is enabling students to learn well and make good progress in lessons.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is excellent . Achievement is very good because of excellent management and very good, often excellent, teaching. Student attitudes are excellent.
Business	Provision in business studies is very good . Results were average in 2003, though current standards are above average. Teaching is very good, but some students remain too dependent on the teachers. There is a very good and innovative curriculum choice to suit the needs of all students.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is good . Teachers have secure knowledge and are committed to improving standards.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of advice, guidance and support is **good**. Students are helped to settle quickly into the sixth form and there is special provision, through the bridging course, for those who need extra support in achieving level 2 qualifications. There is a good range of courses in the sixth form, but not the clear and well-focused routes that have been developed in the main school. Assessment procedures are sound but not as well developed as in the main school. Form tutors work well with students to help them move forwards and students appreciate how readily they give their time. Advice for the next stage of education is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the sixth form are **good**. Students are helped very effectively to settle and the positive atmosphere for learning in the main school is translated into the more adult setting of the sixth form very effectively. Systems have recently been introduced to ensure that students make progress as expected in order to raise standards.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have a very positive view of the sixth form, particularly of the quality of teaching that they receive and the general level of support. They would, however, like better advice on choosing the courses they follow and on the next stages of education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards achieved are **very good** in the main school and **good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in the main school, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Standards are better than in most schools by Year 11 in many subjects
- Business and enterprise status has played an important part in the school's success
- Progress in the sixth form, although good, is not as rapid as in the main school

Commentary

1. Pupils come into the school with lower than average levels of attainment, partly because there are a number of selective schools in the area that attract the most able pupils. The effects of this have weakened as the school has grown in popularity, so that the attainment on entry of the current Year 7 pupils is only a little below average, but the pupils who took their national assessments and GCSE examinations in 2004 joined Brighouse High School with markedly lower levels of attainment than in most schools.
2. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 so that their attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average overall and above average in English. Boys and girls perform equally well and the school's performance at this stage has been rising faster than in most schools. The quality of work seen during the inspection generally matches this picture for Years 7 to 9. Standards are at the expected levels in most subjects, above average in English, art, geography and in history, and below average in science, physical education and ICT. This represents good progress and achievement in almost all subjects, sound progress in science and very good progress in art.
3. The rate of progress is even better in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE and equivalent examinations are higher than in most schools, representing very good added value from when the pupils joined the school. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at grade C or above is much higher than the national average, as are the proportions achieving at least five passes at grade G and above or at least one pass. These results reflect the school's determination that all pupils should do as well as they can. Almost everyone leaves the school with formal qualifications. Results have risen significantly from the time of the last inspection and, as in Years 7 to 9, boys and girls perform equally well against their national averages. Work seen during the inspection reflects this very positive picture. Achievement in science is satisfactory; in the great majority of subjects it is good, and in art, modern languages and business studies it is very good.
4. This very strong picture is due to highly effective leadership that has focused on the importance of ensuring success for all pupils at the end of compulsory education.

Leadership has ensured that the curriculum structure, the quality of teaching and the underlying attitudes all match this determination. The impact of the school's business and enterprise status is also very significant in providing extra resources and in helping to establish the school's very positive ethos.

5. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress towards their targets. This is the result of good teaching, sensitive support and the good involvement of parents in pupils' learning. Achievement is good overall with some pupils overcoming their difficulties and disabilities to achieve very well. Pupils who are gifted and talented are appropriately extended, resulting in very good achievement.

Sixth form

6. About half of the pupils from Year 11 stay on in the sixth form; a number move on to further education in other institutions and some take up sixth form places in other schools. As a result, the overall performance of students at the beginning of Year 12, as indicated by their performance in GCSE examinations, is much lower than in most sixth forms. The great majority of students do better than their GCSE results would predict, but the overall standards reached are much lower than the national average, despite the good progress that students make. This is partly due to the way that the statistics are calculated. Most students have their results added into the school's results when they take their A2 level examinations, usually in Year 13. Their earlier AS-level results are ignored until this time. However, students who take their examination in vocationally-based subjects in Year 12 have their results added to the school's total as if they had completed their sixth form career. This makes a significant difference at Brighouse High where a large proportion of students follow vocational courses. The outcome of this is that too much weight is given to the results of lower attaining students. If this effect is corrected, then the overall performance in 2004 is seen to be below rather than well below the national average.
7. Almost all students taking courses in the sixth form are successful in achieving a grade. Overall they achieve fewer high grades than in most sixth forms. The most successful subjects are business studies at A2 and vocational health and social care.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a* (34.2)	n/a* (33.4)
mathematics	35.0 (35.9)	35.5 (35.4)
science	32.1 (33.4)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 210 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

** Results for English in 2004 are not yet available.*

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	67.5 (58)	51 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96.1 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.0 (99)	97 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	302.1 (36.2)*	282.5 (34.7)*

There were 209 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

**The method of calculating point scores changed between 2003 and 2004.*

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003 (2004 national figures are not yet available)

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.7 (87.4)	89.4 (92.6)

Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	19.8 (21.0)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	178.9 (171.4)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 73 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **very positive** attitudes to learning and their behaviour is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are also **good**. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good overall and especially so in the areas of moral and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to do well
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good, in response to teachers' consistently high expectations
- Very good relationships help pupils to work productively in lessons
- Pupils' personal development is very good

Commentary

8. Pupils say that they like school and feel a real sense of belonging to the school community. They appreciate the opportunities they have for new and varied experiences and are eager to take advantage of them. Many are ambitious and set about their school work diligently, in order to achieve the best possible grades. They are aware that commitment to their studies will result in good achievement and will lay down a good foundation for their future lives. At breaks, lunchtimes and after school the library is always full of pupils completing coursework, researching or simply extending their knowledge. Pupils are also keen to become involved in the wide range of activities outside lessons that allow them to pursue interests, learn new skills and develop socially. There is no shortage of volunteers to take on responsible jobs: pupil librarians can be left in charge of the resource centre, Year 9 pupils act as peer mentors to help the newest pupils settle into school, and Year 11 prefects are excellent ambassadors when they conduct visitors around the school and describe its activities.
9. Standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school are very good because pupils respond well to the high expectations that teachers have of them. They work quietly and sensibly, settling to their tasks without fuss and maintaining their concentration for long periods. They listen attentively and follow instructions carefully. When they are required to work independently they do so conscientiously, often with little or no supervision. Outside lessons pupils behave very well. They treat one another with respect and consideration and are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors. Behaviour in the dining hall and around the building is sensible and controlled. Because the overall ethos of the school emphasises positive attitudes and behaviour, the majority of pupils observe the simple rules. A clear system of rewards and sanctions is understood by pupils. Younger pupils, especially, are motivated by the chance to win points for their house. Because the disciplinary procedures include effective arrangements to deal with any poor behaviour, the number of exclusions has been very low in recent years.
10. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and teachers result in effective learning. Because pupils trust their teachers and feel comfortable and relaxed with them, they are confident to participate in lessons, to volunteer answers and to ask questions. They work well together in pairs or groups, and share equipment and ideas

sensibly. The mutual respect that is apparent in most classrooms creates an atmosphere that encourages co-operative and purposeful learning.

11. The majority of pupils with special educational needs display very good attitudes to their work. The school is very successful in developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem, particularly those of pupils who are part of the visually impaired provision. They work hard and apply themselves well to the challenges that have been set. Pupils willingly support each other and work amicably alongside each other. The school has a very clear vision of its aims and objectives in this area and it successfully achieves its intention to be a caring, friendly and achieving community. The particular focus of business and enterprise permeates most of what takes place in the school as well as outside activities. Provision is monitored and evaluated.
12. Provision for the spiritual development of the pupils and for religious education was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection but is now good. Although the arrangements for collective worship do not meet statutory requirements, several assemblies and most tutor periods contained satisfactory moments for reflection and moral thinking but no worship. There are very good opportunities for moments of reflection in English and good opportunities in religious education and other subjects. A prayer room is provided for Muslim pupils and a *Rock Solid* Christian group meets in the lunch hour for good discussions. Music and physical education provide good opportunities for that aspect of spiritual development which is associated with pride of performance and the satisfaction that comes from achieving personal success and self-confidence. The sixth form religious conference is a notable event in the school year, which enhances the students' opportunities to reflect upon many aspects of belief. On Remembrance Day the school encouraged pupils to reflect upon the dead of two World Wars and one assembly very effectively used the symbolism of candles to encourage individuals to 'make a difference'.
13. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. Very good relationships form an obvious strength of the school. The school has clear and high expectations of the pupils in terms of obeying the code of conduct and of exercising personal responsibility and the vast majority of the pupils respond well. They learn to respect the views of others. The house system and the system of rewards work well. Older pupils look after younger pupils and those with special educational needs. Parents and pupils declare themselves to be happy with the effectiveness of the school's strategy to help pupils become more mature and responsible. Opportunities to discuss moral issues and business and enterprise ethics occur throughout the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a good deal of moral concern for Children in Need, Save the Children and other charities. Opportunities are taken to shoulder responsibility inside and outside of lessons, in the roles of prefect, school councillor, librarian and sixth form captain.
14. Provision for the social development of pupils is very good. This includes co-operative learning in lessons, in sports and in many extra curricular activities and clubs. Team sports foster sportsmanship and playing by the rules. The sports trip to South Africa also embraces links with an orphanage there.
15. There are good opportunities to learn about society in several subjects such as citizenship, history and geography and in associated visits such as the residential visit that all Year 7 pupils undertake. Pupils also learn about society by being involved, for

example, in work experience or community projects. The emphasis on enterprise also means that pupils have strong links with the wider community. In religious education, geography, and personal, social and health education there are profitable discussions on moral issues relating to society, the environment and personal relationships.

16. Provision for cultural development is good, particularly in English and in art, where it includes good multicultural awareness. Both art and music feature aspects of African culture. Display is a good feature of this contribution.
17. In religious education and in history there are opportunities for pupils to widen their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other main religions, and to learn about cultures and societies with different values. In modern foreign languages pupils make visits abroad and also learn about aspects of European culture. The Comenius programme includes links with Sweden and with Krakow in Poland and involves not only visits but also the cooking of national dishes. Music gives good opportunities for performance and enjoyment.
18. The school is at the forefront of introducing pupils to the modern enterprise culture of the 21st century. Its intention is to share the benefits of its ethos and facilities with the community.
19. The school functions as a harmonious social unit but is not in itself multicultural. Provision is made to acquaint the pupils with knowledge and understanding of other cultures and societies but, above all, it successfully gives pupils the attitudes and values necessary in the world in which they will be expected to play a responsible part.
20. Pupils' attendance is better than that seen in similar schools nationally and there is very little unauthorised absence. The school has effective monitoring systems and rewards good attendance with certificates and praise. More importantly, pupils attend well because they find school enjoyable, as well as recognising the link between good attendance and good achievement.

Sixth form

21. The very positive features of the main school carry forward into the sixth form. Students are conscious that they have made a firm commitment to study, so they have a mature approach to their work. They appreciate the more relaxed, informal atmosphere in the sixth form but recognise the need to take responsibility for their own learning. Most rise to the challenge of working independently. Their attendance and punctuality are good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.1
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	1.1

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

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	722	15	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	525	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides **very good** education for its pupils and students. Teaching is solidly good and the curriculum has been adapted very well to the pupils' needs, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very positive; pupils have very good attitudes and work hard
- Teachers are committed and skilful
- Independence and study skills are developed well, but there is too little support for private study in the sixth form
- Assessment is effective and helps pupils to improve

Commentary

22. Pupils learn well as a result of thoroughly good teaching. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and there is mutual respect, so that lessons are characterised by a positive atmosphere of shared purpose. This is an extension of the overall ethos of the school and is an important part of its success.
23. Teachers know their subjects well and plan lessons effectively so that the work is interesting for the pupils and lively. They are helped in this, particularly in Years 10 and 11, by the curriculum which provides courses which pupils find relevant. Lessons often involve the pupils actively, so that they stay interested, and many teachers use a wide

range of approaches so that pupils who learn in different way are all supported. Questions are often used very effectively to encourage the pupils to think about the work and to express their ideas. This helps to develop their self-confidence and ability to communicate, which are important features of the school.

24. Teaching is good throughout the school for pupils with special educational needs. Specialist teaching is very good, particularly for pupils who are visually impaired and those who have dyslexia. Mobility training and the systematic development of pupils' independence are strong features of the support provided for these pupils. The majority of teachers are well informed about pupils with special educational needs. This enables them to plan work at an appropriate level for each individual. However, this remains an area where practice is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils occasionally find it difficult to play a full part in some lessons. Most teachers work closely with support assistants who are valued for their help and expertise.
25. The great majority of lessons are organised and managed well so that time and resources are used effectively. Many lessons give pupils the chance to work together and they collaborate well, sharing ideas, exchanging views and working well as a group. For example, groups of pupils often prepare work for drama outside the classroom, working creatively and responsibly without direct supervision.
26. Pupils are encouraged to feel involved in their learning. Objectives for learning are discussed at the start of lessons and often returned to at the end to review what has been gained. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and marking often includes helpful comments focused on raising attainment. Clear and appropriate targets are set and as a result of this approach pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Sixth form

27. Teaching in the sixth form has many of the same features as in the main school. Relationships remain very productive and teachers respond well to the growing maturity and need for independence of the students. Teachers know their subjects and lessons are conducted well. Students respond positively and make good progress. This is not quite as rapid as in the main school, partly because the rate of progress in Years 10 and 11 is hard to achieve, but also because of two factors: the curriculum has not yet been adapted as successfully to the needs of the learners, and the structure of support for independent study is underdeveloped.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 171 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	42 (25%)	86 (50%)	39 (23%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for the business and enterprise culture to impact on the curriculum are excellent
- There is a good match of specialist teachers to the curriculum that is providing good learning opportunities for all students
- The curriculum provides a very good range of opportunities for pupils to study and participate in a range of activities outside the school day
- The work-related curriculum provides all pupils with excellent opportunities to understand and experience the connections between education and employment
- Learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are good because of the assistance provided by the support staff
- Resources and accommodation are good

Commentary

28. Overall, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for all pupils. All statutory requirements are met. Teaching time is 25 hours per week. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are guided into one of five routes to accreditation. The routes are not bands; a teaching group is likely to contain students from several routes. The routes are designed to allow students from all levels of ability to succeed. Science offers pupils in Years 10 and 11 a wide range of learning opportunities. In art and design a very good range of opportunities is offered, with photography in the sixth form becoming increasingly popular. Religious education has been improved considerably since the previous inspection. Personal, social and health education is provided for all year groups to further develop self-awareness and an understanding of personal relationships. In physical education the curriculum is not providing satisfactory provision for all pupils; in Years 7, 8 and 9 boys and girls are not given the same learning opportunities and the time available for lessons varies. Information and communication technology (ICT) provides a good range of opportunities for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is available as a GCSE course, but limited resources are preventing its full development. The music curriculum is good but there is limited use made of ICT. In geography the development of enquiry skills through the provision of fieldwork is good.
29. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the National Curriculum as well as to a range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced and relevant to their needs. Most pupils are supported within mainstream classes alongside their peers. Occasionally they are withdrawn for specific tuition. Here, very good teaching focuses on their specific learning difficulties, enabling them to become more confident and independent. Good intervention strategies are used effectively to improve pupils' reading and to raise standards of learning and behaviour.
30. The school received designated business and enterprise status in 2002. A major objective of that status, namely to embed a business and enterprise ethos and entitlement for all pupils, has been very effectively achieved for all pupils in Years 7 to

9, who engage in enterprise learning through specific lessons across the curriculum and through discrete short-term and whole-year activities. A wide variety of business and enrichment activities, such as business mentoring and the creation of geography board games, effectively underpins this provision. A comprehensive assessment and evaluation framework is used effectively to measure pupils' progress.

31. A number of vocational subjects are available through the option programme in Years 10 and 11: business and finance at AVCE and GNVQ levels, health and social care, ICT studies, and Btec applied art and design. In the sixth form the following vocational subjects are offered: business and finance at intermediate and advanced levels, e-business, health and social care, business and finance and ICT. In Year 11 all pupils have the opportunity to take part in work experience. All subjects have identified curriculum strands, which support work-related learning (WRL). In history pupils are investigating the causes and effects of the Peasants' Revolt. In religious studies students have designed a board game on religion. In design and technology pupils have designed a Formula 1 racing car and made and sold buns and biscuits for Children in Need day. In modern foreign languages pupils have produced posters relating to their partner schools in Europe. Music has investigated the way music is used by the media. Science has been involved in the design of a bio-gas generator and an analysis of the effectiveness of indigestion remedies. In art and design pupils have developed advertising for films. Pupils in English have designed holiday brochures and in mathematics they have investigated data-handling skills. In music pupils' work is connected to marketing music, to negotiating contracts and to the work of music agents to promote music.
32. Resources overall are satisfactory and well matched to the needs of the school's pupils and the curriculum. In design and technology provision for ICT and computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) is very good. In music there are not enough classroom instruments and there is insufficient access to ICT. Good learning resources ensure that pupils with special educational needs are well supported, particularly when their needs are severe.
33. Accommodation in the main school is good. There is very good provision for subjects like science and physical education, mathematics, geography, modern languages and drama. Many subjects have en suite accommodation. English, for instance, is in a corridor which has the advantage of being close to the library. The library is large, light and attractive. Spaces are well used, particularly so in ICT where areas have been created in which pupils and teachers can talk about work. History, religious education and art bases are good. In music, however, two problems hinder pupil progress: cramped conditions and a lack of soundproofing. In the special needs area, there is not enough storage space for the required resources. There is no social area where pupils can meet. The plumbing does not function efficiently; toilets do not flush properly and some areas are far too hot. However, the site is well looked after and there is a noticeable lack of litter or graffiti. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is good and is used effectively to support pupils with a range of learning difficulties. A few pupils who are considered to be vulnerable find a 'safe haven' in the learning support base at lunchtime. Accommodation for the visually impaired pupils in the main school is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient space for the pupils and staff to work. Specialist equipment takes up a lot of space as do the inevitable bulky resources that have to be prepared on a regular basis.

34. Staffing levels for special educational needs are appropriate, but the deployment of teaching assistants does not always ensure that support is available when needed.
35. A very good selection of extra-curricular activities is available to enrich all pupils' learning experiences. There are a significant number of after-school and lunchtime activities. Good examples are found in music, art and, in particular, physical education, where participation is high. There are homework clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. This is a good example of the school's inclusion policy, which helps all pupils to take advantage of opportunities in the school.
36. Careers education and guidance are good. Year 9 options are well organised and offer pupils real choice. Work experience is organised effectively in Year 11. Good support is provided by the Connexions partnership. There is an exceptional range of opportunities for links with employers.

Sixth form

37. Post-16 students are offered a good range of subjects leading to accreditation at AVCE, GCE AS and A2 levels, but there is not the same clear set of curricular routes that has been developed in the main school. Vocational courses, such as business studies and health and social care, are very popular and have disproportionately more students than traditional A-level courses.
38. Accommodation in the sixth form is good, although its distance from the main school means that younger pupils do not profit from the influence of good, older, role models. However, students enjoy their independence and the college atmosphere. Drama, business studies, science and mathematics have good designated areas. There is no provision for practical physical education, which adversely affects the course. Students benefit from a good social area and a spacious resource centre. The building is in a good state of decoration. Learning resources in the sixth form are adequate, but in science there are insufficient text books. There are sufficient well-qualified teachers for the sixth form and procedures for helping them to settle in and for their further training are good.
39. Sixth form students benefit from the good support and guidance on progressing to higher education or finding employment.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are **good** overall. Support, advice and guidance, based on the monitoring of pupils' progress and personal development, are **good**. The involvement of pupils in the work of the school is **good** in the main school and **satisfactory** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good arrangements to provide for the individual, personal needs of all pupils
- There are very good systems to help pupils make choices about their future learning and career paths

Commentary

40. The school lives up to its aim of providing a happy, secure and enjoyable place to work in by paying careful attention to the needs of the individual. Pastoral care is of a high standard. Pupils know that they may approach a range of people to help with any problems they may have, while staff, because they know pupils very well, can identify issues that need to be resolved and point pupils in the right direction to find help. There are good arrangements for first aid and routine medical care; the school nurse offers a confidential 'drop-in' session; and form tutors and heads of year oversee any day-to-day queries and concerns that arise. The newly appointed pastoral administrators can provide an immediate response to any problems and have time to work with pupils until these are resolved. Parents were particularly keen to stress how effectively the school tailors its provision to the needs of the individual. This is clearly evident, for example, in the arrangements made for certain pupils to spend some of their time at a local college, or on extended work placements, if this is more appropriate to their interests, talents and aspirations. Visually impaired pupils are very well integrated when they are in the main school and their teachers in the special unit make sure that detailed information about their needs is available so that they gain maximum benefit from lessons. New entrants to the school enjoy thoughtful taster and induction programmes, supported by older pupils who have themselves been through the process and can understand and empathise with the anxieties that may beset pupils in Year 7.
41. Comprehensive arrangements exist to help pupils make important choices about their futures. Annual pupil reviews ensure that staff have an overview of pupils' progress and can put in place any necessary support mechanisms. When the time comes to choose the options to be studied in the last two years of main school, teachers are well placed to advise pupils on the courses most suited to their abilities and interests. Careers guidance is offered as part of the overall careers education programme and pupils are given the tools with which to make informed decisions. They are shown how to research occupations and how to match job requirements to their own strengths, weaknesses and inclinations. This preparatory work is supplemented by an exceptionally good range of opportunities for varied links with employers, including work experience and mock interviews, so that pupils are very well prepared to choose the most appropriate path to follow at the end of Year 11. The system is particularly useful for those seeking vocational courses, jobs or training. There are plans to develop the provision for those higher achievers whose aims lie in higher education and beyond.
42. The school has an excellent philosophy of inclusion. High quality specialist teaching enables the majority of pupils to access the curriculum. The school works hard to develop pupils' independence and this is particularly noticeable with pupils who are visually impaired. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils requiring them. Targets identified for pupils are both realistic and achievable, and reflect the recommendations of statements where these apply. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are clear. Information is well documented in the detailed pupil profiles. Good tracking systems enable pupils' progress to be monitored throughout their time in school.

Sixth form

43. Support systems for the sixth form follow a similar pattern to those in main school. A newly instituted progress review system ensures that students are working towards their defined targets. Form tutors, senior staff and subject teachers all make themselves available to offer personal support to students, who are confident that the member of staff to whom they relate best will provide advice and assistance if they are needed. Students particularly appreciate the fact that teachers are willing to give of their own time to offer help. In addition to the standard careers information and guidance, there is good support for those applying to higher education, in the shape of visits to university open days and help with the completion of applications. Students on vocational courses benefit from regular work placements, while special work shadowing or discussions with employers are arranged for individual students on request.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents. Links with the local community and with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong links with local schools are mutually beneficial in enhancing pupils' learning
- Very good links with employers support and enrich pupils' learning and personal development
- The school contributes very effectively to the life of the local community through a range of imaginative initiatives
- Parents strongly appreciate all aspects of the education the school provides for their children

Commentary

44. The business and enterprise initiative has resulted in a very wide range of projects in which staff and pupils work with other local schools. Fruitful links are being developed with other high schools in Calderdale, particularly in the fields of art and ICT. Links with primary schools are exceptionally strong. For example, thanks to business and enterprise funding, the main feeder primary schools share the services of an ICT technician, who helps staff and pupils develop their knowledge and practical skills. The primary schools have also been able to create a management post in each school to enable their own business and enterprise co-ordinators to share ideas and develop materials. This contributes to curriculum continuity when pupils move on to the high school. Very strong links have been forged through the 'Artreach' scheme, where groups of Brighouse pupils teach art and design to youngsters in the primary schools. Curricular continuity is also helped by the bridging courses that pupils follow in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
45. The school has built up very close contacts with employers and businesses in the area and makes very good use of these links to support pupils' learning and personal development. Unusually, work experience for Year 11 pupils is organised entirely by the school, so almost all pupils can be placed in a working environment appropriate to their interests and wishes. Members of the Rotary Club offer their services to conduct mock interviews as part of the careers education process. Many of the business and

enterprise projects are supported by the expertise of a local employer. For example, a local printing firm advised pupils preparing the programmes and publicity material for the school's recent production of *Grease*. Sponsorship from Barclay's New Futures scheme enabled the school to set up its highly successful peer mentoring scheme.

46. The school and its pupils contribute positively to the life of the community around them. Adult education classes in ICT and aviation are very popular and bring together pupils, parents, staff and members of the local community to share activities. When the classes started, confident pupils from Years 10 and 11 acted as mentors to the adult beginners, promoting the image of the school as well as performing a service to the community. An annual Christmas party for senior citizens is organised and run totally by school pupils, again as part of the business and enterprise initiative, so that pupils are developing relevant skills as well as helping others. A number of local and national charities benefit from the pupils' fund-raising activities.
47. Parents are very happy with everything that the school does to educate their children and to help them develop into mature, responsible young people. Comments on the inspection questionnaire and at the meeting were overwhelmingly positive. Communication with the school was described as exceptionally good and most parents felt they were kept well informed about relevant issues. Some parents actively support the school by helping on trips or organising fund-raising events through the school association. Attendance at consultation evenings and open days is very good. The popularity of the school is an indication of its reputation, while the fact that the sons and daughters of so many school staff attend, or have attended, as pupils is a clear testimony to parents' satisfaction.
48. Liaison with parents about special needs issues is very good. They are well informed and are involved at all levels with review procedures. Targets and strategies are discussed and shared so that pupils can be supported through activities at home and outside school. Contact with parents and families of the pupils with visual impairment are particularly good.

Sixth form

49. Discussions with students, together with their response to the inspection questionnaire, show a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Students were able to choose the courses they wanted, appreciate the help and advice offered by teachers and think that teaching is good. They particularly enjoy the adult environment in which they find themselves. Students contribute to the local community through their work placements in nurseries and primary schools and have also helped to teach computer skills to employees in a local firm. They have run a Law Club for primary school pupils and help ease the transition process for pupils in Year 11 by being on hand during 'Taster Days' to describe life in the sixth form, as well as taking part in joint trips and a joint holiday with pupils from the main school. Beneficial links with employers include the Young Enterprise scheme and work placements at law firms during school holidays. Students demonstrate their social awareness by engaging in fund raising for charities. At the same time, they can sometimes apply the skills they are learning in the sixth form to real life situations, for example in preparing promotional material for the Zulu Nation dance group.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are both **very good**. The headteacher's leadership is **excellent** and the school is governed well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's excellent leadership, supported very well by senior managers, has resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection
- The governing body supports the school well
- The school has a very positive ethos that supports pupils' learning and personal development very well
- There are very effective systems for monitoring performance and raising standards in the main school. Although effective, in the sixth form these systems are not so well developed

Commentary

50. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. Over the years he has established a highly positive ethos in which all who work in the school and all learners feel valued and able to do well. He has built up a highly effective team who share his commitment to providing high quality education to all pupils in the school and they support him very well. Senior managers lead by example, through their high levels of commitment, the quality of their teaching and the way they interact with pupils.
51. The school is highly innovative and has capitalised very successfully on opportunities to improve the quality of education it provides, for example achieving specialist school status and adopting alternative curriculum routes in Years 10 and 11. At the same time, the school has maintained very secure management procedures so that the efficient and smooth running of the school has not been disturbed by these changes. The implementation of ideas linked to workforce reform has also enabled the school to reduce the administrative burden on teachers so that they have more time for their core business of working with the pupils.
52. There are very good procedures for monitoring how well the school is performing. As a result, there is a realistic understanding of its strengths and relative weaknesses. This is reflected in the school's plan for improvement, which is well focused and very purposeful. Developments such as the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the quality of teaching and learning are appraised carefully and good practice is shared. This has been a significant factor in raising the school's performance.
53. Curriculum leadership is very good at senior management level. Subject leadership is very strong; almost all subject areas are led very purposefully and effectively. The innovative curriculum that has been established is a major feature in the school's success. The leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator is very good and has some excellent features. Documentation is of very high quality and is very informative. The Code of Practice is implemented effectively and teachers are well informed about pupils' specific needs. Frequent use is made of the services of external agencies whose relationships with the school are very good. Management of procedures for improving provision is good. There is, however, still work to be done to

persuade all teachers that pupils with special educational needs are the responsibility of everyone. At least one department is operating with a policy that is several years out of date and does not mention visual impairment. Others do not always make the best use of support personnel. The school is fully complying with legal requirements in respect of pupils with statements. Improvement in its provision for special educational needs since the previous inspection has been good.

54. Governors share the same ideals as the senior managers and also have high aspirations for the school. They are well informed as a result of the briefings they receive from the school management and from their own contacts with the school. Many are frequent visitors and are closely involved in the life of the school. They are highly committed and bring a wide range of skills to their role. Finance is scrutinised carefully and governors are fully involved in innovations such as the curriculum and procedures for keeping potentially disengaged pupils involved in their learning. Overall, the governors provide good support for the school.
55. Financial management is very good. The budget is planned very carefully and benefits from the close scrutiny of governors with financial expertise as well as the professional involvement of the business manager. Very effective ways have been found to raise funds for refurbishing the sixth form building and for extending provision on the sixth form site. Financial control is exemplary and the most recent audit found no areas for improvement. Spending decisions are considered very carefully to ensure that they represent best value. Considering the funds that the school receives, the context in which it works and the results that it achieves, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4799548	Balance from previous year	94900*
Total expenditure	4782723	Balance carried forward to the next	117251
Expenditure per pupil	3793		

* This figure includes an agreed adjustment of £19108 to Calderdale Local Authority.

Sixth form

56. Leadership and management arrangements in the sixth form are **good**. The combined impact of the head of sixth form and his colleagues has ensured very good transition arrangements for students to a curriculum which is particularly wide to meet their differing needs. The curriculum accurately represents the school's ethos of widening access to the sixth form. The concomitant provision for students' personal development and welfare is very good. There is good evidence of value added. However, attainment is not yet high enough in comparison with national figures and the monitoring of students' academic progress, particularly the use of key data, is not as systematic and rigorous as in the main school.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision for work-related learning is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation and management of WRL are excellent
- Work experience is very well organised and provides beneficial links between school, commerce and industry
- WRL is integrated across the curriculum
- Business and enterprise activities are very well organised and provide pupils with valuable experience about learning for work
- Business and enterprise specialist college status continues to have a significant positive influence on WRL
- No significant weaknesses were evident

Commentary

57. All aspects of the WRL provision have been carefully designed and managed. The provision is under regular review. WRL draws together aspects of business enterprise, work experience, and curricular provision, particularly the range of vocational education subjects. Development is based on innovation driven by the needs of all pupils. Advisors from Calderdale local education authority also support WRL.

58. The following vocational courses are offered in Years 10 and 11; business and finance, health and social care, ICT, the youth achievement award, Btec design, and applied art

and design. The sixth form curriculum offers business and finance, health and social care, ICT and young enterprise.

59. All subjects have identified curriculum strands, which support WRL. In history pupils are investigating the causes and effect of the Peasants' Revolt. In religious studies pupils have designed a board game on religion. In design and technology pupils have designed a Formula 1 racing car and made and sold buns and biscuits for Children in Need day. In modern foreign languages pupils have produced posters relating to their partner schools in Europe. For their GCE course in photography pupils videoed the school production and also organised a business taking family portraits and school portraits of lower school pupils. The music department has investigated the way music is used by the media. The science department has been involved in the design of a bio-gas generator and an analysis of the effectiveness of indigestion remedies. The art and design department has developed advertising for films. Pupils in English have designed holiday brochures and in mathematics they have investigated data handling.
60. Work experience for Year 11 pupils is very well organised. An evening meeting is organised to inform parents about work experience. Pupils in Year 11 on work experience are given training and their performance is evaluated on a range of skills relating to planning, communications, problem solving, decision making and teamwork. Pupils receive good careers guidance. Guidance is given from Year 7 onwards through personal, social and health education lessons. An annual career fair is organised and business managers are regularly invited into the school.
61. The quality of teaching on courses in Years 10 and 11 is good and very good in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes to WRL are good and often very good.

The Visual Impairment Resource

Provision for pupils who are visually impaired is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with mainstream special educational needs mean that pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life
- Pupils are very well supported to enable them to become independent learners and to achieve their full potential
- In-service training for mainstream teachers and pupils has successfully raised awareness of the needs of visually impaired pupils

Commentary

62. The provision in the school serves the whole of Calderdale. It is a local authority initiative which was not in place at the time of the previous inspection. There are currently seven pupils in school whose needs relate to severe visual impairment and/or degeneration, requiring ongoing high levels of direct and indirect support. A range of ICT equipment, including Braille, and equipment for learning touch typing, serves to develop the pupils' independence. Unfortunately, the size and volume of resources cannot easily be accommodated in the space available, particularly when pupils and staff also need the space for working.

63. Pupils make very good progress, often overcoming severe disability. Compensatory activities are delivered to enable them to achieve as much independence as possible. On these occasions, care is taken to ensure that pupils are not always withdrawn from the same lesson.
64. The quality of teaching, learning and support for pupils who are visually impaired is very good. They are encouraged to work alongside their sighted peers and to compete on equal terms. Pupils display good mobility both in and out of school. A blind pupil was successfully able to negotiate a fairly hazardous journey from the school to an identified destination about half a mile away. Only minor interventions by the mobility officer were necessary as a result of ongoing training. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are completed by the local education authority as well as within the school. Procedures are very thorough and parents and carers are closely involved
65. The leadership and management of the Visual Impairment Resource are very good. There is close co-operation with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator. Teachers and support staff in the Resource work closely with subject teachers to plan and deliver a curriculum that is accessible to all pupils. This ensures that pupils are actively involved and included in each lesson. In-service training for teachers has raised their awareness of pupils' needs to a very high level and is being extended to include sighted pupils. Support from governors and the senior management team for the full range of special educational needs is very good.

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

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 over the last three years have been above the national median
- Teaching is good, resulting in good achievement throughout the main school
- The quality of relationships is very positive, leading to very high standards of behaviour
- Leadership and management are very good

Commentary

66. In national tests at the end Year 9 in 2003 results were above the national median and above those of similar schools. Taking the three academic years 2000 – 2003 together, pupils' average points score was above the national median. Girls performed slightly better than boys compared with their respective national averages but the difference was less marked than nationally. These results were better than those in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. Taking into account pupils' below average level of literacy on entry, achievement is good by the age of 14. Unvalidated results for 2004 show a higher percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above than in 2003 but fewer achieving level 6 and above.
67. Results in the GCSE for English language in 2004 were above the national median, with boys and girls performing to a similar degree above their own national level. Boys did much better than in 2003. In literature, results in 2004 were in line with the national median, with girls doing better than boys. This performance was better than that in 2003 because of girls' marked improvement. Good achievement is maintained in Years 10 and 11.
68. The standard of oral work at the age of 14 is above that found nationally. Pupils listen attentively and work effectively in pairs and small groups. The quality of speaking in all its forms is good. Pupils answer questions enthusiastically and make extended responses when required. Because they know their ideas will be taken seriously they are confident and are prepared to speculate and explore ideas. High attaining pupils in Year 8, for example, were imaginative and perceptive in considering a poem linked to their study of the novel *The Machine Gunners*. Positive working relationships encourage lively answers and lower attaining pupils are equally willing to contribute to discussion. Much productive oral work springs from the study of literature. By the age of 14 the great majority of pupils use standard English in formal talk. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' listening and speaking continue to mature. The majority read aloud well and illuminate meaning with variation in pitch and pace. A few are less successful through a lack of audibility and fluency. High attaining pupils in Year 11 held a mature and sensitive

discussion of Carol Ann Duffy's poem *Haversham* related to their study of *Great Expectations*.

69. The overall standard of reading at the age of 14 is above the national expectation. A number of pupils, however, join the school with a reading age below their actual age. Such pupils receive intensive specialist support and make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. This support is often in class and is thoroughly integrated into lesson planning. Good use is made of the excellent library in extending pupils' reading for pleasure and research. The fiction section is particularly strong and offers a wide range of attractive and appropriate reading for all age groups in the school. Pupils keep thorough reading logs and regularly share their experiences of books in class. By the age of 14, pupils study a wide range of literature and other printed materials. In Year 7, for example, pupils were reading *African Folk Tales* as part of their introduction to the literature of other cultures. By the end of Year 9 pupils read texts critically and readily identify key features of plot and themes as well as understanding characters and their motivation. By the age of 16 pupils develop an increasingly sophisticated and mature approach. High attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, responded sensitively and imaginatively to a poem *Love after Love* by Derek Walcott, which stimulated thoughtful discussion upon its highly emotional theme. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils learn to use the appropriate technical language of literary appreciation.
70. The general standard of written work throughout the main school is better than that found nationally. Writing is, in the main, presented carefully with legible handwriting. Pupils write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences. The drafting process is built into everyday practice through the use of separate exercise books. Particular emphasis has been placed on boys' writing and has led to results in tests and examinations above boys' national standards. The best written work at the age of 14 is very well planned and carefully constructed. Some lower attaining pupils in Year 9 enjoy writing but make errors with sentence building, spelling and punctuation. In Years 10 and 11 much of the best writing is in response to literature. Assignments by high attaining pupils on *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, combined very thorough knowledge of the text with accurate writing. The most outstanding writing reaching GCSE grade A* was autobiographical. It was skilfully crafted, subtle in tone and demonstrated mature self-awareness.
71. The quality of teaching throughout the main school is always good and is very good in just under half of lessons. Lessons are very well planned and thoroughly prepared. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is detailed and extensive and they set high academic standards. Lesson objectives are always clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. An outstanding feature of teaching throughout the school is the very positive relationships established in the classroom. These have a direct impact upon the pupils' confidence and enjoyment of their work. Tasks are carefully chosen to match differing levels of attainment and pupils with special educational needs and the visually impaired are managed with great sensitivity. Collaboration with teaching assistants is close and well planned. The pace of lessons is generally brisk with skilful and often robust questioning drawing out well-considered answers. The teaching of lower attaining groups is particularly successful and high attaining pupils are sternly challenged. Marking is consistent and conscientious overall but is particularly constructive in Years 10 and 11 where errors are more precisely diagnosed and targets for improvement clearly set.

72. All members of the department share high expectation of pupils for both behaviour and achievement. Teachers know their classes very well and are well informed about their performance and potential. Relationships are mutually respectful and the ethos of the team is very supportive. The department's overall success and sustained raising of standards are a direct result of very efficient management and strong leadership.
73. The department makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Results in national tests and examinations have improved since the last inspection, especially those of boys. Teaching is now consistently good or better, especially of lower attaining pupils. Achievement is above the national expectation. Behaviour has improved and good schemes of work are now in place.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

74. In other subjects across the curriculum provision is good but there are differences in practice between departments. The quality of pupils' listening is good or better in almost all departments. Spoken responses are always at least satisfactory and are good in most subjects. Opportunities to work in groups and to discuss tasks are planned into some lessons in all departments but pupils are not always invited to feed back findings to the class. Pupils' oral work is a real strength and is being exploited in most curriculum areas.
75. The majority of pupils read well enough to understand printed materials which are well matched to levels of attainment. There is little evidence that pupils are being helped with strategies to aid reading comprehension. In some departments better use could be made of the excellent library, although not all subject sections are equally well stocked. Key words are effectively displayed, except in physical education, and are well used apart from in science.
76. The presentation of written work is generally satisfactory and is good or better in the majority of subjects. Not all subjects are using aids to help pupils structure their written work. Note taking is generally thorough and there is good extended writing in many departments. Marking is generally consistent and constructive.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Varied and resourceful teaching, together with high expectations, results in very good achievement
- Pupils are offered a range of extra language opportunities to supplement their learning
- Very good relationships exist between pupils and teachers, resulting in good attitudes enhancing learning
- Marking and target setting are not informing pupils adequately of how to improve
- German results are below national averages

Commentary

77. At age 11, pupils have below average standards of literacy but by the age of 14, they are average with 43 per cent achieving level 5 or higher. This indicates good achievement. These standards are further improved by Year 11. Last year 64 per cent achieve A*-C grades in French compared with 52 per cent nationally. This is well above average and demonstrates very good achievement, especially as many candidates take modern languages, most of whom achieve a pass. The recent trend has been for pupils to achieve better than national averages in French. In German, a second language option, the numbers entered are small and although pupils all pass, they do not attain the highest grades.
78. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good, with lessons being well planned, timed and resourced to suit different ways of learning. The best lessons ensure progress by structuring learning logically and by consolidating learning before moving on. These lessons are lively, using various methods and adapting programmes to suit different abilities. In a few less effective lessons, time is not used effectively enough and there is a lack of variety.
79. Teachers use ICT well to stimulate interest. Pupils learn about foreign culture, and go on exchanges and visits. Cooking, films, music, ICT and wider reading after school enrich their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils demonstrate mutual respect. Marking is not diagnostic enough and targets are too vague to show pupils how to progress.
80. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Lessons are well organised, using challenging materials and homework to consolidate and develop learning. Work is thoroughly marked and pupils are informed of how to make progress. Good support is given to less able pupils with emphasis on visual clues and to gifted and talented pupils with appropriate extension work. Teachers model work to show pupils what is expected and extended writing is guided, to ensure success. Pupils are taught good study skills.
81. Leadership and management are very good, playing an active role in developing and implementing school policies. The department fosters the school philosophy in providing for all pupils' needs and interests. A good team has been established, resulting in much consistency of practice. However, some documents and programmes of work are incomplete which adversely affects a small number of lessons. Good monitoring systems exist to raise standards which disappoint teachers' high expectations. Data is well used to track pupils' progress and underachievers are mentored. Teaching reinforces literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The team is forward looking and dedicates time to professional development.
82. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Reading materials now encourage reading for enjoyment. Pupils study independently through the Internet. Results have steadily improved in French and a plan is in place to raise standards in German.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved by Years 9 and 11 in the past three years
- Good curriculum and resources meet the need of all pupils
- There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties
- Good progress is being made with new teaching and learning strategies including the use of ICT
- Only a small numbers of students reach the highest grades at Year 11

Commentary

83. On entry to the school pupils' standards are slightly below the national average but by the end of Year 9 they are close to the national average. The rate of Improvement in the past two years has been higher than that for schools nationally. Boys and girls have similar results. The proportion obtaining higher grades is similar to that found nationally. Results at Year 9 are higher than in science but lower than in English. By Year 11 results have increased to slightly above average with a significant increase in the past three years. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest grades is lower than that found nationally. Boys' results were slightly higher than girls' in 2003, but lower in 2004. Mathematics results at Year 11 are higher than those for science but lower than those for English. Taking into account entry levels at Year 7, pupils achieve well, and results in 2004 by Year11 are at the highest for five years.
84. Overall, pupils make above average progress by Year 9 and also by Year 11. Boys and girls do equally well. Those with learning difficulties make good progress and all pupils are monitored closely. The most able make average progress by Year 11. The introduction of a new scheme two years ago is having a positive effect on achievement and the homework books provide structured exercises that link with class work. The scheme is also graduated for different ability levels and the sequencing of materials facilitates movements between sets. Work seen in books is usually well presented and pupils know how well they are achieving. Lower groups in Year 9 make good progress with functions and mappings and top groups are confident in the solution of simultaneous equations. By Year 11 middle sets have an understanding of cumulative frequency graphs and correlations.
85. Teaching is good. During the inspection the quality of teaching of three out of four lessons was good or better and all lessons were at least satisfactory. All lessons have clear learning outcomes that are made known to pupils and are usually structured using the guidance from the national strategy for pupils aged 11 to 14. Teachers are skilled at questioning pupils and in helping them to understand mathematical principles and techniques. Most teaching groups learn by a variety of methods including games and challenges, group work exercises, problem-solving exercises and, increasingly, ICT. The introduction of interactive whiteboards is having a positive impact and some Internet-based learning is being introduced which allows some homework tasks to be completed and marked electronically. Teachers have a good knowledge of the learning needs of individuals in their groups. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and additional help is always available if necessary outside lessons. The best lessons often included learning materials to supplement textbook materials, for example in lessons about interest rates for savers and the analysis of current league tables in football. Active approaches to learning were very successfully used in a lesson

about the properties of polygons. Pupils are good at working in pairs or small groups on problems and can explain their approach to solving problems to the class as a whole, so developing confidence. The plenary session conducted at the end of nearly every lesson helps to consolidate key learning objectives. In most lessons pupils maintain a high level of interest throughout the lesson. The marking of work is thorough and regular, with pupils receiving feedback about their progress.

86. Leadership of the subject is very good as the strategies to raise standards have been successful and there is good awareness of how to progress further. The department has good documentation and shared policies and procedures. A strength of the subject is the interest being shown by staff in using new technologies to enhance learning and to incorporate new approaches to learning mathematics into schemes, particularly with enterprise and business initiatives. The management of the subject is also very good as resources are being used efficiently, there is a good deployment of staff, and attention is given to developing the expertise of staff. The accommodation is good in the mathematics rooms and displays provide an attractive learning environment. There is an insufficient number of interactive whiteboards.
87. Improvement since the last inspection is good as standards have steadily risen and issues requiring attention have been addressed. The subject is well placed to continue to improve and has a well-constructed action plan.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. Pupils' development of mathematical skills across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is good work taking place in art where perspective, scaling and symmetry are developed, in business education where supply and demand curves are studied and in geography when data is transferred from tables into diagrams. Modern languages is also using numerical work in the teaching of times, dates and surveys. Pupils also use simple formulae in spreadsheets in ICT. However, the provision is varied, with some subjects such as design and technology and physical education without a numeracy policy. In science graph drawing skills are poorly developed.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have expert knowledge of their subjects
- Good behaviour and attitudes help pupils to learn well
- Teachers' marking gives insufficient help to pupils on how they can improve
- The use of learning support assistants is unsatisfactory

Commentary

89. The results of national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2004 were below the national average. The results in 2003 were similar when standards were close to the average for all schools but well below the average for schools with similar prior attainment and well below average for schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. In both years

standards were below those for English and mathematics and the proportion of pupils with the highest levels of attainment was particularly low. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, at a rate similar to the improvement in the national average.

90. Results in the GCSE dual award science examinations were below average in 2004 and slightly better than the results in 2003, though the national average increased by almost the same amount. There is no overall difference in the results of boys and girls at any age. Results in the other core subjects, English and mathematics, are significantly above average by this stage. The standard of pupils' work seen by the end of Years 9 and 11 is below average and graph drawing skills are poorly developed.
91. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory at all ages. They enter school with below average standards, and make satisfactory progress to the end of Year 9, when their standards are below average and they are still below average by the end of Year 11.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are brisk and well planned to include a variety of activities, which maintain pupils' interest and make learning effective. Teachers make good use of their expert subject knowledge. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes mean teachers waste little time maintaining discipline and lessons are trouble free. Less effective lessons are insufficiently demanding, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily because teachers give extra help but the use of learning support assistants is unsatisfactory because their time is not used constructively. Teachers' marking is variable. The best is analytical and gives clear targets for improvement but much is superficial and does not help pupils to improve. Missing work or errors are not corrected so that gaps and inaccuracies in pupils' knowledge persist. Older pupils do not have textbooks to take home to research a topic or extend their learning.
93. Leadership is satisfactory. Although standards are rising they are only doing so at a rate similar to the national improvement and science standards are below those of English and mathematics. There has been a widening of the curriculum for older pupils to give more choice. Management is good. Day-to-day organisation is good and teachers and technicians are well deployed. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is very good with clear vision of future development planned
- The attitudes of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very good
- Teachers in Years 10 and 11 are well qualified and show very good subject knowledge
- Improvement since the last inspection is very good and all key areas have been addressed
- The technical team offers very good support
- Standards are rising, reflecting good achievement, but they are still below the national average

Commentary

94. In 2004, at the end of Year 9, although pupils' attainments in teacher assessments were in line with the national average, no pupils reached the higher levels. Standards have risen over previous years. At the end of Year 11, a small number of pupils took vocational qualifications and results here were below the national average with no pupils gaining higher grades. Standards on entry were well below the national average.
95. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils currently in Years 7 and 8 are confident with ICT skills and are meeting challenging targets. This rise in standards is in part due to improvements in teaching and to work done with primary schools. Pupils in Year 11 are working towards a GCSE qualification and while standards are still below the national average, pupils show increased skills and knowledge. Most pupils write well and are able to evaluate their work effectively. Numeracy skills are not sufficiently developed in the subject but do not prove a barrier to progress.
96. Achievement is good in all years and pupils work with enthusiasm. Boys and girls achieve equally well and pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. In Years 10 and 11 especially, they show very positive attitudes to the subject and quickly develop new skills and understanding.
97. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, where much of the programme is taught by non-specialists. Teachers of Years 10 and 11 have very good subject knowledge and skills. Teaching is generally well planned and lessons are purposeful and challenging. Assessment is well co-ordinated and pupils contribute to their own assessment through self-evaluation. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils' learning is sound and they are able to use a variety of software programs, working independently and in groups. In Years 7 and 9, pupils worked with complex formulae in creating spreadsheets. In Years 10 and 11 learning is good and Year 10 pupils make creative use of multi-media presentation tools. Pupils are able to discuss their work effectively and use technical terms with increasing confidence. More could be done to address weaknesses in writing but pupils make good use of spellcheckers.
98. Timetable provision has recently been extended and the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 makes effective use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy materials and techniques. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are entered for GCSE courses and there are plans to include technical courses from 2005. Teaching rooms are very well equipped, ensuring individual work, but they are frequently too warm. Teachers make good use of them by creating space for direct teaching. The network gives pupils access to their work across the school.
99. Leadership of ICT is very good. There is a clear vision for future development and a well-organised plan for its achievement. Management is good; there is good support for non-specialist teachers and the technical team is well led. They provide very good support and contribute to the quality of provision throughout the school and within the community. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and is helping to raise standards by improving teachers' skills. Partnerships with primary schools are very good and this is contributing to the rise in standards of pupils on entry.

100. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. In particular, teaching and learning have improved, provision in Years 7 to 9 meets statutory requirements and teachers are generally more confident in the use and delivery of ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. Provision of ICT across the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

102. The standard of pupils' ICT skills is in line with the national average and there are some examples of very good practice. The pupils cover all the requirements in the programmes of study using a wide range of networked programs, supplemented by the use of subject-specific software.

103. In design and technology, pupils in Year 11 are making very effective use of a suite of computers and CAD/CAM equipment to design and produce a model racing car for a national competition. In business studies very good use is made of computers to analyse and evaluate business systems and provide solutions to real problems. Elsewhere pupils develop their ICT skills in art, French, geography, mathematics and English. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards, promoting learning by increasing pupils' motivation. The use of these is spreading throughout the school as more teachers are trained in their use and more equipment becomes available. In science regular use is made of a mobile suite of laptops, enhancing pupils' understanding of data logging, modelling and control. In religious education more needs to be done to utilise ICT opportunities; music development is limited by the lack of opportunities pupils have to use computers for composition and performance.

104. Pupils with special needs and those in the visually impaired unit make very good use of laptops and software to advance literacy and numeracy skills as well as extending ICT competencies. Good extra-curricular provision is available in the learning resource centre and pupils make very good use of computers for research and presentation.

105. Leadership of whole-school ICT is good and development plans show that the co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how to improve provision. There is still much to be done in auditing provision and measuring pupils' achievements in all years and this is already under way.

106. The technical team provides very good support for non-specialist teachers, and ensures continuity of learning through the regular maintenance of the network and computers. They are involved in staff development and have established good relationships with pupils, who see them as a valuable resource.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and structured so that pupils work hard and achieve well

- Pupils have mature attitudes to learning and respond well to the good teaching they receive
- National Curriculum criteria are not always applied accurately in the assessment of pupils' levels at the end of Year 9
- Pupils are not yet encouraged sufficiently to work collaboratively and think for themselves
- Teaching and learning are carefully matched to GCSE examination requirements

Commentary

107. GCSE results in 2004 were broadly in line with national averages. These results represent a small rise from the previous year when pupils attained better results in geography than in most other subjects they took. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards were well above average in 2003 and high in 2004. However, because National Curriculum criteria are not always applied accurately, the levels given are over-generous with the result that pupils are not always sure about how well they are doing.

108. In work seen standards are above expectations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and pupils' achievement is good. All pupils recognise geographical terminology and higher attaining pupils can use this confidently and accurately. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their geographical skills through fieldwork. For example, pupils in Year 11 presented and analysed well the data they collected on a field trip to Skipton.

109. All pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject and communicate this successfully to their pupils. They plan and structure their lessons well so that pupils respond positively to the good teaching they receive and work hard. Teachers and learning support assistants give constructive individual support to pupils with special educational needs so that they achieve well. Teachers are widening the range of teaching methods and resources they use, including the use of ICT, but these can be further developed to encourage pupils to work collaboratively and think for themselves.

110. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department is very well organised and appropriate priorities have been identified for further improvement. The department responds well to new ideas and schemes of work are reviewed regularly which ensures that teaching is closely matched to GCSE examination requirements. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and good practice is shared.

111. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because teaching and learning continue to improve. The department has both the capacity and commitment to improve further.

History

The provision of history overall is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has recently produced much improved results that are above the national average in Years 10 and 11
- The pupils display good attitudes to their work and enjoy their historical studies
- The leadership and management of the department are good and help to produce an effective teaching team
- The improvement of literacy skills is a strength of the teaching
- Whilst some classes are successfully shared between more than one teacher, this practice creates extra demands on teachers' time in order to preserve continuity of learning.

Commentary

112. By the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the national expectations and this represents good overall achievement in the light of their attainment on entry to the school.

113. Attainment in the 2004 GCSE examination was above national average in terms of A*-C grades and was 100 per cent in terms of grades A*-G. This represents good achievement in the light of the pupils' recorded prior attainment and is a big improvement on the results of 2003. Results in the subject compare favourably with those in most other subjects. Girls do markedly better than boys and achieve grades A*-C well above the national average. Some of them attain the highest grades.

114. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books shows that in Years 7 to 9 pupils demonstrate an increasing knowledge and understanding of topics such as castles in Year 7, Napoleon in Year 8 and the Treaty of Versailles in Year 9. The work is always well matched to the age, ability and interests of the pupils. Some particularly good results come from group work on the concept of change in the use and construction of castles and from some very effective source evaluation on the topic of Napoleon. In all classes observed thinking skills were improved and independent learning encouraged.

115. In Years 10 and 11 the work seen shows conscientious attitudes and a good build up of knowledge and understanding of topics such as changes in medical practice. Good assessment procedures ensure accurate marking and prediction of the pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress with the help of adapted materials and modified teaching styles and some in-class support. Good strategies are employed to improve basic skills of literacy and satisfactory strategies to improve numeracy skills. Skills in ICT are taught alongside historical skills. Most pupils, including those designated as being gifted and talented, achieve their predicted grades in examinations and girls sometimes exceed them. The history courses and the extra-curricular activities, including many visits to places of historical interest and importance, make a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

116. The teaching by specialists and some non-specialists is consistently good and sometimes very good. The teaching seen was characterised by good subject knowledge, good planning and good control. The teachers work at a brisk, purposeful pace and create good relationships. In every class observed the pupils responded accordingly and co-operated fully. Several classes are shared between two teachers. Although the teachers concerned take great care to co-operate and to maintain standards, this practice creates a big extra demand on their time and poses potential problems for the smooth progression and continuity of the pupils' learning.
117. Underpinning the good results, good relationships and effective teaching are the good leadership and management of a new head of department. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the recent rise in examination results and the maintenance of a successful team of specialist and non-specialist teachers.

Religious education

Overall the provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has produced good achievement and progress for pupils
- Lower attaining pupils and gifted and talented pupils are well taught, make good progress and attain their predicted grades
- Good leadership and management underpin good provision in religious education
- Procedures for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are good
- The religious studies course makes a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils in the school
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped

Commentary

118. By the end of Year 9 the majority of the pupils attain standards in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. This represents good achievement and progress in the light of their attainment on entry into the school.
119. In 2004 and over the past few years those pupils who entered for the GCSE examination in religious studies have consistently gained grades of A*-C in line with national averages and it is normal for them to attain 100 per cent grades A*-G. This represents good achievement and progress. At this level religious studies compares well with most other subjects in the school. Far more girls than boys take the subject and they tend to do better. The boys do not normally attain the two highest grades. A similar pattern of attainment is evident in the sixth form but the low numbers involved make it difficult to make statistical comparisons.
120. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books shows that pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are able to demonstrate an increased knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions from a low attainment level on entry to the school. They can describe the chief beliefs of different faiths and appreciate the significance of signs and symbols. They show themselves to be respectful and co-operative learners in lessons

and they respond well to the consistently good teaching they receive. They learn *about* religions as well as *from* religions.

121. The majority of pupils studying for the GCSE examination in religious studies profitably discuss moral issues and exchange personal views. The religious studies department is an inclusive one in which pupils of all backgrounds feel at home and learn to respect the views of others. Children with special educational needs as well as those designated as gifted and talented can usefully discuss moral issues such as abortion, marriage, divorce, and adultery without being afraid to give a personal view on such challenging topics as 'When does life begin?'
122. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the help of appropriate teaching styles, modified materials and some in-class support. The department has good strategies for improving vocabulary and extended-writing skills and satisfactory strategies for improving numeracy skills. The use of ICT by teachers and pupils is in need of further development. The department makes a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils in the school.
123. The teaching is consistently good. It is characterised by good subject competence, good relationships and sensitivity. All the teachers make good use of visits, worksheets, videos, booklets and the interactive whiteboard. The fact that they take every pupil in the school for short periods of time means that there is a very heavy load in terms of marking, reporting and meeting parents but they know individual pupils well and assess their progress accurately.
124. Underpinning the work of the department are good leadership and management, good planning, good assessment and good tracking of pupils' progress. The subject shows good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the introduction of the short course at GCSE level which now enables the school to fulfil the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all pupils.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership and management of the subject, which ensure the team of teachers work well together, sharing a high level of commitment
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned, which mean pupils learn well
- A good range of material areas and projects is offered to pupils, leading to good teaching of the design process
- Good classroom management leads to pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes
- Assessment is used well during and at the end of lessons to assess what pupils have learned and to inform future planning
- Teachers are not always consistent about how they mark pupils' work and use comments to help them progress and improve

Commentary

125. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with those expected at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement in relation to their standard when they enter the school is good. Good teaching and an engaging range of projects help pupils to develop a clear understanding of the various aspects of designing and making. By the end of Year 9 they are able to select and use a range of hand tools and equipment with some accuracy, are well aware of health and safety procedures, and are able to make various products to an acceptable standard. However, their research and design skills and drawing techniques are less well developed. Pupils are developing their skills in evaluating their work, identifying what worked well, but they do not always make suggestions as to what could be improved. In food technology good use is made of sensory analysis to test and evaluate products.
126. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 the overall results for design and technology were slightly lower than the national average, but had improved since 2003. At GNVQ manufacturing intermediate level, 90 per cent of pupils achieved a pass or better and 44 per cent at foundation level achieved a pass. This represents good achievement over time. Girls performed better than boys. Results in food technology, graphics and textiles are well above average, and pupils' achievement in food technology is very good. However, attainment in resistant materials and product design is low. Pupils are developing a good understanding of design processes and, by the end of Year 11, more able pupils produce work that shows detailed research, good design skills and drawing techniques. Pupils consider the views of their clients and make good quality products. Industrial application is explored and done well by the more able pupils. Other work by the pupils reflected limited design skills, weaker drawing techniques and organisational skills, and lacked rigour in the evaluation of the design ideas.
127. The quality of teaching and learning across all years is good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils very well and their high expectations of behaviour create a positive attitude in them. Teachers have good subject knowledge, give clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and use resources very well. High quality displays set high expectations. Although lower school projects are well planned, in many lessons teachers give considerable direction as they guide pupils through structured tasks. This often inhibits pupils' opportunities to decide how to approach work for themselves and impedes their development as independent learners. Learning is not always tested during and at the end of lessons to assess what pupils have learned and to inform future planning. Pupils' work is marked but the methods used are not as helpful to them as they might be, often lacking in constructive comments and targets for improvement. Literacy strategies are built on as pupils are positively encouraged to use appropriate technological vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified and given good individual support. Pupils are given very good opportunities to use ICT including CAD/CAM to explore, develop, model and communicate design proposals, and to shape and form materials.
128. The co-ordinator of design and technology provides very good leadership and management of the department. Following her example, teachers and technicians work as a genuine team, willingly sharing responsibilities and a commitment to improving standards. Day-to-day organisation is very efficient and good documentation gives clear guidance to staff. Rigorous annual reviews and the regular monitoring of teaching and learning have led to a new curriculum plan being introduced in the lower school

and future targets agreed for the subject. Lesson observations are accepted practice. The department has very good links with the community and other schools, and provides a range of extra-curricular activities. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Overall the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of the pupils
- The very good professional relationship between the teachers and pupils creates a very good learning partnership in lessons
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent, very well organised, promoting high expectations and providing excellent opportunities for all pupils
- Assessment is excellent in providing information to pupils on their strengths and weaknesses, thereby having a positive effect upon learning
- No significant weaknesses were evident

Commentary

129. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average which demonstrates very good achievement for the majority of pupils considering their below average standards on entry into Year 7. Work seen indicates that standards continue to improve because of very good teaching and the wide range of opportunities offered. In 2003 the GCSE results in art and design were above average. In 2004 the standards in GCSE examinations improved on 2003. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. All pupils have access to a wide range of materials and experiences, respond well, work hard and enjoy the lessons. The levels of achievement of pupils in GCSE art and design are better than the average for all their other subjects.

130. Teaching is very good. The teachers work as a very effective team offering complementary skills, which enhance the learning opportunities for all pupils. The advanced skills teacher provides very valuable support and advice. Lesson planning is very effective in promoting high standards. Lessons provide challenge for all pupils and therefore skills, knowledge and understanding are being developed well. Pupils with special educational needs and those considered to be talented enjoy very good support from their teachers. Teachers promote a clear code of conduct. Relationships in all lessons are based on mutual respect and are invariably very good. The teachers therefore promote an effective and socially inclusive style of teaching, which offers good opportunities for all pupils. The personal development of the pupils is improving because they are encouraged to develop opinions through discussion, share ideas and deal with problems, thereby developing independent learning skills. Language skills are improving because key words are introduced into most lessons. Opportunities for the promotion of numeracy are limited but concepts of scale, proportion, symmetry, perspective, area and volume are introduced. Opportunities to experience ICT are

embedded into the schemes of work for all years. Regular references are made in most lessons to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. Assessment is excellent. Record keeping and marking which informs pupils and influences the review of the curriculum, are extremely effective. All pupils have development targets and self-assessment ensures that they understand their targets and how they might improve. Homework is effective as preparation or reinforcement for lessons.

131. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Department documentation and day-to-day management are very good. The head of department promotes a clear vision and very high expectations. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is good, providing the pupils with a very pleasant and attractive environment in which to work. Impressive displays of work are a feature of the public areas in school; they celebrate high achievement, very good teaching and hard work by pupils in all year groups. Resources are satisfactory at present but the popularity of applied GCSE has increased the numbers of pupils selecting art and design in Year 10 and 11 and the present level of funding could present problems for curriculum expansion. The previous inspection indicated that learning was satisfactory and standards were average. Learning is now good, often very good and standards are above average. Therefore improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for the subject are very good
- Knowledge and skills development are good
- Boys have made considerable improvement since the previous inspection and now make similar progress to girls
- Standards have fallen in public examinations
- Timetabling changes has reduced provision in Years 8 and 9

Commentary

132. At the end of Year 9, pupils' standards are in line with nationally agreed levels. Standards in GCSE examinations are below the national average – a small rise from last year but overall there is a falling trend due to changes in syllabus and staffing. Literacy is extended and developed well through drama activities at all levels.

133. Achievement is good in all year groups. Pupils work hard and show enthusiasm and skill. Their attitudes to learning are very positive and they make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well and pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, benefiting from the strong emphasis on the development of literacy.

134. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers show very good expertise and knowledge and this is imparted effectively. Lessons are planned very well and recent developments in self-review have helped to raise achievement in Year 7. Assessment in Year 9 is carefully based on nationally agreed levels and in Years 10 and 11 is matched

to examination grades. Teachers use strong themes and pupils respond well to the challenge, creating lively and interesting work.

135. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 learn well. They grow increasingly confident and are able to talk knowledgeably about their work and demonstrate skills with flair and creativity. Improvised work grows increasingly sophisticated; pupils are articulate and show good physical skills. Year 7 pupils created interesting scenes using sounds and voices, and Year 9 pupils showed good mime and focus skills. In Year 10, pupils were developing good vocal skills and in Year 11 pupils, preparing improvisations for assessment, were exploring the theme of prejudice and their responses were sensitive if somewhat stereotyped.
136. Changes in the timetable have reduced curriculum time. Drama is no longer offered to Year 8 pupils and pupils in Year 9 are taught for half a year, which negatively affects continuity and skills development. The curriculum in Years 7 and 9 follows the nationally agreed syllabus and the focus is upon the development of technical skills and dramatic conventions. GCSE drama is offered to all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
137. The head of department shows good leadership. She has a clear vision for the subject's development and has devised appropriate strategies to raise standards. Management is also good, and there is a consistent approach to planning, delivery and assessment.
138. Since the previous inspection, boys' achievement has improved substantially but standards overall have fallen.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently good or better
- Pupils in GCSE classes respond very well to high expectations and achieve well
- Some aspects of leadership need prompt attention to achieve improvements
- Resources are unsatisfactory, including those for computerised music making

Commentary

139. Standards overall are average when compared with those nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average but are subject to appeal. Results for previous years show standards closer to the national average for grades A*-C. Current Year 11 pupils, boys as well as girls, have above average standards. There are no overall strengths or weaknesses. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 can use stave notation fluently. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 showed standards close to the national average in 2004, and above this in the previous two years. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 use their imaginations well in creating music from graphic scores and selecting it for particular purposes. The standard of singing is above average in every year. No pupils benefit from using computers for music making.
140. Achievement is good. Nearly all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very committed to music in their lives. They respond well to high expectations. There is much mutual support

and most are determined to succeed. Good behaviour in every year gives time for concentrated learning through music with performance as a strong feature. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to achieve as well as others. The achievement of all pupils is restricted by important limitations in accommodation and resources.

141. Teaching and learning overall are very good. Teaching is enthusiastic with very good subject knowledge and skill. Teachers prepare very well and assessment is secure and supportive. Teachers manage pupils well in spite of limitations of spaces and equipment. The use of voices and encouragement to create music are strengths. Teachers spend much time beyond lessons to provide extra learning experiences. However, teachers need to be more aware of the advantages of computer use for composition. Some chances are missed to ensure that all pupils' understanding of technical terms is secure.
142. Leadership is satisfactory. During the maternity leave of the leader, the management of the acting leader is good. There is good teamwork between the three teachers, which produces developments in schemes of work. Policies and systems are in place to help the department run smoothly, including for the work of instrumental teachers. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified. Some aspects of leadership are on hold during these temporary arrangements for leadership. Urgent attention is needed to improve the range of accommodation and resources, including space for safe storage.
143. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved and the number of boys and girls choosing GCSE music increased. The proportion taking instrumental tuition has fallen and limitations in resources remain. Prospects for improvement are good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination are in line with the national average and improving
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school because of good teaching
- The attitudes of pupils are very good and there are very good relationships between pupils and their teachers
- Management is unsatisfactory; there is no clear curriculum plan to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum
- There is a wide range of extra- curricular activities offered to pupils

Commentary

144. Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 were in line with the national average. There has been an improvement from previous years, with girls performing better than boys. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a low level of skill and a restricted range of experiences but they achieve well in most activities taught throughout the school.

145. In the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. They are average in rugby where boys in Year 8 pass and receive a ball with above average control and demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the game. By the end of Year 11 standards are average. They are above average in health-related fitness, where pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They work hard and record results from a circuit of activities and possess knowledge and understanding of why they improve their fitness. Standards at GCSE are average. Written work is of a good standard, that of girls being better than boys'. The personal exercise plans vary in quality and some lack depth in terms of the understanding of the principles of training in pupils' chosen sports. In theory lessons low ability pupils on the GCSE course lack motivation and knowledge and produce below average standards.
146. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned with clear objectives but these are not always shared with the pupils. Very good teaching matches objectives with those of the National Curriculum, but this is inconsistent between teachers. Teachers possess good knowledge of the activities taught but they are not up to date with all aspects of the National Curriculum. Assessment is inconsistent and does not always reflect levels of *Curriculum 2000*. Marking at GCSE is unsatisfactory. There are few comments to help pupils improve, no grades are given and on some occasions no marking exists. Pupils are not aware of their predicted grades for the forthcoming examination and, as a result, are not aware of the progress they are making. Teachers form very good relationships with their pupils and this contributes to the very good attitudes of pupils. They arrive enthusiastically to lessons and most are prepared to work hard. Unusually, a small number of girls in a Year 9 class demonstrated a poor attitude to their work in an aerobics lesson and showed little respect for the teacher. Generally speaking, there are few non-participants in lessons.
147. Pupils are appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered and there is a good level of participation. School teams are successful in football and netball, especially at county level. A high proportion of pupils have achieved success at regional, county and national level in a range of sports, indicating the strong commitment of teachers to their pupils. The newly qualified teacher is making a positive contribution to the department. A technician adds valued support to all teachers.
148. Leadership in the department is satisfactory. The head of department is committed to providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils, including extra-curricular activities. Management of the department is unsatisfactory and insufficient progress has been made since the previous inspection. Results in the GCSE examination have improved as has teaching. However, there is no curriculum plan to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum and the present curriculum is different for boys and girls. Documentation of the department is in need of updating – the policy for special educational needs, for example, does not consider pupils from the visually impaired unit, although teachers have had special training in this area. At present they are integrated into lessons and make good progress. There is, however, no risk assessment. Assessment of pupils is satisfactory and although levels indicate progress, pupils are not aware of them. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory as they do not report what pupils know, understand and can do. There are no clear targets for improving weaknesses. ICT has

not been developed sufficiently in teaching, although some pupils make use of word processing and the Internet at home. The school's plan to raise the attainment of boys has yet to make an impact. Accommodation is good and complemented by extensive playing fields. There is no dual use of the sporting facilities to involve the community or to raise funding for the school.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has successfully embedded the business and enterprise ethos and entitlement in Years 7 to 9
- There is a comprehensive assessment and evaluation framework for the enterprise provision
- Standards at age 16 are well above national expectations
- Pupils achieve very well and very good value is added, although weak literacy restricts the progress of some pupils
- There is very good teaching from a dedicated team
- Leadership and management are very good

Commentary

149. By Year 9, pupils know and understand the enterprise process and effectively engage in courses of study in personal economics and business projects. There is insufficient data to make comparisons in terms of national standards. Nevertheless, the current cohort of pupils has clearly made very good progress, in terms of knowledge, understanding, and enterprise and business awareness.

150. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. The results of the GCSE course in 2003 were far above national averages, and unvalidated results for 2004, with 91 per cent at grades A*-C, are even higher. Work seen in class and in pupils' files is well above national levels. Boys' and girls' attainment is better than that found nationally. The strengths of the pupils' class work are their basic understanding of the subject matter and their steady accumulation of knowledge which is well organised in their files. Pupils confidently deal with business concepts and apply appropriate business terminology effectively. For example, in a case study on recruitment, Year 11 pupils successfully and appropriately used expressions such as 'job specification' and 'employability criteria' when discussing the merits and demerits of job applicants. A course in business and communication systems has not yet had a cohort complete at GCSE. However, standards seen in class and in pupils' notebooks indicate standards well above national norms. From a baseline attainment at entry to the course in Year 10, which is above average, pupils' achievement is good, particularly in the maturation of their understanding of business concepts.

151. Teaching is very good. Teachers form a committed team and they know their subject well. The best lessons are characterised by pace and challenge. Very good use is made

of both formal and informal assessment and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work, thus providing a firm basis for learning. Learning is very good and reflects the very good teaching, which takes pupils' knowledge and understanding to a deep level. Pupils' response is nearly always very good.

152. The curriculum is wide and enriching. Resources are good. The department has a range of effective text books and there is good access to ICT. Accommodation is good in terms of size and décor but is insufficient in terms of the number of discrete business rooms. Staffing levels are good.
153. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department, who is also head of ICT, has overseen the production of appropriate documents which deal effectively with most aspects of the work of the department. In all her work, she is very well supported by her colleagues, particularly the business and enterprise college manager. They provide very good role models for a department committed to high standards.
154. Business education has made very good progress since the previous report, particularly in creating a business and enterprise environment, which forms the basis of particularly pleasing results and high standards of attainment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good, boosted by a wide variety of opportunities for service and responsibility
- The GCSE short course is well established in Years 10 and 11
- The course contributes well to pupils' development, but a greater concentration on knowledge and understanding is needed in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

155. Achievement is good overall. For one third of the cohort currently following the short GCSE course, achievement is good. Those from all years who take responsibilities in the school and who serve the wider community through many projects achieve very well, gaining self-esteem and maturity. The developing ethos and resources for enterprise in the school provide a valuable boost to achievement. There is a good system for commending and celebrating achievement through the subject. The assessment of learning and achievement from the 'unique days' that the school organises is at an early stage.
156. Standards in the short GCSE course are average overall. Two thirds of pupils who took GCSE citizenship in 2004 gained grades A*-C. Where time is found and citizenship identified in busy tutor periods, standards are average. The scale and quality of pupils' work in the community are above average. Work-related learning makes a very good contribution to the subject.

157. Teaching and learning overall are good. There are good quality materials and approaches in the GCSE course, and teaching usually engages pupils well. Planned learning from other subjects was apparent in lessons in the arts, humanities and WRL subjects. Some teaching is very effective in helping pupils to understand and participate in a democratic system through the year councils. However, the school council is not yet firmly established as an effective vehicle for pupil opinion on school policies. The teaching of programmes of study in tutor periods is satisfactory overall. More concentrated time for this is needed in these lessons. Other subject teachers could do more to identify assessed work in citizenship which could be recorded and reported.

158. Leadership and management are very good. The GCSE course is well established as a coupling to other short courses. It is planned to increase the proportion of pupils taking this. Good schemes of work exist for all years. The leader receives very good support from key pastoral staff. There is very good publicity for pupils to be reminded of the skills common to citizenship and enterprise. The leader is seeking to improve further the complex task of efficient and reliable assessment across all aspects of the subject for the recording and reporting of individual achievement. The use of time in the weekly tutor periods needs closer monitoring for the teaching and learning of citizenship to improve.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Design and technology	8	62.5	74.5	0	15.1	16.8	25.3
Geography	9	100	74.3	44.4	19.8	40.0	26.5
ICT	22	44.7	67.0	5.2	10.9	13.2	21.4
Mathematics	12	50	61.9	0	17.1	14.2	22.1
Physics	3	66.7	68.6	0	14.4	16.7	22.7

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

Art and design	4	100	98.6	0	50.2	60.0	87.3
Business studies	22	100	98.7	9.1	36.8	64.5	80.1
English	11	100	99.4	9.1	36.3	58.2	80.9
English literature	6	100	99.5	16.7	46.5	73.7	86.5
French	3	66.7	98.8	0	51.5	26.7	87.6
Design and technology	7	71.4	97.8	14.2	35.0	54.3	77.9
Geography	5	100	98.7	20.0	44.5	76.0	84.0
ICT	13	76.9	95.6	0	24.6	41.5	69.7
Mathematics	4	100	96.7	0	55.6	50.0	88.8
Physics	2	100	96.7	0	44.6	40.0	81.7
Business	61	91.8	14.6	18.0	14.6	64.9	60.1
Health and social care	28	100	67.7	53.6	14.5	92.1	63.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in English language and literature, and on AS and A2 courses in French.

English

Provision in both English courses is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at AS and A2 level in English language are above the national median
- Teaching is very good overall and sets high academic standards
- Recruitment is strong and retention on courses is high
- The standard of students' oral work is above expectation
- Leadership and management are very good
- Students' average points score at A2 level for literature in 2003 was below the national median

Commentary

159. Results in GCE AS-level examination for English language in 2003 were well above the national median with a much higher percentage of students than nationally achieving higher grades. Their average points score was significantly above the median. In 2004 unvalidated results were somewhat less good with fewer high grades, although students achieved the pass level. The average points score was lower than the outstandingly high level of 2003 but still above the median for that year.

160. In the AS-level English literature papers in 2003 the percentage of students achieving the top grades was below the median but the percentage achieving grades C and D was significantly above the median. Almost all reached the pass level and the average points score was higher than the national figure.

161. The GCE A2 level results in 2003 for English language were below the national median. The percentage reaching high grades was low, although all students achieved the pass level. The average points score was significantly below the national figure. Unvalidated results in 2004 showed a major improvement with over half of the students reaching high grades. Their average points score was above the median.
162. Results in the GCE A2 level English literature examination in 2003 were below the national median. A lower percentage than nationally scored high grades and, although all students achieved the pass level, the average points score was below the median. In 2004 unvalidated results show all students reaching pass level but their average points score was below the national median.
163. The standard of work seen in both language and literature courses in Year 12 is above that found nationally. A real strength is the high quality of students' oral responses. In a language class on the media, for example, they were stimulated, by vigorous questioning, to give detailed and imaginative answers supported by sound background knowledge. A literature group, working in a seminar style of learning, made well-prepared presentations which extended into detailed discussion to which every student contributed. Note taking is thorough and helpful and longer written assignments are carefully prepared and well presented. Both in their written and oral work students show a rapidly developing maturity of thought and expression. They have adjusted well to the serious academic challenge of their new courses.
164. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Academic standards are uniformly high, and planning and preparation are very thorough. A wide range of teaching approaches and groupings is used. Relationships are very positive and students express their appreciation of the expertise and accessibility of teachers. Every effort is made to encourage students to extend their knowledge through independent reading and research. Teachers draw upon a wide range of published critical opinion. Questioning is used as a powerful way of embedding understanding and discussion is used as a fundamental way of learning.
165. Students think highly of the subject and their teachers, understanding fully their commitment and expertise. Written work is thoroughly and constructively assessed with much positive guidance. The subject is very well led and managed.

French

Provision for French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Competent linguists offer courses to suit students' choices
- A variety of teaching styles and methods stimulates student interest
- Students experience a lot of target language, which helps them become proficient
- The good teacher-pupil ratio means ready access to personal help
- The small numbers of mixed ability students can limit activities

Commentary

166. Students start the course with a range of ability that are largely lower than national averages for a sixth form. The small number who take A-level achieve well. It is not possible to compare these small numbers with national averages. Work seen in Year 12 indicated average standards for this stage in the course and in Year 13 standards are good.
167. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use good target language most of the time so that students' skills of listening and understanding are good, better, in fact, than their speaking skills. Occasionally, teachers do too much of the talking and do not give students thinking time in order to answer effectively.
168. Groups are taught by two competent linguists who provide a balanced experience of the language and a mixture of teaching styles. Teachers offer a good range of activities and resources to make lessons challenging and interesting. Teachers generally know students well and relationships between students and teachers are good. Students respond well to being treated as adults and ask for help readily. The work is appropriate and demanding but supported with good grammatical information and practice. Students use the Internet to research and to use the exercises provided. They work independently at home and show commitment to their studies. Regular homework is quickly and thoroughly marked.
169. The department is well managed. Teachers are allocated according to their interests and expertise wherever possible. The department aims to provide for the needs of all students. A range of courses is available, including a Spanish option for non-examination students during lunch hours. The teachers deliver courses efficiently and standardise their marking. Although the department is well resourced with headsets for individual listening and a computer, there are no interactive whiteboards and no computer suite to make best use of teachers' expertise with ICT. There is little opportunity for monitoring performance. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Extended writing has improved.

MATHEMATICS

The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Students receive a high level of personal support
- Students are proceeding to further study in mathematics and other numerate subjects at university
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning

Commentary

170. The department provides AS and A2 courses in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics, a retake class for GCSE mathematics and a class delivered as part of the bridging course for level 2 learners.

171. Numbers taking A-level have been small in recent years and most students have done well when compared with predictions based on their prior attainment and a few obtain high grades. In the last three years the AS group has increased steadily to 12 entries in 2003 but about half of these failed to complete the year successfully. The current group sizes are three in Year 13 and eight in year 12. Some students start the AS course with a modest performance in mathematics at GCSE and underestimate the demands of the course. Numbers are too small to make realistic comparisons with national data. Overall the standards reached are good at A2, satisfactory at AS and satisfactory at GCSE retakes when based on prior attainment. There is no significant difference between the standards reached by male and female students.

172. Students taking AS and A2 follow a modular course and use texts written to match the needs of each module. Year 12 students display confidence in integration, the plotting of curves and the calculation of constants. They have weekly homework questions that are discussed in class and a more formal assessment every two or three weeks. The workload expected from students is high. Students' files in Year 12 contain evidence of good understanding of equations involving indices, co-ordinate geometry and differential equations. Year 13 students were able to cope well with two-dimensional vector equations when studying motion. The marking of work is thorough and there are detailed comments to explain misunderstandings. Some of the work seen in exercise books was not set out in a way that would be useful for revision purposes.

173. Teaching seen in Years 12 and 13 was good. Lessons are carefully structured to meet the needs of learners. A good level of dialogue takes place which helps to facilitate understanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Students are confident enough to ask for additional help and support when required and are able to explain working out to peers at the board. Year 13 students who were preparing for a module test in mechanics were able to demonstrate understanding of the principles of forces acting on rigid bodies. Students are well prepared in examination techniques and discuss marking schemes and examiners' comments on past papers. This makes a good contribution to

their learning. The teaching room is of adequate size but lacks an interactive whiteboard and facilities for ICT.

174. AS and A2 mathematics is co-ordinated by an experienced teacher who is also a head of year in the sixth form and based in the sixth form building. This teacher also co-ordinates the schemes for these courses. The leadership and management of these courses are good. Students are able to gain additional help and support on site, and outside timetabled lessons, if needed. There are good textbook resources for students but support for learning from ICT is underused. Issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed.

SCIENCE

175. The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in physics. Chemistry and biology were also sampled. In a very good lesson in chemistry, an expert explanation and an effective demonstration helped students to understand the effect of one atom on a neighbouring atom in a simple compound. In a good lesson in biology students' previous knowledge about the nitrogen cycle was reinforced well, the teacher making very effective use of ICT.

Physics

Overall the provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge assists students' learning
- Very good relationships and attitudes make lessons productive
- Resources, especially the number of computers and textbooks, are unsatisfactory

Commentary

176. The number of students studying physics is small so results fluctuate. However, in 2003, results at advanced level GCE were below average, with no higher grades of A or B. Results for 2002 were close to average. Unvalidated results for 2004 suggest they will be below average. Although standards have been below average, students achieve what they are capable of in terms of their attainment at GCSE so that their achievement is satisfactory. Results in the AS-level examinations in 2003 were below average and similar to those for 2002. Unvalidated results for 2004 indicate that standards improved a little.

177. The standard of Year 13 students' work seen during the inspection is average. Students in the upper sixth form use a very wide range of scientific formulae competently. They manipulate equations, substitute numerical values and calculate correctly. Students in the lower sixth form understand the theoretical behaviour of gases and were seen investigating the effect of temperature on the pressure of a fixed volume of gas.

178. Overall teaching is satisfactory. There is a shortage of computers in the laboratories and no textbooks for Year 12, so the range of activities is limited, relies on worksheets and teacher explanations and so lacks variety. Teachers use questions well to allow students to recall previous knowledge, to apply it to new situations and to draw logical conclusions. They show expert knowledge of their subject and answer students' questions competently, using their answers to extend learning. Students' learning is satisfactory. Their very good attitudes and good relationships with their teachers play a significant part in making lessons effective. The assessment of students' work is good.

179. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department accepts students whose GCSE science results are below what might be expected for an academic and demanding course but over the last few years no candidate has failed to gain a grade at A-level. The number of females studying the subject is below average. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on the AS and A2 information technology courses. The ICT work in the bridging course leading to the formal CLAIT qualification was also sampled.

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well
- Teaching is very well planned and effective
- Students develop good levels of independence

Commentary

180. ICT is a popular course at AS-level and students have joined the course with lower than average attainment at GCSE level. Although the students have made steady progress on the course, results have been well below average, with girls doing better than boys. Results in 2004 are higher, reflecting improved teaching on the course and a higher starting point for students as a result of improvements to the subject in the main school. Results at A2 level are close to the national average, although fewer students reach the highest grades than in most schools. There has been the same improvement in results for 2004 and student make good progress on this course.

181. Students on the ICT courses are well motivated and benefit from good quality teaching. The courses are very well planned, with carefully structured project guides for the students to follow.

182. This ensures that they know what they have to learn in order to meet their targets. Teachers know the subject very well and lessons are very purposeful. They support the students very well in their coursework and maintain a good pace of learning by setting targets for progress throughout the course. As a result, students learn well and make good progress. The main barrier to achieving higher results has been the starting point of the students in ICT as they come into the sixth form, and this is rising steadily.

183. The subject has improved very well since the last inspection as a result of very dedicated and skilful leadership from the acting head of department. She has introduced a very clear structure for the subject in the sixth form, building on the even more extensive developments that she has made in the main school. As a result teachers and students know what has to be done. Assessment procedures are thorough and accurate. Work is marked in a supportive way and students are involved so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve. Resources for the subject have been enhanced considerably and are satisfactory. Technical support is very effective.

HUMANITIES

184. The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in geography. The provision for history was sampled during this inspection. Students in history normally all attain A

level passes but the numbers are too small to draw statistically significant conclusions. A lesson observed on Nazism demonstrated good teaching, good response from co-operative pupils, and a good appreciation of the need to base judgements on valid and reliable evidence.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is closely matched to examination requirements so students achieve well
- Relationships are relaxed and positive and stem from mutual respect
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to work independently in lessons

Commentary

185. A-level results in 2003 were below the national average and school data indicates that they remained at a similar level in 2004. However, these results represent good achievement for the small number of students concerned when compared to their attainment at GCSE.

186. In work seen, standards in Year 13 are average but in Year 12 they are above average. Standards fluctuate from year to year because small numbers of students of varying prior attainment study geography in the sixth form. Students use specialist subject vocabulary with accuracy and show a good understanding of more complex geographical concepts. High quality fieldwork enriches the A-level course for all students. For example, Year 12 students collect and analyse detailed data and reach valid conclusions about the coastal landscape at Morecambe. Students in Year 13 make good use of ICT to research and present their findings on issues such as fair trade and urban homelessness.

187. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teaching is closely matched to the examination requirements, lessons are well planned and students' progress is carefully monitored. There are too few opportunities in lessons for students to work independently of their teacher. Students have very good attitudes to learning and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

188. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department is very well organised and teachers work together as an effective team to share good practice. Appropriate priorities have been identified to raise standards. These include reviewing the issues that students study in order to complete their examination coursework.

189. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as teaching and learning continue to improve.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in design and technology.

Design and technology

Overall the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership and management of the subject, and a team of teachers sharing a high level of commitment to improving standards
- Good teaching and teachers' very good subject knowledge are enabling students to learn well in lessons
- Very good use of ICT supports students' learning
- Increasing numbers of students follow design and technology courses
- Some lessons lack rigour and consequently the pace of learning is slower

Commentary

190. In 2004 very low numbers of students were entered for A2 and AS examinations. Results in both courses were very low. These results were lower than in the two previous years. There was a considerable changeover of teachers during the course which contributed to the lower than expected results. This, however, represents good achievement for those students when their prior attainment is considered.

191. Standards of work seen during the inspection were at least average. These standards are achieved because teaching is good. As a result, students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they begin in the sixth form is good. The student in Year 13 shows good understanding of design practices and through good use of disassembling existing products makes substantial gains in his knowledge and understanding of the components and materials used in personal computer and laptop production. Both the student and the teacher, however, feel his learning would benefit from having other students in the group. More able students in Year 12 on the product design course have good research skills, and analyse and present information well, stating the impact on their design ideas. Students following the food technology course in Year 12 use product analysis and investigative skills to learn about the properties of food products. More able students do this well, but other students find it difficult to draw any conclusions.

192. Students learn well. They make good progress in lessons, taking pride in their work. This results from teaching which is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge, and provide regular opportunities for students to contribute to lessons. As a result students are interested and attentive, and generally work productively. The teaching encourages a mature approach to work and the teachers' high expectations of behaviour create a positive attitude in students. High quality displays show students what they need to aspire to. Learning, however, is not always tested during and at the end of lessons to assess what students have learned, and some lessons lack rigour. Consequently the pace of learning in these lessons is slower. Students' work is marked with constructive comments and targets for improvement. Students are given very good opportunities to use ICT including CAD/CAM to explore, develop, model and communicate design proposals, and to shape and form materials.

193. The co-ordinator of design and technology provides very good leadership and management of the department and has a clear understanding of the needs and priorities for the subject at post-16. There is an awareness of the need to attract more students to the course and increase the numbers of students going into the second year. Teachers have a strong shared commitment to raising standards. Day-to-day organisation is very efficient and good documentation gives clear guidance to staff. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for tracking the progress of students are well established. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to carry out continued improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

The focus was on the provision for AS and A2 courses in art and design.

Provision in art is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in the sixth form is very good due to the quality of teaching and the range of opportunities available to the students
- Teaching is very good. The teachers have very high expectations and work as an effective team, offering complementary skills that bring benefits to the students
- The attitude of the students and their professional relationships with their teachers are excellent, providing an effective learning partnership in lessons
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent, providing a very clear vision and the promotion of high standards
- GCE photography is very successful and is enhancing the range of opportunities available to the students
- Assessment is excellent and is having a significant positive impact on standards and achievement
- No significant weaknesses were evident.

Commentary

194. The numbers of students in GCE AS and A-level art and design and GCE AS and A-level photography are too small for analysis against national averages. Standards in GCE AS examinations in 2003 were well above average. In GCE A-level in 2003 standards were average but well above those in 2004. In 2003 and 2004 in GCE AS-level photography standards were above average. In GCE A-level photography in 2003 and 2004 standards were broadly average. Achievement in both art and design and photography is very good. Because of very good teaching research skills are good or very good. Students are encouraged to solve their own problems and have confidence in their abilities. A number of students in GCE photography have had no previous experience in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Students have a good understanding of art and design, developing thoughtful investigations and exploration of ideas. The students are articulate and are capable of discussing their work with confidence, demonstrating pride in their achievements.

195. Teaching is very good. The lessons are challenging and very well planned, providing all students with opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective. The professional relationships between the teachers and the students are excellent, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons and a positive influence on learning. Project briefs are well designed; they include clear aims and objectives, excellent assessment criteria and deadlines for completion. Consequently all students know what is expected of them and work hard. Assessment provides students with excellent advice and guidance and is a very good influence on the future development of the department. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. Students learn well as a direct result of very effective teaching and the promotion of independent learning skills. Students are very complimentary about the level of support given to them by their teachers.

196. Leadership and management are excellent. There is clear vision and excellent planning which promote very high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team. Resources are satisfactory but the increasing popularity of art and design and photography is putting a strain on the existing provision of materials and equipment.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects in this area were inspected in detail.

BUSINESS

The focus was on the provision for AS, A2 and GNVQ courses in business studies.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained are above those obtained by similar students in similar schools
- Very good teaching is given by a dedicated team
- Good value is added and students achieve very well
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good
- A lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject impacts negatively on students' performance in both class work and examinations
- Accommodation and the lack of specialised resources limit teaching and learning provision. This has a negative effect on standards

Commentary

197. In the sixth form, the school offers AS, A2 levels, GNVQ intermediate level, e-business, and AVCE courses.

198. Results at A2 are in line with national averages. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above those seen in similar schools. Students' projects and written work are interesting, well produced and

professionally presented. Higher attaining students effectively evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate and well-supported conclusions. Lower attaining students demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts and are increasingly confident with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data, though these skills remain relatively weak.

199. Standards at AS are in line with national norms. Higher attaining students apply relevant theory and show a good grasp of business concepts. However, they do not always develop an explanation into a fully substantiated view. Lower attaining students often make assertions which are unsupported and they present evidence which is not always evaluated.
200. At the intermediate level of GNVQ, which the school uses as part of a bridging course, results last year were in line with national standards. Current standards seen in class are above standards in similar schools. Students confidently use a wide range of business terminology. Work is thorough and covers the requirements of the syllabus in a broad way. Relative weaknesses are the interpretation and analysis of data and students' failure to retain knowledge and understanding over time. Nevertheless, given the students' prior attainment at entry to the sixth form, there is tangible evidence of very good value added.
201. Results in the advanced vocational examinations are in line with national figures. Work seen is above national norms. The strengths of the students' class work is their basic understanding of the subject matter and the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, particularly that of such underpinning business concepts as organisational functions and structures.
202. Given the levels of prior attainment at entry to the sixth form, achievement in all courses is very good. However, students' progress is hindered by the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject, which impacts on the time they can devote to learning. The department's sixth form curriculum is broad and balanced and offers opportunities for success.
203. Teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent rapport with students and their expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Students are very well supported academically. Teachers often endeavour to ensure that students have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners. However, there are some lessons in which there is a tendency for teachers to be too didactic. Progress is best where students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work.
204. Learning reflects teaching. Students respond well in lessons. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour. Their attitudes are mature and they sustain interest. However, some students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.
205. Resources are good. The students use computers effectively to undertake research and to prepare reports for coursework. Accommodation is good in terms of the size of

rooms but inadequate in terms of the number and appropriateness of specialist rooms. The curriculum is broad and innovative and includes a course in e business.

206. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department checks and analyses results carefully to identify areas of courses in which learning can be improved, and sets clear targets for action as a consequence. She has a clear vision for the future of the department which sensibly encompasses plans to strengthen, even more, the current strong academic and vocational aspects of the department's provision to meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future cohorts of students. In all of this, she is well supported by her colleagues, whom she in turn supports. She is an excellent role model for a department committed to the highest standards.

207. Business education in the sixth form has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the wide range of curricular opportunities offered.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on the provision in health and social care.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are committed to improving standards
- Lessons are well planned, enabling students to acquire sound skills, knowledge and understanding
- Good classroom management leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes
- There are very good leadership and management of the subject
- Teachers make insufficient checks on students' learning during and at the end of lessons to ascertain what has been learnt

Commentary

208. Students achieve well and standards are above average, particularly in the AVCE course. Standards of work seen during the inspection in most respects are average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Students can select and use a range of research materials in their study of health and social care topics. They know how to communicate effectively and are learning to reflect on the different communication skills they use in their interaction with clients. More able students in their case study observations are able to analyse the ethical issues involved in the treatment of clients and to make critical evaluations of the risks and consequences of treatment. They are developing skills in drawing conclusions and responding to issues. Most students were able to give a clear oral account of areas of work they are currently studying. However, their skills in evaluation need to be developed. Students' work is well organised and presented; they use correct terminology in their assignments and some make good use of ICT.

209. Students learn well. This results from the quality of teaching and learning which is good and sometimes very good. Teachers manage students well and their high expectations of behaviour create positive attitudes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subject, resulting in students appreciating the significance of care provision. Students make good progress because lessons are well planned; they have a clear structure, with specific learning objectives, so that students know what to do and how to do it. In some lessons teachers do not take opportunities to challenge students to question their judgements, particularly negative ones. Teachers' comments on written work and review sheets are helpful and constructive, giving clear feedback on what needs to be done to improve. However, teachers make insufficient checks on students' learning during lessons and they do not always summarise lessons to ascertain what has been learnt in order to set individual targets and help to plan for future lessons.

210. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the needs and priorities for development and has a clear vision of the subject's aims. Teachers work together and have a strong commitment to raising standards and improving students' learning and personal development. Good

use is made of outside speakers and work experience to enhance and extend learning. Resources are good and students have good access to ICT.

211. The subject was not inspected in the last inspection so it is not possible to judge the department's progress since that time.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subjects in this area were inspected.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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