

INSPECTION REPORT

PENKETH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Penketh

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111431

Headteacher: Mr B Fishwick

Lead inspector: Mrs C Worthington

Dates of inspection: 4th - 7th October 2004

Inspection number: 268876

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 -18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1359
School address:	Heath Road Penketh Warrington Cheshire
Postcode:	WA5 2BY
Telephone number:	(01925) 720 264
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Chairman of governors:	John Holmes

Date of previous inspection: 8th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Penketh High School is a larger than average comprehensive for pupils aged 11-18 from a socially mixed background within a fairly wide catchment area on the western side of Warrington. There are about five per cent more girls than boys. The proportion of pupils currently entitled to free school meals (12 per cent) is about average. Most pupils are white British; others are mainly of Asian origin. The percentage of pupils believed not to use English as their first language is a little higher than average at 2.7, but only one pupil is at an early stage of acquiring English. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (10.4) is below average; that of pupils (3.4) with statements of special educational needs is above average. These needs relate mostly to dyslexia, moderate learning difficulty or social, emotional and behavioural problems. The school holds the Artsmark and Sportsmark as well as awards for Investors in People and Investors in Careers. It is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Young Enterprise, The Children's Fund and Lionheart Challenge. A bid for Specialist School status for Visual and Media Arts is well advanced.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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30518	Michael Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
10941	Renee Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
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15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	History
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education
7222	Alan Watson	Team inspector	Music
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Penketh is an **effective school**. The headteacher is innovative, self-critical and articulates a clear vision for the school's development. Standards are average overall, representing good achievement from pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7. Leadership and management are good and so are teaching and learning, particularly in Years 10 to 13. The school is subsidising the sixth form at the beginning of its three-year development plan and provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Innovative leadership results in the school disseminating its good practice to other schools.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.
- Provision for visual arts and drama is very good.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good as a result of good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Attention to inclusion is very good but does not do enough for gifted and talented pupils.
- Provision for work-related learning is good with some very good features.
- Provision for citizenship and personal, health and social education is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment procedures are good in Years 10 and 11 but are not consistent in Years 7 to 9, except in English, mathematics and science.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made good improvement. All the key issues have been addressed and the school has done the best it can to relocate the public footpath running through its site. Nevertheless, this remains a significant problem. Standards in Year 9 in particular have been rising faster than the national trend. Leadership and management, teaching and learning have all improved, and so have pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour. The school is now in a good position to improve further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	-	C	C	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	-	E	E	

*Key: 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.*

Achievement is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils are currently achieving average standards from below average attainment on entry. The school's National Curriculum test results for pupils aged 14 years have been rising since 2000. In 2003, they were not as good in English as in previous years, but average overall. The results in the 2004 national tests were a great improvement, particularly in English, where the school exceeded its targets.

In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils who achieved five A*-C grades was above average, but the points score was average. The 2004 grades were lower, especially in English, because several pupils who were predicted C grades did not attain them. The school has already introduced measures for improvement and these are having a good effect. Standards in art and design are a particular strength of the school. Results in modern foreign languages, having been a weakness for some years, have improved particularly well as a result of the school's focus on this subject.

Students enter the sixth form with grades lower than in some schools, and make satisfactory progress overall. Achievement is very good in art and design and good in business education. In 2003, although examination results were well below average, the value added to the students' education was good compared with their prior attainment. Many A-level groups were too low in number for national comparisons to be made. Currently, the picture is better, with students embarking on AS level courses with satisfactory qualifications, and they are achieving well in some subjects. For some students, below average literacy and ICT skills, together with inadequate study skills, are preventing higher achievement.

Attitudes and behaviour are generally good throughout the school. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** is also good. **Attendance** and punctuality are **satisfactory** in the main school but in the **sixth form, attendance is low**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education provided by the school** is good. **Teaching and learning** are good throughout the school, particularly in Years 10 to 13, where eight out of ten lessons seen were good or better and one quarter was at least very good. Teachers have good expertise and manage behaviour well. Teaching is particularly good in art and design and drama, resulting in very good achievement, but learning in citizenship is unsatisfactory because there is too little guidance and support for teachers.

The **curriculum** is satisfactory in the main school, providing a broad range of worthwhile opportunities that cater for the interests, aptitudes and individual needs of pupils, except in citizenship and PHSE. The Year 7 curriculum is innovative and working well. The sixth form curriculum is in the early stages of a three-year plan and is satisfactory. Enrichment is good in the main school, but limited in its scope in the sixth form. Arrangements for pupils' **care**, welfare, health and safety are generally good. Provision of advice, **support and guidance** is good. The school involves pupils and students in its work and development well. The school council provides many chances for them to develop their confidence as they represent their peers and learn about democratic procedures and decision-making. The school has accepted many of their ideas.

The school has a good **partnership with parents** and very good links in the wider **community**, including with other schools and colleges. The school has made several good improvements in these areas since the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **good**. The headteacher is a strong leader, well supported by his deputies and senior management. The school is recognised for its innovative practice which it disseminates to other schools. The subject heads of department

and pastoral heads of house carry out their duties well in the school. There is excellent leadership of drama and art. Governors give good service to the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have positive views of the school. Parents believe that their children are happy and receiving a good all-round education. They particularly appreciate the good leadership of the headteacher.

Some expressed disquiet with the setting arrangements and behaviour management in some groups. Setting is based on capability in English, mathematics and science, as in most schools, and there are inevitably some mismatches between setting and aptitude in other subjects. However, the system is flexible enough for changes to be made. Inspectors found that behaviour is managed consistently well and rarely disrupts learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in Year 11 by continuing to focus on C/D borderline pupils and by providing more challenge for the higher ability pupils and those who are gifted and talented.
- Improve provision and achievement in the sixth form by addressing the low attendance, improving students' independent learning skills, ensuring that entry qualifications are high enough and providing more scope for curriculum enrichment.
- Ensure that literacy and ICT skills are consistently developed through all stages of the curriculum.
- Ensure that finances are distributed sufficiently to enable subject resources to be purchased and that the sixth form becomes fully cost-effective;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure full coverage of the curriculum for citizenship and PHSE.

THE SIXTH FORM AT PENKETH HIGH SCHOOL
Caters for 110 students in a good range of academic and some vocational courses

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is satisfactory. It has had unsatisfactory features to do with the recruitment and retention of students in the past two years but is now in the initial stages of a three-year development plan. Proposals to harmonise timetables with partner institutions and facilitate transport are being realised. Teaching and learning are good; students exhibit good attitudes and willingly take responsibility in the school. Standards are average for the beginning of the academic year. All is in place for successful further development. Although the sixth form is slightly subsidised by the main school at this stage of its development, cost-effectiveness is satisfactory overall.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision for visual art is outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment is good and used well to monitor progress.
- Students receive good support and guidance for their studies and future careers.
- Attendance is low and unmonitored, and has an adverse effect on standards.
- Independent learning skills are not developed well enough in all subjects.

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 is good and students make satisfactory progress from Year 11, although the achievement of those of lower ability is good. Teaching is good, with a clear emphasis on raising attainment through supporting students to understand their targets and how to reach them.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory. The range of ability of students is very wide and teaching is unimaginative. Basic skills are not secure in all students.
Science	Provision for chemistry is satisfactory. Teachers have good expertise and use a variety of approaches in well-planned lessons. Students do not take enough responsibility for learning.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good. Students achieve well from good teaching and standards are above average.
Humanities	Provision for psychology is satisfactory. Recently-introduced specialist teaching has a positive effect on students' achievements. Funding is inadequate for the number of students taking this subject.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for art and design is excellent, as are possibilities for further development. Provision for performing arts is good. Students have the potential to achieve well in drama and music but in dance , they have no previous experience.
Business	Students make good progress. The course is well organised and very well taught, but students do not do enough independent learning. Several vocational courses are not offered, leaving no way forward for students within the sixth form. Other pathways exist through collaborative links.
Health and social care	Students of a very wide range of ability make satisfactory progress; standards are below average. Teaching is satisfactory with good features.

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

Support and guidance are good, as are arrangements for transfer and induction into the sixth form. Information about courses is well presented. Tutors and subject staff work well together to monitor their students' progress. Students are encouraged to develop good study techniques and independence in their learning, but need more guidance in some subjects. Provision for careers advice in the sixth form is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly-appointed leadership has insisted on higher academic standards on entry to Year 12, but has not fully investigated the effect of absence on standards, nor monitored attendance. There is some lack of clarity in how responsibility is delegated from senior management to the head of sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel that they are treated as mature young adults and given responsibility in the school. They appreciate the new computer facilities and think they are given good advice and information on their studies and their future plans.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are average by the end of Years 9 and 11, representing good achievement from pupils' attainment on entry. There are yearly fluctuations reflecting the nature of individual groups of pupils but the school analyses its performance and works hard to improve it.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good overall.
- GCSE grades in 2003 were above average, but have fallen in 2004.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in practical subjects but in academic subjects are often hampered by limited literacy.
- Current standards in Year 11 are well above average in art and design and drama, and above average in science and mathematics, but attainment in citizenship is below average.
- Standards in the sixth form are improving and are currently better than those shown by examination results.

Commentary

1. Standards are average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils enter with attainment which is usually below average. Those who took GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average when they started Year 7, particularly in literacy and verbal reasoning tests. They achieved well to attain average standards in their Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2001, and above average GCSE grades in 2003, as measured by the proportion attaining five or more A* to C grades. In 2004, a significantly lower number of pupils gained five A* to C grades, although the percentage gaining A* and A grades was very similar to that of 2003. Some candidates with predicted C grades did not achieve them. Many of these were disaffected girls; this problem does not seem to exist in the current Year 11, where measures to improve the performance of pupils at the D/C borderline, put into place following the analysis of previous results, are already proving effective, particularly in English in second and third sets.
2. In Year 9 in 2003, results in national tests were average overall, but pupils attained higher standards in mathematics than in English and science. Pupils enter the school with slightly higher attainment in mathematics and this is maintained by the consistently good teaching throughout the school. In science, pupils attained average standards but did not achieve as well as they should have done compared with the results in similar schools. In English, however, test results were below the national average in 2003 and well below that of similar schools. The measures put in place by the school to remedy this were very successful, and pupils' performance improved greatly in 2004, exceeding targets that were raised for this year group. There has been all-round improvement in 2004 in Year 9 test results, maintaining the generally rising trend.
3. The school's performance in National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds and GCSE examinations is analysed thoroughly each year by the senior management team and

monitored by the local education authority. The school consistently adds value between the ages of 11 and 16 and is the third highest performing school in Warrington. More sophisticated analysis of the Fischer Family Trust data shows that boys' achievement in particular has been improved by the school's intervention methods, but there is still more that could be done to improve the achievement of the gifted and talented pupils and those of higher ability. The trend in GCSE results had been rising, but there was a dip in 2004.

4. Standards attained by pupils with special educational needs are below or well below average in most subjects. National Curriculum test results in Year 9 in 2004 showed an appreciable number of passes among pupils with special educational needs in science and improved levels in English and mathematics upon 2003 results. Lack of ability in literacy impedes the learning of these pupils, however, and school testing in reading and comprehension shows levels well below actual age as a rule. Pupils are entered for examinations where appropriate. Those with special educational needs often do better in practical or creative subjects, such as physical education, art and design or drama. Overall, they achieve well, sometimes very well, against their own targets, particularly with the support of specialist teaching and when supported in class.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.4 (33.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.3 (35.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.5 (32.8)	33.3 (33.3)

There were 261 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55 (41)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.2 (33.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 226 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	86.9 (80.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.9 (19.9)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	175.1 (191.7)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 51 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Current attainment in the school is average in Years 7 to 9 in all subjects except mathematics, art and design and drama, where it is above average, and in citizenship,

where it is below average. Achievement is generally good; pupils' attainment on entry in most subjects is below average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils consolidate and extend their learning. Standards are maintained in mathematics; they rise to above average in science and history and well above average in art and design and drama. Elsewhere, they remain average, but the value added between the ages of 11 and 16 years shows a significant increase and is positive overall. There are now no significant differences between girls' and boys' achievement since the school has addressed the latter. It is now putting in place measures aimed at the average pupils on the C/D borderline, with particular success in English.

6. The school is expecting to become a specialist Arts College in the near future and the outstanding provision for art is the reason for well above average standards in examinations. This is evident in the high quality artwork displayed around the school. In drama, too, performance is of high quality and well above average. Pupils achieve very well in these subjects. In citizenship, standards are below average because of the inadequacies in provision and pupils' achievement is limited and unsatisfactory. Although their personal development and attitudes to work are good, this is because of the good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
7. Pupils enter the school with below average standards of literacy. This is developed well from Year 7 onwards and is average by the end of Year 9, remaining so thereafter. However, limited skill in literacy remains a barrier to achievement in some subjects, namely geography in Years 10 and 11, health and social care in the sixth form, and for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school. The standard of numeracy is average and pupils have no difficulty with applied numeracy in science, design and technology and geography. Skills in ICT are satisfactory but pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop them across the whole curriculum, largely due to difficulties with access to computers, though the school is in the middle of a rolling programme to improve ICT facilities.

Sixth form

8. Students' attainment in the subjects inspected is average overall, but ranges from well above average to below average. Standards achieved in AS, A-level and AVCE examinations in 2003 were well below the national average, but represent good achievement and added value when students' prior attainment is taken into account. The school has admitted students on AS level courses in the past with GCSE grades below those generally considered appropriate for passing advanced level examinations. The result is that standards in AS level fell and students were unable to continue with A-level in some subjects. For this reason, examination grades showed only a little improvement in 2004, but many groups were not large enough to make national comparisons. Now the school is ensuring that attainment on entry to the sixth form is at a higher level and current standards were seen to be average, with well above average attainment in art and design and above average attainment in business studies and religious education.
9. In some subjects, such as health and social care, the standard of literacy is lower than would be expected for advanced level studies and this is preventing higher standards being achieved. The school has recognised this and is phasing the course at Penketh. It is redirecting students down more appropriate pathways. Numeracy was observed to be satisfactory in A-level physics, but ICT skills are not as good as would be expected for

sixth formers, except in discrete ICT, business studies and design and technology. Independent study skills are not well developed. Students do not read widely, nor do they do enough research; this limits their learning and makes them too dependent on their teachers' support and guidance. Teachers are putting in a great deal of effort to improve independent learning but there is still some way to go.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

In the main school and sixth form, attitudes and behaviour are generally good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and students is also good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory in the main school but in the sixth form, attendance is low.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attitudes and behaviour make a positive contribution to achievement.
- Personal development is good because there is strong provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for all year groups.
- Very good relationships at all levels contribute to the strong ethos.
- Inadequate monitoring and recording procedures for attendance in the sixth form have resulted in low attendance rates.

Commentary

10. Attitudes are good throughout the school, and have improved greatly since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy school life and show very high levels of interest and enthusiasm in their work. They concentrate well in most lessons and take pride in their achievements. The interest of different groups of pupils is successfully maintained through various programmes that challenge and support them according to their individual needs. However, provision is not sufficient for higher ability pupils and those who are gifted and talented.
11. Pupils with special educational needs work hard to achieve their targets, and show positive attitudes towards learning. Targets may include behavioural objectives with involvement in social integration. Personal development plays an important part, and a major aim is to help pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence. These pupils are fully accepted across the school, though intervention strategies may be used when a pupil is withdrawn for a behaviour problem for a while. Pupils understand the reasons for withdrawal and accept the principles of the scheme.
12. Behaviour is generally good in the classroom, in assembly, in the canteen and around the school grounds. A minority of pupils, mostly in lower sets, can be disruptive in lessons but teachers deal with this effectively and disruption is minimal. Some pupils say that bullying occurs, but that it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Following concerns about smoking, arrangements for supervision now include the toilets. All pupils are aware of the school rules and there are high expectations regarding conduct at all times. The house points system is effective. Pupils can earn points for their achievements, attitudes, behaviour and attendance. The incidence of exclusion for unacceptable behaviour is low.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1,314	82	6
Asian or Asian British – Indian	11	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	1	0
Parents preferred not to say	28	1	0

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

13. The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony, very well. Consequently, pupils work together very well and there are many friendship groups in and out of lessons. The inspection team was impressed at how well pupils work together on collaborative tasks, particularly in practical subjects, such as design and technology and drama.
14. The school has made good improvements to personal development since the previous inspection. Spiritual development is now good. Opportunities in assembly and in subjects such as science, literacy and history allow pupils to marvel at the world around them and also to consider and reflect on human achievement and failing. Pupils' moral development is now good and they have a clear sense of right and wrong. In a Year 9 drama lesson, they did a play about the moral dilemma faced by witnesses to a serious car accident. In religious education, Year 10 pupils recently considered the issue of divorce, and Year 11 topics include abortion and euthanasia.
15. Pupils accept responsibility well and know that they have an important role to play in the community. Older pupils often help younger ones by acting as peer mentors. Pupils' cultural development is now good because they have many opportunities to learn about their own culture through the curriculum. Opportunities in art are especially noteworthy; pupils visit several national art galleries and do much work with a multicultural dimension. Although awareness of other cultures in Britain is good, many pupils said they want to know much more.
16. Attendance is satisfactory. Although it was below the national average in 2002/3, it has risen by 0.5 per cent in 2003/4. Unauthorised absence has risen over the same period. However, this is because of a new and very strict approach: holidays in term time are no longer tolerated, except in the most exceptional of circumstances. The school monitors and promotes attendance effectively through the pastoral system and several learning mentors who work very hard in this regard.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	8.0
National data	7.2

School data	0.8
National data	1.1

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

Sixth form

17. Students have positive attitudes to life and studies in the sixth form and their behaviour is good. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are mainly good. These factors make a significant contribution to students' achievements and personal development. Students respond positively in lessons and to chances to take responsibility for their own learning. They show much interest in school and sixth-form issues through the College Committee, which provides them with good opportunities for personal development.
18. The monitoring of attendance and related record keeping in the sixth form are unsatisfactory. Attendance and absence statistics were not kept properly in the 2003/4 academic year, and from the very limited data available, attendance and unauthorised absence are significant issues hindering the progress of many students. There are also serious concerns about the safety implications of this pattern of attendance. Registration was observed to be done by subject teachers at the start of every lesson but not centrally by form tutors during the designated registration period, which was used solely for the academic mentoring of individuals.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is satisfactory with many good features, particularly in the enrichment provided in arts subjects.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly in Years 10 to 13, where about one quarter of all lessons seen were very good or excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good expertise is widespread because good practice is shared and weaknesses overcome.
- Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching in art and design and drama is very good and pupils achieve very well as a result.
- Learning is unsatisfactory in citizenship because teachers do not receive enough guidance.
- Assessment procedures are good but the use of data in Years 7 to 9 is not as good as it is in the rest of the school.

Commentary

19. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school; of the 153 lessons observed, over three quarters were good or better. The highest proportion was seen in the sixth form

and Years 10 and 11, where more than eight out of ten lessons were of this quality, and nearly one quarter were very good or better.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	30 (20%)	83 (54%)	34 (22%)	3 (2%)	0	0

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

20. The spread of good teaching grades was wide, indicating that teachers have good expertise in their subjects and monitoring and evaluation procedures are effective, ensuring that good practice is shared and weaker areas improved. Heads of department are good role models; they and their line-managers monitor teaching effectively in several ways, such as by classroom observation, examining pupils' books and seeking pupils' own evaluations in some subjects. This is not the case in citizenship, however, where there is unsatisfactory learning because teachers do not receive appropriate guidance and support.
21. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. In English, pupils learn well because lessons are planned with clear objectives. The development of oral skills is particularly good through questioning and discussion. In mathematics, the good teaching is rather didactic and instructional. This enables pupils to do well in tests and examinations but does not develop their ability to work independently by taking account of the different learning styles of pupils in some large classes. In science, however, there is a wide variety of teaching approaches planned to enable most pupils to learn well. In all three core subjects, there is some degree of insufficient planning for the complete range of ability found in the school; in mathematics and science, it is mainly the pupils of higher ability and the gifted and talented who are not consistently given enough challenge to extend their understanding in a way commensurate with their capability.
22. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations of behaviour and of pupils' capability in all subjects. In art and design, in particular, teachers have very good expertise and challenge pupils to give of their best. As a result, in this subject, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. In all subjects, teachers encourage and engage their pupils, who respond by applying themselves to learning and being productive in the amount and quality of work they produce.
23. A consistent planning format is used well throughout the school and the three-part lesson advocated by the National Strategy for Development at Key Stage 3 is almost ubiquitous, and assisted by the recent change to one-hour lessons. Although in some lessons, the plenary summing up of objectives is not always apparent, notably in mathematics, religious education and history, teachers generally make effective use of time, and pupils are productive. In geography, however, pupils are sometimes expected to provide answers to very specific questions in too short a space of time.
24. Teaching methods are satisfactory and, in most cases, engage pupils by being matched well to their learning needs. In modern foreign languages, for example, teachers use a wide range of creative methods involving games and flash cards which capture pupils' interest. In some large classes, this is not always so.

25. Teachers make good use of resources. In mathematics and ICT, electronic whiteboards are used to good effect, and the school's innovative work-place reform procedures ensure that teaching assistants are well trained and employed effectively by teachers, particularly to guide the less able. Technician support is effective in science and ICT and enables teachers to concentrate their efforts in the classroom, which is beneficial to pupils' learning
26. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Specialist staff know the pupils very well and relationships are strong. Skilled assistants support pupils very well in class and in small groups, making a strong contribution to their learning. Individual education plans (IEPs) have been developed since the previous inspection. Staff refer consistently to these. Appropriate use of differentiated work enables pupils to learn at their own pace, though teachers' expectations remain high. Good use of ICT has helped to improve pupils' understanding and presentation. Success in learning varies across the curriculum according to teaching strategies. In general, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
27. A good policy for homework is consistently applied; homework is satisfactorily used in all years to reinforce learning and extend the curriculum, though it does not do enough to develop independent research.
28. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and good in the core subjects, where there is frequent assessment of National Curriculum levels through tests and written projects. In other subjects, assessment is not so frequent and, although pupils know their targets, they do not always know how to reach them because teachers' marking is not adequately informative. In Years 10 and 11, assessment procedures are good, follow the GCSE guidelines and are carried out effectively. Pupils know their targets and are aware of how to achieve higher grades because teachers' marking at this stage is conscientious and informative. Furthermore, learning mentors regularly discuss targets with them in order to assist achievement. Assessment procedures are not used well enough, however, in non-examination subjects, such as physical education and citizenship, in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

29. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good; over eight out of ten lessons seen were good or better, and one quarter was at least very good. Teaching in art and design is excellent because of the extremely high expectations of students' achievements. Teaching challenges and inspires students and they produce some outstanding artwork; the degree of expertise and knowledge they acquire makes them extremely critical of their own work and leads to high achievement. This is also true of the drama component of performing arts. Teaching in business studies is very good and well organised so that students make very good progress.
30. In most other subjects inspected, teaching is good. All teachers have a high level of expertise and challenge students well. Lessons are well planned. In the lessons that were very good or excellent (about one quarter of those observed), all students were engaged by the teaching material and achieved very well. Discussion and debate are used particularly well, as seen in English and history. Teachers' very good technical

expertise in ICT enables students to gain ICT skills rapidly. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory overall. Although students do well, teaching does not encourage them sufficiently to acquire independent learning skills in preparation for higher education. Some groups are too large or too small for successful group dynamics. There are four students in Year 13 physics and 24 in Year 12 psychology, for example, and this makes it difficult for them to extend their learning by sustained discussion with their peers, on the one hand, or for learning to be matched to the needs of all students, on the other.

31. Assessment is particularly good in the sixth form. Subject teachers and form tutors spend much time profitably checking students' progress in achieving their goals, which are now aspirational and challenging. Very good individual support greatly assists students to do as well as they can.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth, balance and flexibility of the curriculum ensure that the needs of pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds are met.
- The innovative Year 7 programme helps pupils new to the school to learn and achieve well.
- Very good provision for the visual arts enriches the learning of all pupils.
- Unsatisfactory provision for citizenship and for personal, social and health education has an adverse impact on standards.
- Provision for work-related learning is good with very good features
- Partnership with other post -16 providers ensures a broad, balanced and flexible curriculum that meets students' needs.
- The range of enrichment activities is restricted in the sixth form.

Commentary

32. The curriculum satisfies the legal requirements for National Curriculum subjects. In Years 7 to 9, the programme includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, enhanced by drama. Both French and German are offered in Years 7 to 9; the great majority of pupils study two modern foreign languages and can choose to continue them in Years 10 and 11. The newly-introduced Year 7 curriculum draws on the best features of primary practice to ensure that new pupils build on prior learning and adapt successfully to secondary education.
33. The breadth and flexibility of the curriculum make certain that, from Year 9, pupils have a variety of coherent pathways towards continuing education, training or employment. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' basic needs are met through the pursuit of a common core of subjects. Pupils then build on this foundation to construct a programme of study tailored to their individual needs and interests by choosing four further subjects from a very wide range of traditional GCSEs, applied GCSEs, and vocational courses.
34. Pupils with special educational needs take part in all aspects of the curriculum. They are enabled to do so through specialist help and appropriate resources. Accommodation

and equipment in the resource learning area are good, with good facilities for teaching and for counselling. There is, however, a lack of individual support in religious education lessons and, for a few disabled pupils, no access to upstairs rooms in one building. There is a need for a lift in this part of the school. Work experience involves all Year 10 pupils. This includes experience in shops, offices, a restaurant, a garden centre and an engineering company. These placements are supervised closely and the school reports good progress. There is underdevelopment of a vocational skills programme for older pupils at present, though taster courses are planned later this term at a local college to explore opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs are welcome at any extra-curricular activities.

35. The school's careers education and guidance programme prepares pupils well for the later stages of education, training or employment. The school also does much to promote pupils' moral and social development in its daily life. However, the taught citizenship programme is unsatisfactory. Standards are below average because planning and delivery lack rigour and coherence. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory because it does not ensure delivery of the nationally recommended programme. The time allocated to teaching religious education in Year 9 is below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus.
36. The school has successfully implemented the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, and teaching and learning show close attention to the recommended lesson structures. Its very good provision for the visual arts, and extensive extra-curricular activities and community links, has enriched learning and raised standards in all areas of its life and work.
37. Provision for work-related learning is good with very good features. The main aspects of the national framework are in place and are co-ordinated very effectively by a deputy headteacher supported by a colleague who delivers work-related best practice to other Warrington and Cheshire schools. The school takes part in the annual Lionheart challenge, which allows pupils to apply enterprise skills in a competitive setting. Vocational courses are taught effectively and the work experience programmes are managed well. The Vodaphone Voice Project raises awareness of modern interviewing skills and "focus days" involving local employers support pupils' experience. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in the Junior Sports Leaders award, and to be pupil librarians, pupil governors, pupil receptionists or school council members, among many others. The school has its own radio station which is run by the pupils.
38. The school has a very good relationship with the Connexions Service personal advisors and a member of the school staff is used in an advisory capacity by this service throughout Warrington, which itself is a 14 to 19 Pathfinder. Penketh is part of the planning group for work-related learning in Years 10 and 11. An audit has been taken across subject areas, and some departments contribute more positively than others at present. Vocational subjects are making a good impact in this area and the Careers and Education and Guidance Programme is comprehensive. The school has held the Investors in Careers Award for five years. An alternative curriculum with extended work experience placements is available for relevant pupils. Visits to the school by the armed services, local employers and further education departments support the work-related programme. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme are being satisfactorily developed during the academic year. The school is working with an external software

writer to develop a package that is tailored to the needs of the school, leading to individual target setting in careers exploration. Not all subject areas are ensuring that they make an effective contribution to the work-related learning programme in the school.

39. Staff overall are well qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. Only in religious education and humanities are there some non-specialist staff employed. In Year 7, primary trained staff are in place to aid the transition of pupils. Learning support assistants are numerous and proactive in lessons. Many are attached to a subject area to help develop specialist experience. There are few problems of recruitment or retention of staff. Other support, administrative and technical staff give good service.
40. Accommodation is satisfactory with some good improvements since the last inspection. The school has worked hard to put into place a programme of upgrading and modernisation, still in progress. A number of curriculum areas have been improved, namely art and design, mathematics, ICT, and music, and there is now a media suite. The science block has been rebuilt with well-designed laboratories. The learning resource centre is rather small for a large school but is well used by pupils, both in school time and out of school hours. Most departments are now in discrete areas and a change of layout has improved pupil circulation on stairways and corridors, though these can still be crowded at lesson changeover time. Toilet facilities have been improved and there is now disabled access to all areas of the school except one block. The design and technology area is outdated and requires modernising. The concern over the sloping paved area at the last inspection has been addressed by landscaping and fencing. Whilst the school has made some improvement in addressing the issue over the public footpath, it remains concerned about public access to the premises during the school day and out of school hours. There is some litter around the school but little graffiti or vandalism caused by pupils.
41. Resources for learning are good. The ratio of computers to pupils matches the national average to cover the needs of the curriculum, though the difficulty of access reduces the contribution of ICT in some subjects. The mathematics and modern foreign languages departments have suites of computers attached awaiting to be networked, which should improve overall provision further. The school is keeping up with the developing technological trends in the classroom with the ongoing installation of interactive whiteboards. Drama resources are excellent. Computerised lighting, a professional sound system and moveable seating have been installed and represent considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection. Textbook provision is adequate, though funding across the curriculum has been reduced. Resources for religious education are unsatisfactory. The learning resource centre (library) makes a good contribution to learning and book resources are satisfactory.

Sixth form

42. The school has planned well to develop its post -16 provision over a three-year period. At this early stage of development, the sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall, and improving. Partnership with Warrington Collegiate Institute and Priestley College lies at the heart of the school's vision for the curriculum. Each institution's distinctive strengths will be built on to ensure a diversity of choice that will meet the needs of pupils from Penketh and other schools in the area. Plans to harmonise timetables, and to facilitate transport, are well advanced.

43. Penketh, on its part, is reducing and refocusing its provision of vocational courses, some of which can be more effectively offered elsewhere. Whilst it has retained the vocational certificate of education (VCE) award in ICT, its distinctive contribution to vocational provision in the locality will be the VCE double award in the performing arts, which can be coupled with A-level media studies. Together, these build on the school's acknowledged strengths in the visual arts. In parallel, the school is strengthening its existing portfolio of 16 traditional GCE A-level subjects. The early fruits of this strategy were well evidenced, for example, in the 2004 AS examinations in philosophy and religion, when a group comprising both Penketh and Priestley College students attained a 100 per cent pass rate.
44. The core programme of tutorials and careers education and guidance effectively supports students in planning their pathways to higher education, training or employment. Students are afforded some opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, for example, through the Young Enterprise scheme, or Duke of Edinburgh Award. At this point in the sixth form's development, however, curriculum enrichment is limited because of a lack of coherence and rigour in its planning and monitoring. There is inadequate provision for games, for example.
45. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the sixth form block requires upgrading and a number of areas need redecorating. Staffing is good; there are sufficient well-qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, except in psychology, where class sizes are too large. Resources are good. Sixth form groups have access to the same resources in art and design and drama, for example, as the rest of the school. The funding for psychology is unsatisfactory for the number of students.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are generally good. The provision of advice, support and guidance is good. The school involves pupils and students in its work and development well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements to settle new pupils into Year 7 are very successful and those to guide Year 11 pupils as they prepare for public examinations are good.
- Pupils with particular needs are well supported.
- A strong pastoral system gives pupils and students confidence and security in their learning.
- Pupils and students form very good, trusting relationships with adults because of the school's very strong family ethos.
- Pupils' and students' views are taken seriously and they are well involved in whole-school matters.

Commentary

46. The school's induction arrangements are very good and parents are delighted with them. Prospective pupils are given a very good chance to experience the learning routines at pre-school induction days. All Year 7 pupils are based in one building and this works very well, ensuring a gradual integration. Where desired, a pupil mentor from Year 8 is allocated to each Year 7 pupil. The good level of support provided in Year 11 includes the allocation of an adult mentor, where appropriate, as pupils start this crucial period in their education. These factors represent good improvement since the previous inspection.
47. Arrangements for child protection and for those in public care are good. The school meets its legal requirements. The designated officer for child protection is fully trained along with two others. All heads of house are booked to receive extensive training this term. The school has addressed all health and safety matters identified at the previous inspection as far as is reasonably possible. Good efforts are made to reduce the problems caused by the public footpath running through the site. General health and safety risk assessments are now undertaken as required. Arrangements for first-aid and fire procedures are good.
48. A good pastoral support system is organised well, with heads of house, form tutors, support staff and external agencies making a good contribution to achievement and personal development. The progress of all pupils is monitored effectively. Both pupils and parents are involved well in setting future learning targets. The school has changed recently from a head of year system to a house system. The inspection team agrees with heads of house that, although information about personal development is used very well to guide and support pupils, there is scope to improve academic monitoring procedures and the use of data further.
49. The school effectively provides for pupils who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language with ongoing support from the local education authority and outside agencies such as the speech and language therapy service, which has very close links with the school. Individual pupils' progress is recorded daily and used to determine future planning. Frequent contact occurs between teachers, assistants, special needs staff, heads of house and co-ordinators of intervention and inclusion policies. Pupils are tested regularly, especially in reading and comprehension, to ensure that their literacy skills develop as much as possible. Pupils are aware of their targets.
50. The school has a very strong family ethos, underpinned by very good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff. This is promoted very well because all year groups are represented in each house, and all staff are attached to a house. This gives pupils confidence in raising any concerns or worries they may have.
51. Pupils easily express their views and become well involved in the school. The school council provides many chances for them to develop their confidence and speaking skills as they represent their peers and learn about democratic procedures and decision-making. The school has taken on board many of their views and ideas, for instance, regarding fundraising, the house system and peer mentoring.

Sixth form

52. Support and guidance are good, as are arrangements for transfer and induction into the sixth form. Information about courses is well presented and Year 11 pupils can attend a 'choices' evening during the autumn term. Sixth-form tutors and subject staff work well together to monitor their students' progress. Any individual learning problems are quickly identified and additional support provided. Students are encouraged to develop good study techniques and independence in their learning. Provision for careers advice in the sixth form is good. Sixth formers generally appreciate the advice and information they receive about their options for the future. The College Committee is well involved in many aspects of the school. Two members of the committee usually attend governing body meetings. Members are also well involved in organising charitable, sports and social events. They are consulted about developing the sixth form learning environment. There are now more computers for them to use and improvements have also been made to study areas, for example.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents and very good links in the wider community, including with other schools and colleges. The school has made several good improvements in these areas since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have good opportunities to express their views and make suggestions.
- They make a good contribution to the school and their children's learning because they receive good information about the school and their children's progress.
- Very good links in the community help to enrich the curriculum and support learning very well.
- Very good links with other schools, colleges and universities have a positive effect on transfer arrangements into Year 7 and on learning in other year groups.

Commentary

53. Staff and governors have a very strong, shared vision regarding community links. A questionnaire is sent to parents periodically, which enables them to influence policies and identify issues usefully. The school recently sought views about its proposed reduction of the lunch period and arrangements for reporting to parents before making any changes.
54. Parents generally have a high regard for the school and its work. They are well informed about the school through a well-presented prospectus and regular newsletters. Although some parents are disappointed with the information about their children's progress, the inspection team judges it to be good. Strong features include a timely and helpful interim report and 'settling in' meetings with tutors for pupils in Years 7, 10 and 12. Pupils' annual reports provide a helpful pen-picture of how well they are doing, together with future learning targets. The school's radio station broadcasts locally at certain times – an innovative information mechanism.
55. Parents are welcomed into the school and they make a good contribution to its work. The 'Friends of Penketh High School' support the school well by organising many social and fundraising events. The group regularly provides money for the school to spend on

additional resources, such as audio and visual equipment, and for pupils' prizes awarded at celebration evenings. Pupils' planners show that most parents support their children's learning at home well. Although a few parents are concerned about the school's arrangements for homework, the inspection team found them to be generally satisfactory.

56. Regular contact occurs between parents of pupils with special educational needs and special needs staff. Home visits are made and meetings set up to deal with any problems. Parents are invited to review IEPs and are asked for comments; most respond with good effect. Good links exist with partner schools and an improving structure for school-leavers, with more appropriate school/college links, is being developed.
57. Links with the religious community make a very strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very close ties with Youth for Christ, St Paul's Church and religious leaders who accommodate visits to non-Christian places of worship, and these make a very strong contribution to personal development. The officer from Warrington Youth for Christ frequently visits the school and helps many pupils to raise their aspirations and realise their potential. This officer has also been instrumental in introducing regular basketball coaching and the Lighthouse group (an outreach group attached to a local church) to the school, both of which have developed as very strong contributors to the curriculum in their own right. Other links include the Peace Centre (youth and sports activities), many sports clubs (specialist coaching), local businesses (development of job hunting skills) and the Pyramid Centre (media and visual arts). The school puts much back into the community. It is very successful in fundraising for charities and good causes and accommodates or helps, in some way, many local clubs and groups.
58. Extensive links with primary schools ensure a smooth transition of pupils into Year 7. Staff undertake a very high level of outreach work and this gives many pupils from primary schools confidence about the next stage of their education and enriches their learning in subjects such as science, ICT, dance, music and physical education. The school has established very effective links with the Warrington Collegiate Institute, and many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend part of their time at the Collegiate as they study for national vocational qualifications.

Sixth form

59. Parental partnerships are also good in the sixth form. The sixth form has a separate brochure and this gives appropriate details about what is on offer. There is also good information about options and courses of study open to students. Information to parents about their children's progress and standards is good. Links with universities, colleges and the wider community are very strong. Students in both years can attend a series of study skills and revision lectures at Liverpool University and this enhances their skills and also gives them an insight into university life. Sixth formers are also encouraged to attend the annual UCAS convention, where many representatives from universities provide advice and guidance about higher education. There are very close ties with some work experience and field study providers at national and overseas venues. The sixth form buys in additional specialist teaching to enrich certain courses, such as the private organisation that gives a series of lectures on various subjects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher is well supported by the assistant heads, deputy heads, senior managers (including a development director (bursar) who is a member of the support staff) and governors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership is innovative, self-critical and articulates a clear vision for the school's development.
- Leadership of drama and art and design is excellent.
- Heads of house play a good role in academic mentoring.
- The senior managers undertake their line management duties well.
- Management of the sixth form does not ensure that all students are centrally registered daily.
- Leadership pays great attention to the inclusion of all pupils but does not always address the needs of the gifted and talented.
- Governors play an important part in the management of the school.
- Performance management is aimed directly at improving pupils' learning experience.
- The induction of new staff is very good, staff development needs are identified, and training is delivered effectively through a well-structured programme, but not yet for citizenship.

Commentary

60. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher has led the school since the previous inspection and has brought about considerable improvement in all-round provision. His leadership is reflective, self-critical and dedicated to further improvement. He has a clear vision for the school and its future, which is shared by all staff and governors. This is to build on the school's outstanding arts provision and become a specialist college, which will enable the community to benefit from the provision for visual and performing arts and media.
61. Leadership is innovative, exemplified by the employment of three teachers in Year 7 qualified for primary school work to help bridge the transition from the primary to the secondary curriculum. It has also led the way in workforce reform and work-related learning, and the headteacher is asked to go to other schools to help spread good practice. Their leadership development is encouraged and supported throughout the school and this enables staff talent and drive to be exploited through changes of job-description and the promotion of projects, such as the Raising Achievement initiative, which has had a significant impact on standards achieved.
62. The headteacher is well supported by his deputies and assistant heads as well as by the wider team of senior managers. The recent changes in responsibility have resulted in a significant proportion of managers being new to their posts or appointed within the last year. For this reason, there is an occasional lack of clarity, for example, in the leadership of the sixth form, where responsibility for monitoring and the recording of attendance has been overlooked. The line management of subject departments is effective and takes place through regular meetings and monitoring activities.

63. Effective leadership and the good management of the department for special educational needs contribute strongly to its success. A strong sense of teamwork exists, with full support throughout the school and a combined intention to help every pupil achieve maximum results. Thorough documentation and efficient recording of progress are in place. Ongoing evaluation ensures that objectives are relevant. The co-ordinator is very experienced in the area of special educational needs and, though in post for just one year, has initiated many positive changes, which have already shown good results. Staff are supplied with pupil profiles, for example, which outline needs and suggest strategies for improvement. Links with the head of Student Services and personnel from Learning and Behaviour Support Staff within the school give strength to the educational and welfare needs of these pupils. The department is fully supported by the governing body.
64. The school's strategic planning is satisfactory. Much energy has been directed towards the current complex bid for Specialist College Status, which has dominated the past academic year. The plans have been well managed towards specialisation in an area of strength, namely the very good provision for visual arts, which is excellent in the sixth form. The school's current priorities have been adapted from the main priorities of the local authority and are being used satisfactorily to underpin the school's current priority to improve teaching and learning, but there are too many of them. School improvement planning has improved since the previous inspection and is now fully costed, but it is not always clear how success can be measured in improved standards and achievement.
65. Leaders are good role models and this has a positive effect on the school's ethos, which is orderly and purposeful. Leadership qualities are developed in pupils, too. Pupils and students play a full consultative role in the school through the school council and in their position as peer mentors. The student leader of the sixth form committee attends governors' meetings so that strategic decisions are made known to pupils. The school is an openly consultative society; monitoring and evaluation feature strongly and are effective in producing good teaching, from which pupils learn and achieve well.
66. Heads of department are good teachers and lead by example, disseminating good practice. Many are only recently in post and have been promoted for their good leadership qualities, and have already made a noticeable impact on standards. In English, for example, effective changes in staffing have been put in place as a result of an analysis of why standards fell at GCSE in 2004.
67. Heads of house are fairly recent appointments as the school has moved from a year to a house system. They and pastoral staff ensure that policies such as those for managing behaviour and personal development are adhered to consistently throughout the school. This makes a significant contribution to the school's inclusive ethos. Heads of house have now extended their role satisfactorily into the monitoring of academic progress.
68. The school pays great attention to the inclusion of all individuals. As well as making good provision for pupils with special needs, it does well by the few who come from other countries with little English. It ensures that boys and girls have equal opportunity in all aspects of school life, but it does not do enough to enable the gifted and talented pupils to reach their potential. Although there are enrichment activities for them, it is rare to see challenge in lessons addressed directly at them.

69. Performance data are readily available in the school and made easily accessible by heads of department and the deputy head, who makes sure data are up-to-date and relevant for each year at assessment and target-setting times. The school effectively uses the 'traffic-lights' system of highlighting average, and above or below average, expectation of progress, and this is used particularly well in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 and in all subjects from Year 10 upwards. Very good use is made of academic monitoring and peer mentoring to enable groups of pupils to be targeted. In this way, the school has raised the achievement of boys, particularly in English in Years 7 to 9. It does not, however, target its gifted and talented pupils well enough.
70. The school has recently introduced an effective streamlined performance management system for staff, clearly linked with the school improvement plan and aimed directly at improving pupils' performance. Procedures have been refined down to three areas covering teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Staff are required to identify and supply evidence of one good idea in their teaching each week. In learning, a system of written feedback from pupils has been introduced, and all teachers agree pupils' targets with their line managers. Provision for ongoing continuing professional development is good and offers training and development opportunities for needs identified previously as part of the performance management review. The school has a good review system to monitor departments. The quality of teaching and learning is maintained by a regular and systematic programme of classroom observations, which is followed by evaluation and actions for development. Systems for the induction and training of new staff are very good, involving subject mentors, non-subject mentors and professional development mentors. Performance management of support staff remains at the developmental stage and is a priority for the current academic year. Governors fulfil their duties responsibly and effectively in respect of the head's performance management, and have recently extended this brief to include the work of the deputy heads.
71. Governance is good. The governing body is led well and gives good service to the school. Governors keep up-to-date with their training and spend sufficient time inducting new members. The work of small committees that report back to the whole governing body is efficient. Governors are very supportive and are involved well in strategic planning, such as that for the specialist college bid. They monitor and evaluate the school improvement plan frequently and question the rate of progress of all initiatives relevant to their particular committees. Governors promote and take pride in the inclusive nature of the school, but do not consistently evaluate provision for the gifted and talented.
72. All statutory requirements are met, except for the provision of citizenship and personal, social and health education in the curriculum. Current practice, set up by an advanced skills teacher for citizenship and monitored by HMI, is not effective as it does not deliver a coherent curriculum in these areas. Governors have a good idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in respect of standards, and members on the curriculum committee check the school's progress in the PANDA report annually. They also challenge the headteacher and senior management team to do better, as recently they did in the case of English and modern foreign languages.

Sixth form

73. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. The day-to-day management is carried out effectively; teaching and learning are monitored and

evaluated well by subject heads and their line managers. There have been recent changes in leadership but the legacy of insufficient monitoring of attendance and related record-keeping has not been rectified. During the inspection, students were only registered during lessons and not during their form period, which itself is used well for academic mentoring by the form tutor. Leadership is committed to academic rigour and the achievement of high standards, and now ensures that higher entry requirements for the sixth form are being adhered to here. The number of AS level groups has risen with a particularly high take-up in psychology. Groups are viable, though interest in the mathematics course is low. The retention rate has increased in the current year.

74. The sixth form follows the school's priorities in its development, and the appointment of the new head of sixth form has been the result of staff development to deal with a lack of rigour and low retention rates over the past two years. The school now has strong relationships with other sixth form providers, whose students come to Penketh for advanced religious education courses. The sixth form is at an important point of its development. The school management has set up further sixth form provision and expert teaching to attract more students through its specialist arts provision, now that the transport and curriculum infrastructure are in place.
75. At present, the sixth form is not entirely cost-effective since it is subsidised by the main school, but the courses currently running are well subscribed with students who have appropriate entry qualifications and play an important role in school life, particularly in the school council and as mentors to pupils in the lower school. Teaching, learning and achievement are good in most of the subjects inspected. There are not many timetabled non-examination courses, but sixth-formers take part in and often run enrichments in sports, media and performing arts, which are also available in the main school.

Financial information

76. The financial management of the school is good; all procedures are clear and priorities are costed carefully against the school improvement plan. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Despite having a larger than usual staffing budget, the school manages to have an appropriate carry-forward. Some departments are under-funded, particularly psychology and religious education. The school development director (bursar) is meticulous in keeping good records and the most recent audit only revealed minor details which have since been effectively dealt with.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,851,520
Total expenditure	4,814,720
Expenditure per pupil	3,480

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	142,259
Balance carried forward to the next	179,059

77. The headteacher and governing body strive to find the best value in all areas of the school's activity. They consult parents, pupils and staff widely when making decisions, for example, about changes to the school day. They compare the school's standards with those of other schools, both locally and nationally, and put in place measures to do better. Competitive tenders are appropriately sought for goods and services. The school strives to do better, but does not provide sufficient challenge for the gifted and talented, and some other higher ability pupils. It gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Achievement is good.
- Standards are average and rising.
- Teaching is good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work, and for identifying and addressing underachievement, are good.
- Pupils are insufficiently involved in tracking their own achievement.

Commentary

78. Standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were below the national average and those of similar schools. The percentages of pupils who reached both the expected and higher levels were all below average. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys, but the gap has narrowed over the past four years. Results in 2003 represent a dip in attainment. Prior to this, attainment had been in line with the national average, and the provisional results for 2004 indicate that standards have risen sharply to well above the national average for 2003. Attainment at the higher levels is also well above the average for 2003. Standards in the current Year 9, with a considerable time left before the tests, are average.
79. Pupils start Year 7 with attainment below the national average and usually achieve well. The exception to this was in 2003, when achievement was satisfactory. The achievement of pupils who took their tests in 2004 was very good. All pupils currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 are achieving well.
80. In 2003, GCSE results in English language were in line with the national average for the percentage of grades A* to C attained, and below average for grades A* and A. The percentage of grades A* to C in English literature, which was taken by nearly all pupils, was just above the national average. Standards in the current Year 11 are average.
81. The achievement of pupils who took the GCSE examinations in 2003 was satisfactory, but results for 2004 indicate that achievement for this group of pupils was unsatisfactory. Pupils who are currently in Year 11, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well, and they are on course to attain standards which are higher than the national average.
82. From Years 7 to 11, pupils make good progress by taking part in discussions and from hearing the ideas of others. Although many pupils have a limited vocabulary, they make good progress in using this effectively, and in broadening the range of words they use to

add interest and detail to what they write. Pupils develop a thoughtful response to literature and show good progress in their understanding of plot and character and in using textual references to illustrate their opinions. Those of higher ability develop a more analytical response to what they read. Throughout the age and attainment range, pupils' spelling is careless and inconsistent.

83. The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear lesson objectives which they explain; good use is made of a concluding discussion which reviews the progress made in meeting these objectives. This gives pupils a sense of purpose and they show good commitment and concentration. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and application. They make good use of challenging questioning and discussion, and pupils respond well by thinking hard and extending their learning. Good additional support is offered to pupils needing help. This sometimes takes the form of demonstrating - to the class or a smaller group - the way in which a task should be carried out, giving pupils the confidence and skills to continue independently. The quality of marking is particularly strong. It offers specific advice to pupils on how they can improve. A strong emphasis is placed on pupils' understanding of examination and test requirements. In less successful lessons, either too much time is spent on direct teaching, which offers pupils little chance to participate, or too much time is given to pupils to complete a task, so that the lesson lacks pace and pupils begin to take a more leisurely approach.
84. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teamwork is good, with a clear commitment to raising standards. The recently appointed head of department has taken energetic and palpably effective steps to identify, analyse and address the recent dips in attainment. Assessment procedures are good, and pupils' progress is regularly monitored. Potential underachievement is identified at an early stage and a good system of additional support is in place for pupils who need it. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in tracking their own progress. A regular programme of monitoring of teaching and of pupils' written work promotes consistency. The schemes of work, recently updated and revised, using contributions from most of the teachers in the department, provide good guidelines for less experienced teachers. However, they contain very little planning for the teaching and use of ICT skills. Nevertheless, pupils make appropriate use of word-processing and Internet research, and in Year 11, some pupils choose to make PowerPoint presentations as part of their oral assessments.
85. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, and there are clear indications that there has been a significant rise in standards in 2004 National Curriculum tests in Year 9. The previously good standard of teaching has been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

86. Standards of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory. In most subjects, pupils participate in discussions confidently, and in design and technology, many pupils give confident oral presentations to the rest of the class. However, pupils' generally narrow range of vocabulary limits oral contributions, which often lack detail and are not extended. In mathematics, good opportunities for discussion enable pupils' oral skills to progress through Years 8 and 9. The standard of written work is more varied, both between subjects and between pupils of different ability. In subjects where there is good opportunity and support for writing, such as drama, all pupils use writing to increase their

learning. In science, writing has a positive impact on progress, while in history, the inadequate writing of lower ability pupils affects the progress they make. In general, pupils' reading satisfactorily meets the demands of the courses they follow, although in some subjects, for example, religious education and science, opportunities for reading are limited.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All teachers have high expectations of behaviour and learning.
- New initiatives have led to a rise in GCSE standards in both French and German.
- Good pupil-teacher relationships ensure positive learning environments.
- The use of ICT by both pupils and teachers is insufficient.
- The assessment of pupils' work does not give them language-specific guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

87. In 2003, GCSE results were well below the national average in French and below average in German, with a very low percentage of A and B grades in both languages. However, in 2004, results in both languages showed a significant improvement in the overall percentage of A* to C grades and, in German, one third of pupils achieved a B grade. Based on 2003 teacher assessments, standards at the end of Year 9 in French were broadly in line with national expectations.
88. Standards of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 are broadly average for children of this age. Pupils make good progress in French and German in all skill areas and, in most lessons, boys achieve as well as girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when the work is matched to their individual needs; they understand phrases and sentences and copy single words and phrases correctly. They are keen to speak in French or German, although their pronunciation is often approximate. Higher and average ability pupils acquire a wider vocabulary and they are extending their written and spoken work. However, in some lessons, they are not stretched to their full linguistic potential.
89. Overall, the standard of written work produced by pupils in Years 10 and 11 in French and German is average. Higher ability pupils are producing increasingly complex written work and they refer to past and future events with confidence. Their work is well presented and this reflects their positive attitudes to their work. Lower ability pupils are working at low levels due to weaknesses in their grasp of basic vocabulary and structures.
90. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in French and German. Teaching was good or very good in over two thirds of the lessons seen. In these lessons, teachers use probing questions which encourage pupils to think more deeply, and the wide range of creative teaching methods, including matching games and flashcard exercises involving pupils, really spark pupils' interest. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and there are high expectations of both behaviour and learning across the department. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to language learning. In less effective lessons, the pace of

the lesson is slow and some pupils become distracted and lose concentration. In all lessons, teachers do not use National Curriculum levels to inform pupils of their progress.

91. Leadership and management in modern foreign languages are good. The department is led by an enthusiastic, experienced linguist whose vision and team approach have led to a rise in standards. There are systems in place to analyse results and monitor teaching and learning, and these inform future initiatives. In addition, the head of department and her team have implemented a very effective behaviour management system which stresses high expectations and uses rewards to best effect. Marking across the department is regular but does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their written work and move to the next level. Schemes of work in both French and German lack detail and there is insufficient use of ICT by teachers and their pupils.
92. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in GCSE French and German are rising and progress is now good. However, the use of assessment is still an area for development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good; work is appropriate and matches course requirements.
- The quality of teaching and learning is overall good but there are few opportunities for extending higher ability pupils.
- Relationships between the teacher and the pupils are very good.
- The attitude and behaviour of pupils is overall very good.

Commentary

93. Standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were above average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Pupils' achievement was good compared to prior attainment on entry to the school. Since the previous inspection, annual improvement has been at a greater rate than that seen nationally, with girls performing slightly better than boys over the last three years. Standards in the 2004 national test indicate a continuing overall improvement and pupils' achievement is good. Current standards of work seen are overall good and pupils are achieving well.
94. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were above the national average. Pupils performed significantly better in mathematics relative to other examination subjects. Boys performed better than girls and significantly better than boys nationally, though the proportion of pupils achieving A or B grades was below average. Of those entered for examination, almost all passed; their achievement from Year 9 to Year 11 was good. Standards in the 2004 examination have improved further, with both boys and girls performing equally well. Current standards of work seen are above average and pupils are achieving well.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and work matches the revised scheme of work. Lessons are planned well and there is a good balance between theory and practice. However, teaching methods do not take sufficient account of the differing learning styles of pupils that exist in some large classes and pupils' learning as a result is teacher dependent. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from mental exercises at the start of lessons as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, but a review of lesson objectives to give some understanding of how well pupils have progressed is not common. Good use is made of 'bite-size' activities to motivate lower ability pupils. Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to progress as well as their peers. Information and communication technology is under-used as a resource for learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are very good, though opportunities for pupils' personal development and the development of higher order thinking skills are limited. Pupils listen well and contribute much in lessons, maintaining a brisk pace, but the recording of key words and statements is overlooked. The attitude and behaviour of the pupils are very good. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, where teaching was very good, pupils worked collaboratively investigating different 'word problems', identifying the order of operation to obtain a solution, which they then

explained to the rest of the class. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils, and homework is set regularly, and marking is up-to-date.

96. In Years 10 and 11, good teaching reflects the scheme of work and planned programmes of study. Continuity from Year 9 is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is evident in their exposition and explanation. Pupils are expected to make use of previously taught skills, though a review of what pupils know, understand and can do is often overlooked at the start of lessons. Good use is made of time to keep the pace of lessons brisk. Resources that are available are used well. Work is intellectually demanding, though teaching methods observed are mundane and opportunities to extend the more able by focusing on higher order skills such as estimating, hypothesising, reasoning and testing are uncommon. Teachers monitor pupils' work well, intervening where there is need, though checking whether conceptual understanding is secure is overlooked. The presentation of pupils' work is generally good, and provides a good record for review and revision. Homework is used to reinforce the learning in lessons, but opportunities to extend the more able through challenging targets are infrequent.
97. Leadership of mathematics is good and management satisfactory. The new head of department has a clear vision and a sense of purpose. There is a strong team spirit and a collective response to raising standards. Subject staff, including the learning support assistant, are prepared to give up their time to support the pupils. There is a strong work ethic within the curriculum area and staff are good role models for the pupils. Issues raised from the previous inspection have been addressed. Assessment procedures are secure, though the analysis of data to guide teaching, curriculum development and what pupils know, understand and can do are not systematic. Planned initiatives for the monitoring and evaluation of the standards of teaching and learning and adherence to curriculum area policy are underway. Documentation is satisfactory, but strategies for the implementation of existing and new policies are yet to be put into place. With respect to the transition of Year 7 pupils into Year 8, the maintenance of existing learning styles and opportunities for sharing good practice need to be planned for.

Mathematics across the curriculum

98. There is a detailed school numeracy policy and a numeracy co-ordinator has been appointed. Staff training has taken place to raise staff awareness and an audit of numeracy across the curriculum has been completed. All departments have identified opportunities for reinforcing pupils' numeracy in schemes of work and a process of monitoring and evaluation is underway with a particular focus currently on the work of the geography department. Pupils' basic numeracy skills are overall good and they in general do not have to rely on the calculator. Pupils estimate, calculate, draw graphs and interpret information. In mathematics, pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from the use of quick-fire mental exercises at the start of lessons as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants, ensuring they make the same progress as their peers. Other departments, notably geography, science, art and design, and design and technology, support a broad range of numerical experiences. National test and examination results indicate that pupils' competence in mathematics across the curriculum is good, managed well and is an aid to learning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is imaginative and interesting in all years and pupils respond with good behaviour and a positive approach to the subject.
- Pupils put commendable effort into their work and learning is productive.
- Good leadership and management and the shared commitment of staff are identifying and implementing action for improvement.
- Although resources relating to ICT are satisfactory, there is a need to increase its application in the delivery of the syllabus.

Commentary

99. GCSE double award science results in 2003 were slightly above the national average. Following an improving trend over recent years, results fell in 2004, but there was a substantial rise in the number of A and B grades gained. Year 9 test results in 2003 were in line with the national average, but below those of similar schools. Results have been rising steadily since 2001, although 2004 results show a slight fall on the previous year. Action is being taken, particularly in pupil monitoring, to address the 2004 results. In all years, there is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
100. Standards across the school are average. Pupils settle quickly on entry to Year 7 because of the very good liaison with feeder schools and the innovative curriculum delivery. Encouraged by supportive teaching, pupils quickly display good scientific thinking, and achievement across Year 7 to 9 is good. Pupils' enjoyment and interest in science are very apparent in lessons, as seen in a Year 7 class totally engrossed and asking sensible questions on the process and mechanics of birth. Overall achievement in Year 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Pupils are being taught to think for themselves and benefit from an emphasis on practical work in which they are expected to explain and evaluate their observations. Pupils' ability to develop answers and their confident and correct usage of appropriate scientific language are notable features. They show respect for each other and cooperate well in group work. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support, with staff well aware of their requirements. They participate fully in lessons and progress as well as others. There are no differences in achievement amongst any groups of pupils in classes.
101. Teachers' good subject expertise and skill in presenting information to pupils lead to effective learning. Good planning incorporates clear learning intentions communicated to pupils, ensuring that they know what is expected of them. A variety of teaching approaches is used to maintain pupils' interest. In a largely theoretical lesson on braking and thinking distances related to driving, interest was maintained and learning supported by the good use of images using a laptop projector and by relating the discussion to familiar situations. Marking is regular and of a good standard. It contains constructive comments to help pupils know what they should do to improve. Teachers use methods to suit all pupils, but occasionally opportunities are missed to stretch those of the highest ability fully. Good work is produced when they are stretched, as in a Year 9 lesson on energy in the home, where imaginative and original ideas on conservation were evident.

Relationships between staff and pupils are constructive, leading to a good atmosphere for learning.

102. There is a shared commitment by staff towards subject improvement. They work together effectively as a team and are well led and managed by a department head with a clear vision and sense of direction for the future. A regular and systematic monitoring of teaching followed by evaluation and the identification of actions for development is important in taking the department forward. Schemes of work are in place and regularly revised. The use made of ICT across the curriculum as a research tool is satisfactory, but it lacks application to the evaluation and analysis of experimental work. Literacy is good, seen in both written and oral work. Numeracy adequately supports all work. Accommodation is very good. Laboratories are well designed, with impressive wall displays, and have a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment and learning of science. A hardworking team of technicians provides good support.
103. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. There are now effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of teachers, leading to an overall improvement in teaching standards. There are no instances of poor behaviour and the positive attitude of pupils is a feature of lessons. The slow pace of lessons in Years 7 to 9 has been addressed and there is now an obvious productive working atmosphere throughout all lessons, with pupils on task and enjoying their learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is raising pupils' skill levels in ICT.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes towards the subject encourage good standards.
- Good inclusion of all pupils in lesson activities helps improve their standards of work.
- Assessment information is not well established and used systematically to set targets and ensure appropriate challenge for all pupils.
- Systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is insufficient.
- Too few opportunities are provided across the curriculum for pupils to use ICT, and requirements for taking measurements and controlling devices are not fully met.

Commentary

104. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicate that pupils' attainment is average for their age. This is supported by the standards of work seen during the inspection. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of levels of skills in using ICT. Overall, attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is below average, so pupils' achievement is good by the time they are 14-years-old.
105. By the end of Year 9, pupils use word processing and multimedia software packages to present work, spreadsheets to process information, and are confident users of the Internet to research topics. Higher ability pupils work quickly and accurately. In work seen, most pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, including those with

special educational needs, make good progress. Pupils' numeracy and literacy are average.

106. In 2003, the GCSE ICT results achieved by pupils were below average and below the results pupils achieved in other subjects. The GNVQ results in 2003 were well above average for A to C grades. In work seen, pupils in Year 11 who study GCSE ICT had skills that are in line with national average and their achievement was good.
107. By the end of Year 11, most pupils are confident users of a range of applications. The higher ability pupils in particular understand the role of ICT in their work and are able to explain the development of their work. Lower ability pupils have satisfactory technical skills but do not always complete work thoroughly.
108. There is very little variation in the quality of teaching and learning at Year 9 and Year 11, with good teaching overall and some very good teaching in one-third of lessons. The use of a data projector board has an excellent effect on pupils' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. A diverse range of activities maintains pupils' interest and actively engages them in learning. Consequently, all pupils are very clear about what they have to do and why. When the teaching is very good, work is introduced very enthusiastically with detailed explanations, which is effective in encouraging a similar response from pupils. The pace of learning is brisk. Classroom management of pupils is a particularly strong feature throughout the department. Teachers make regular checks on individual progress in lessons and provide pupils with good support and guidance. Good use is made of learning assistants: they are familiar with individual needs and they ensure that pupils with special educational needs progress as well as others. The marking of pupils' work is not consistent throughout the department and assessment is not well established.
109. Specialist subject provision in ICT benefits from good leadership and satisfactory management. The very good improvement achieved since the last inspection has partly been brought about by the significant increase in the number of computers. The curriculum has improved significantly, meeting the needs of all pupils. There is clear vision and direction for the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

110. The school's arrangements for the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. There is very little tracking of the contribution of other subjects to develop pupils' ICT skills, and the lack of a specific policy for ICT across the curriculum is holding development back. Few teachers are consistently using ICT to improve the quality of teaching. Most pupils are competent users of ICT and yet their skills are not being recognised or built upon in their learning across the curriculum. In some instances, this is due to the difficulty of access to computer rooms, as in history and geography. Training has been provided for staff so that they can apply ICT to their subject. Technical support is very good in all areas of the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good with some very good features.
- Learning is good and pupils are quick to acquire appropriate skills in geography
- The quality of departmental leadership is very good, management is good and there are clear indications of innovation and improvement.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to think for themselves.
- Marking is regular but does not indicate clearly how standards of individual pieces of work could be improved.
- There are no opportunities to use ICT within lessons, either by pupils or the teacher.

Commentary

111. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were close to the national average. They represented a significant improvement on the previous three years and indicated the growing strength of the subject. However, in 2004, the numbers taking the subject fell and the success rate at grades A* to C was significantly below the national average. Teachers have analysed these results well and are addressing the key issues which arise from them, including the relative underachievement of boys and the need to promote the subject amongst students of all ability. They are also aware that many failed to achieve a C grade by only a few marks and are extending their focus on this group.
112. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is below average and is often hindered by low literacy skills. However, by the end of Year 9, attainment is close to the national average and standards are average. Achievement is mostly good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils acquire a range of appropriate geographical skills and study many interesting topics. Year 7 pupils develop a good awareness of Warrington through the study of the Ordnance Survey map, for example. In Year 9, they study a number of aspects of tourism and consider the conflicts caused by inappropriate development in several locations, at home and overseas. The work seen in geography was of a good standard. Pupils often take great care over presentation and there is good evidence of the use of ICT in projects on home computers, including the use of PowerPoint and extensive research on the internet. Work is consistently marked, although more comments could be made on some work to indicate clearly the ways in which it might be improved or extended.
113. The quality of teaching and learning are both good, with some examples of very good practice. Teachers plan lessons well and there is extensive and consistent lesson preparation. All teachers show good subject knowledge and their delivery is always purposeful. In the best lessons, teachers use very good strategies to challenge pupils and make them think for themselves. However, this was not consistent and some lessons are very tightly structured so that pupils are expected to address very specific questions and to provide thoughtful answers in too little time. Pupils' attitudes are usually good and the management of pupils' behaviour is often good. The lack of ICT facilities in the department limits the opportunity to present some ideas effectively and pupils are often unable to use in lessons the ICT skills which they undoubtedly possess.
114. The subject is led very effectively and managed well. There is good tracking of pupils' progress and this is used to guide planning. Overall, assessment is satisfactory and the

further development of assessment for learning has become a focus for the department. Very good progress has been made in producing schemes of work and a very full departmental handbook which shares many good learning ideas. In particular, there is excellent planning detail on fieldwork in different parts of the country. There is a clear determination to raise pupil numbers and to run again the sixth form geography course.

115. The department adopts a teaching style which accelerates the learning process. Lessons are highly paced and, although this promotes interesting teaching in many lessons, it reduces the time available for pupils to think in an expansive way. There are good attempts to support literacy where this is required and the learning assistant gives very effective support. There is a firm commitment to inclusion and there were many instances where issues relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education were drawn out with sensitivity and understanding.
116. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. By last year, standards had improved significantly, although they have subsequently fallen. There is a very clear policy for raising attainment and a clear focus on developing geographical vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs are constantly encouraged and interest levels are high.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New leadership has already identified appropriate priorities for the subject, such as ICT development.
- Programmes of study do not show expected levels of work that will guide teachers, particularly non-specialists, as to the appropriate level of challenge in lessons.
- Teaching is good overall, but not all teachers plan lessons clearly.
- Pupils' awareness of National Curriculum levels and how to use them to improve their performance is not strong.

Commentary

117. Pupils' standard of attainment on entry to Year 7 is in line with that seen nationally. By the end of Year 9, all pupils achieve satisfactorily to reach average standards. Although those of lower ability struggle to understand work on time and chronology, by Year 9, all have gained good knowledge. They use good subject vocabulary when assessing the causes of failure at the Battle of the Somme, for example.
118. GCSE pupils benefit well from specialist teaching, making good and often very good progress. Examination results in 2003 were above the national average, with significant numbers well above. Boys' performance matched the girls', representing good achievement. In 2004, results dipped at grades A* to C and the boys' performance was behind that of the girls. Current standards are good. All pupils have good knowledge and are capable of writing detailed accounts, for example, about the causes of the Cold War, but often they give simple summaries rather than more detailed evaluations.

119. Overall teaching and learning are good. They are at their strongest where specialists teach, as in the examination years. Planning is good, and a mix of activities holds pupils' concentration. Motivation is maintained by some good opportunities for discussion. In Years 7 to 9, some of the work is insufficiently challenging, particularly for pupils of average and higher ability. Teachers use some well-focused questioning to guide learning, but refined learning objectives are inconsistently made clear. In most lessons, the summary session at the end of lessons is rushed, with little time for reflection.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 7 (top set) class were asked to examine artefacts which were being considered for inclusion in an exhibition of local history of the 20th century.

In an excellently planned lesson, each group of four pupils was given an information sheet (explaining the task, giving background details and highlighting keywords) and a box containing five artefacts. Prompt sheets were also distributed to lead the groups to ask questions of each item (when it was made? by whom? for whom? what do we learn from it? is it a reliable source?). Differentiation was achieved by teacher and peer group support. Towards the end of the lesson, the groups were invited to discuss their findings and say whether the item should be included in the exhibition. Pupils made excellent gains in their understanding of the difference between primary and secondary sources, and in the ability to analyse them for information and to question reliability. Pupils felt completely at ease with the teacher and gave their best in work and conduct. Learning was challengingly extended with homework for which each pupil was given a copy of the 19th century narrative painting "When did you last see your father?" They were asked to comment on it as a source relating to the English Civil War, to choose four figures in the painting and to discuss how they might fit into the story. They left the classroom with great excitement.

120. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently-appointed head of history has worked hard to achieve improvements in a short time. Teamwork is good, a new subject handbook has been written and good programmes of study developed. More work remains to identify expected levels of work, and where exactly the subject includes ICT and citizenship. Good assessment procedures are in place and examination pupils benefit from teachers' good guidance, but pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient knowledge of National Curriculum levels to help them to improve. Targets are set, but some are not subject specific enough. In Year 7, a more thorough benchmarking of pupils' standards could aid the tracking of progress. Overall improvement has been satisfactory with teaching and GCSE results improving. Long term planning, which includes the subject ICT requirement, requires further development.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach satisfactory standards at the end of Years 9 and 11, and achieve well.
- Pupils learn well because of good teaching.
- The low time allocation in Year 9 is an impediment to raising standards further.
- The unsatisfactory provision of learning resources hinders pupils' skills development.

Commentary

121. In the 2003 GCSE full course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was above the national average. They achieved well in relation to their capabilities.

Over time, there has been a trend of improvement that has significantly exceeded the national trend. Standards were lower, however, in the 2004 examination because of staffing difficulties.

122. By Year 9, standards are average and achievement is good because pupils are taught well and come to lessons keen to learn. However, the low time allocation for the subject in Year 9 places a restriction on how much further standards can be raised. By Year 11, standards at the GCSE full course examination level are average and achievement is good. With specialist teaching, pupils are quickly making up the time they lost in Year 10 because of staffing problems. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic and faith backgrounds achieve well because teachers ensure that they play a full and active part in lessons.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and is good overall. Where teaching and learning are strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject and clear aims which they share and review with pupils. They plan well to achieve their aims through interesting and challenging work that is very well matched to the individual needs of pupils. Pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds can take risks in their learning because they know that their contributions will be received with respect. Teachers have high expectations and engender good relationships in the classroom. They set worthwhile homework that extends the learning in lessons, and use marking well to help pupils understand how to raise the standard of their work. Where learning is less secure, it is because teaching is sometimes too directive in style and does not give pupils enough responsibility for their own learning. Teachers also sometimes miss opportunities to review pupils' progress with them at the end of lessons. In a small minority of instances, marking is perfunctory.
124. Good leadership ensures a clear vision of how to raise standards. Good management has resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been significantly raised at GCSE full course examination level. Provision has been significantly improved in Years 10 and 11 with the recent introduction of a GCSE short course for all, and now meets statutory requirements. The quality of teaching has been raised through the recent appointment of specialist teachers. However, the unsatisfactory provision of learning resources, particularly of textbooks, hinders the development of pupils' skills of independent learning, research and enquiry.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching.
- Good relationships contribute to the positive pupil response.
- Good standards of practical work in all areas.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored with enough rigour.
- Assessment and marking are not used effectively to guide planning or set targets.
- Design communication skills need to be developed, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

125. The 2003 GCSE results were in line with the national average. Boys and girls achieved A grades in line with national figures. The 2004 GCSE results were below average in food technology and product design - a course examined for the first time in 2004. Previous results have been average. In child development, results were below average in 2003 but were better in 2004 and about average compared with the national average of the previous year.
126. Current standards in Year 9 are average; pupils have achieved well from their below average attainment on entry in Year 7. Those with special educational needs make good progress and produce good standards of work, including the use of the Internet for research. Good work was seen in all areas. The pen packaging project, for example, made good use of colour to improve presentation and drawings were well annotated. Good, reasoned evaluations were seen in a food studies exercise. Where work is weaker, it is mainly due to poorer presentational skills, the use of felt tip pens for colouring, the lack of detailed analysis and incomplete tasks. Some good ideas, often drawn in pen, can be untidy.
127. Current standards in Year 11 are average in food technology and product design. Good work was seen in the educational toy project, where ideas were developed in detail, including perspective sketching and the modelling of ideas. In food technology, very good use of ICT was made for research and presentation in the packed lunch project, where good understanding of health-related issues, such as obesity and nutritional values, was seen. Weaker work showed a lack of individual design ideas and development, poor dimensioning and annotation and generally untidy presentation. Information and communication technology is not always used to improve the quality of the work. Practical work seen was usually good in all areas.
128. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; a proportion of very good and satisfactory teaching was seen. In the better lessons, learning is more intense because of the teaching styles used. Good subject expertise, good pace and planning were seen in most lessons. A Year 9 lesson increased learning about the importance of using good graphical and written skills when presenting ideas. An element of fun in the lesson and good use of group work contributed to the good learning and achievement. A Year 11 food technology lesson developed practical competence in coursework in a very busy lesson, which heightened learning and understanding to a very good level. Very good relationships and the good use of assessment enabled pupils to make very good progress. Where lessons were not as good, the pace was slower, low-key tasks were set and pupils were not fully engaged in their work. Those with special educational needs were well supported by the class teacher in all lessons and they usually made good progress. Technical language is supported well in all lessons and pupils are confident when speaking in front of others. Numeracy is as expected for pupils this age. Information and communication technology is used in pupils' work, including the Internet for research, but the use of computer-aided design (CAD) does not feature strongly.
129. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The recently-appointed head of department has a good vision for improvement. Priority is given to short term objectives aimed at raising standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning and of the consistency of assessment practices - including marking - are not sufficiently rigorous.

Strategies to improve design communication skills and general presentation are being addressed through lesson planning and work sampling across the department. CAD/CAM resources have recently been installed but resources for general ICT use are limited, and poor in food studies. Control technology is not covered in sufficient depth, at present. Technician support is good in technology and improved in food studies. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The workshops are in need of upgrading and modernising as much of the equipment is well worn. In food studies, there is a lack of chilled storage facilities, no blinds on windows and no ICT resources, apart from one computer. Health and safety issues have been addressed but there is a concern over the efficiency of the dust extraction system when working to full capacity. A safety audit has been undertaken recently and required standards were met.

130. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Facilities for CAD/CAM have been installed, but ICT resources in general are not sufficient to allow full coverage of control technology. Standardisation of marking and assessment remains an issue from the last inspection, as does the use of data in target setting.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships.
- The use of sketch books for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Group sizes are too large in Year 9, and this restricts the breadth of what is taught.
- The full potential of ICT as a learning aid is not fully developed in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

131. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well above the national average. Although boys perform less well than girls, their scores are still well above the national average, with rising trends in recent results.
132. Standards in the current Year 9 are just above average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school. Those standards are achieved because the teaching is good and pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Lower ability pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Pupils use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings; work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for study.
133. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average. This represents very good achievement over the two years of the course for the majority of pupils, and is a direct result of assessment procedures that ensure that pupils have opportunities to discuss their achievements and set targets for future development. Pupils with special

educational needs achieve well and benefit from personal tuition and guidance. Good matching of tasks to capabilities ensures that higher ability pupils in Years 10 and 11 are sufficiently challenged. The range of media opportunities and the development of personal interests have had a positive impact on boys' achievement since the previous inspection. Sketch books are well annotated and pupils' work shows the influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The difference between the groups is mostly explained by teachers using a greater range of teaching strategies and making better use of homework in the later years. The teaching of GCSE work has a greater pace and clear lesson structure. Pupils are encouraged to take increasing initiative in planning their work, so adding to their personal achievement. Teachers use their excellent knowledge and expertise to very good effect and use praise to encourage the participation of pupils. Resources are inadequate for teaching and developing ICT effectively and for three-dimensional study.
135. Leadership and management are excellent. Teachers work very well as a team and give freely of their time to pupils to extend learning. Staff bring a broad and varied range of experience to the subject and departmental meetings are used to share ideas and good practice. Visits to galleries and the use of artists in residence have a positive impact upon the quality and range of pupils' work.
136. Improvements since the previous inspection have been very good as a result of very good teaching and clear leadership within the department. GCSE results have improved, as have pupils' knowledge and understanding of contemporary artists and the opportunity to discuss and appraise work in lessons.

Drama

The provision for drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 and very well by Year 11 as a result of good and very good teaching and learning.
- Pupils enjoy drama; attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The resources used to support the teaching of drama are excellent.
- Leadership of the department is excellent.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a weekly drama lesson with a specialist teacher, but they are taught in ability groups set for academic subjects, which is not ideal for a practical subject.
- The GCSE drama option is open to all abilities and a wide variety of needs are taken into account when planning lessons.

Commentary

137. In the 2003 GCSE drama examination, all of the relatively small number of candidates passed; just over half gained grades between A and C. Results for 2004 show a significant increase. There were twice as many candidates and the proportion of A to C grades rose to 79 per cent. All candidates passed. There was no significant difference

in the performance of girls and boys. This represents very good achievement as GCSE drama attracts pupils from the whole ability range.

138. By Year 9, standards are above average for children of this age. Pupils display very good listening skills and are perceptive and articulate. All abilities demonstrate very good self-discipline and have the knowledge and confidence to match their response to the demands of the dramatic context. The ability to empathise with a character and to take on a role is also evident in written work. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Commitment is obvious and attitudes in lessons very good. Pupils demonstrate secure, confident control and understanding of dramatic technique and a willingness to experiment with new concepts. They are imaginative in their creation of roles, understand style and work well together. The written work of the highest achievers is perceptive and evaluative and demonstrates confident understanding of form and structure. There is evidence of real involvement from all ability levels, although it is obvious that the written responses of the less academically able do not always match their practical ability. The department is developing strategies which will give greater support to these pupils and also help the most able to gain A* grades.
139. Achievement is good by Year 9 and very good by Year 11. It is directly linked to the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils arrive on time for their lessons ready to work. They have to meet the consistently high expectations of teachers who know them well. The needs of the full ability range (from those with special educational needs to the gifted and talented) are reflected in the detailed planning and range of activities which underpin lessons. Teachers probe and make pupils think, extend their vocabulary and react with greater depth of understanding. Taut timing gives a sense of urgency. Teachers are confident in themselves and their subject expertise. This transmits itself to the pupils who, in an atmosphere of warmth, support and mutual respect, grapple with sensitive issues. A Year 9 group, for example, examined a 'Hit and Run' incident from a variety of viewpoints.
140. Leadership of the department is excellent and management very good. Excellent clarity of vision and sense of purpose are in evidence, as are knowledge and understanding of teaching strategies. In three years, academic standards have risen significantly and technical resources have been upgraded to professional standards. Pupils and teachers respond to an excellent role model. The department handbook is impressive, and very good links have been made between drama and citizenship. Comprehensive plans are now in place to make more effective use of assessment data and link them to tracking and target-setting. Opportunities for curricular enrichment outside the school day are open to all pupils and culminate each year in a high-quality major production.
141. Since the previous inspection, a new head of drama has been appointed. The many strengths noted at the time have been built on and the few areas of concern addressed. Overall, the improvement has been good.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent GCSE lesson, Year 11 pupils explored complex moral issues
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It was a remarkable experience. For 45 minutes, the pupils had been transported back in time. They had
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visited Nazi-occupied Austria and learned something of the humiliation of the oppressed. The teacher had led the way with great sensitivity and care. Pupils were handed copies of a grainy black and white photograph depicting Jews scrubbing a street. They were asked to consider the scene from the viewpoint of the onlookers. It was obvious from the serious discussion and the speed and purpose with which they moved that they were used to working productively and collaboratively to tight timelimits. In groups of five, they produced 'still images', assuming the characters of spectators. Spontaneous improvisations followed as the teacher, in the role of a provoking German officer, joined each group in turn. He was a fine actor and the pupils' levels of performance increased to match his.

The lesson was compelling. The pupils' contributions increased in depth and perception as the teacher, assuming the role of a surviving German officer, invited questions and so returned them to the 21st century. Finally, cross-curricular links were made to citizenship, human rights and the responsibility of the individual. Pupils left the lesson in a thoughtful mood.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good learning, and pupils are enthusiastic.
- Marking and assessment procedures are insufficiently developed.
- The administration and management of the department are very good.
- Timetabling arrangements should be improved.
- Instrumental and vocal tuition are a strength of the department.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject is good.

Commentary

142. Standards in Year 11 are in line with the national expectations. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, nearly three quarters of candidates achieved A to C grades. In 2004, no one managed an A grade; three quarters achieved grades B or C. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of tonality as an aspect of change in 20th century music. Year 10 pupils make good progress in identifying instruments of the orchestra from the sounds they produce and what they look like. Achievement is good.
143. In the 2003 teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils, standards were above the national average. Current work seen during the inspection shows average levels of attainment and average achievement for pupils of this age. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the elements of music. Year 8 pupils, for example, using a clip from Shrek, demonstrated their understanding of how sound, timbre and dynamics affect mood. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as others. The achievement of higher ability pupils and those who are gifted or talented is above average.
144. Teaching and learning are good, leading to good all-round achievement. Teachers and visiting instrumentalists and vocalists are accomplished musicians with a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well planned and prepared. Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. A good range of teaching styles effectively sustains their interest. Pupils work well as a class, in small groups and individually. Those in Year 9, for example, enjoyed working in pairs to perform their own compositions in a reggae style on the keyboard. Opportunities for pupils to sing and appraise their own and each other's performances are too few.

145. Although pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds, the marking of pupils' work, target setting and assessment procedures are not strong. Teaching is best when pupils are given a good range of activities related to listening, composing, performing and appraising. There is good pace and rigour when aspects of the lesson are delivered with a time limit. Teaching is least effective when lesson objectives are not made clear to the pupils.
146. One hundred and eight pupils benefit from instrumental and vocal tuition. About 90 are effectively involved in a range of extra-curricular activities, including singing groups, percussion groups, a swing band and the Hey Presto jazz band. Teachers are inspiring and conduct these groups in an entertaining and professional manner. Pupils also rehearse themselves and apply similar critical standards. Productions, such as 'Les Miserables', presentation evening performances and carol services effectively complement class teaching. Accommodation and resources are good. Information and communication technology is not being fully used.
147. Leadership and management of the department are very good, and good progress in the department has been made since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in GCSE physical education, dance and the Junior Sports Leadership Award.
- Provision and take up of extra-curricular activities are good.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning does not ensure consistency in all lessons.
- Assessment is not used as part of learning.

Commentary

148. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were in line with national averages. In core physical education, standards are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 9, standards are also in line with national averages. Pupils with special needs achieve at the same rate as others.
149. Pupils enter the school with average standards and they achieve satisfactorily to attain average standards by the end of Year 9. In a basketball lesson, Year 9 pupils performed basic passing and dribbling techniques, but were not able to transfer these techniques consistently to the game situation because of their underdeveloped hand-eye co-ordination. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE physical education and dance are in line with national averages; when compared to standards on entry to the course, this represents good achievement. GCSE results in 2004 have improved for both physical education and dance. Pupils' achievement in theory work is restricted by their lack of good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Clear systems and procedures ensure that pupils are always engaged in their activities and they maintain good basic techniques already

learned when developing game situations. This was seen in a soccer lesson where pupils used good passing techniques to exploit space created by good movement.

150. In core physical education, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils do not know the National Curriculum level they are working at so cannot set targets for improvement. Standards and achievement in the Junior Sports Leadership award are very good. The course is supported by very good links to feeder primary schools.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is good in GCSE physical education and dance and in the Junior Sports Leadership Award lessons. In Years 7 to 9, teachers target the work well to the standards pupils have reached, with pupils often working with different equipment and on different tasks. Where teaching is not so good, pupils do not know how to improve their attainment. Strategies to improve their literacy are not yet in place. In most Year 10 and 11 lessons, pupils concentrate and are motivated by the varied teaching and learning styles. They cooperate well when working in pairs and small groups.
152. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has developed a clear vision for raising standards, which is embraced by the department. Teachers are well supported by materials, systems and procedures through a good subject handbook. The monitoring of teaching and learning does not focus on raising standards and so there is some inconsistency in practice. A good extra-curricular programme enhances an appropriate physical education curriculum, which has been reviewed in order to meet the needs of pupils.
153. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Procedures for assessing pupils are better but pupils are unaware of their level of attainment and the department does not analyse data in order to assess the achievement of different groups of pupils. The accommodation and resources for physical education are good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

There is an optional media studies GCSE course for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In the media studies lesson seen, teaching and progress were both satisfactory. The planning for the lesson was in appropriate detail and there was clear emphasis on preparing to meet the examination requirements. Pupils showed interest in the topic and had carried out satisfactory preparations for their task.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in discrete citizenship lessons are unsatisfactory.
- Careers education, including work experience, is good.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

154. Standards are below average by the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory in all elements of personal, social and health education and citizenship. Knowledge and understanding about citizenship are developed in discrete lessons and in personal, social and health education lessons. Satisfactory use is made of off-timetabled days, which enhance learning and utilise personnel from the wider community and industry. However, citizenship is in a transitional period as staff and structures for teaching the subject have recently changed. The subject leader is in the first few weeks of her new position.
155. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Lessons do not motivate pupils and it was evident that some were not engaged in learning. In certain lessons, topics did not relate to National Curriculum requirements. Much of the pupils' learning was based on knowledge, with little account taken of their skill development. Teaching is best in aspects of careers education. The school has good links with Connexions and has in place a good two-week work experience programme for Year 10 pupils. The schemes of work are being revised in the light of the new structures. There is planning for them to cover a broad range of issues affecting the life of young people.
156. The school has developed some opportunities where pupils can explore their rights and responsibilities, especially through active participation. The school council is a good vehicle for the development of knowledge and understanding about responsibility and offers the opportunity for pupils to develop the skills of participation and communication. A number of activities encourage real participation in community aspects. These include work for local charities.
157. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The new lead teacher has a good vision of how citizenship can be developed, but teachers still lack expertise and there are no regular team meetings or opportunities for staff development at present. The lead teacher is aware of opportunities for citizenship across the curriculum, but many staff do not know how these can be taught and developed to reinforce the citizenship curriculum. Assessment procedures are in place but they do not take account of all the opportunities where citizenship takes place, nor are these occasions monitored.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine subjects 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
Biology	3	66.7	65.2	0	11.1	20	20.6

Business Studies	2	100	76.4	0	16.3	25	26.2
Chemistry	4	50	72.7	0	13.9	10	24.1
Media Studies	9	88.9	86.4	33.3	23.8	36.7	32
English Language	3	100	82.9	0	17.5	26.7	28.7
English Literature	1	100	85.9	0	19.1	40	30.2
French	1	0	78.2	0	18.9	0	27.6
General Studies	5	80	73.9	0	17.8	18	25.7
Geography	1	100	74.3	0	19.8	20	26.5
German	2	50	81.5	0	19.3	15	28.9
History	2	50	80.7	0	19.5	10	28.6
Mathematics	7	57.1	61.9	14.3	17.1	18.6	22.1
Music	1	100	86.5	0	21.4	20	30.7
Physics	2	100	68.6	50	14.4	45	22.7
Psychology	8	62.5	69.7	12.5	16.7	18.8	24.1
Sports/PE Studies	1	0	73.2	0	11.4	0	23.1

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	12	100	98.6	50	50.2	90	87.5
Biology	13	85.7	96.4	28.6	39.2	61.4	78.6
Business studies	9	100	98.7	22.2	36.8	68.9	80.1
Chemistry	5	83.3	97.6	33.3	49	63.3	84.9
Media Studies	6	100	99.4	50	37.8	90	82.1
Design and Technology	3	100	97.8	0	35	60	77.9
English language	7	100	99.4	42.9	36.3	80	80.9
English literature	6	100	99.5	16.7	46.5	66.7	86.5
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
French	1	100	98.8	0	51.5	40	87.6
General studies	6	100	94.7	16.7	31	56.7	73.1
Geography	1	100	98.7	0	44.5	40	84

History	4	100	99	0	44.6	65	84.6
Mathematics	4	100	96.7	25	55.6	80	88.8
Music	1	100	98.8	0	38.9	80	81.1
Physics	11	81.8	96.7	27.3	44.6	60	81.7
Psychology	9	100	97.4	33.3	42.7	80	81.8
Sports/PE studies	1	100	98	0	30.9	40	75.2
Art and design VQ	2	50	69.8	0	23.8	20	70.2
Business studies VCE	6	100	65	0	14.6	80	60.1
Health and social care VCE	4	71.4	67.7	0	14.5	45.7	63.5
Travel and tourism VCE	3	100	71.8	0	14.5	60	62.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Two English courses are offered at A-level - English language and English literature - but it is not possible for a student to take both subjects. The inspection focus was on English language.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Very good procedures track progress and offer students advice on improvement.
- Students with a wide range of ability are given the opportunity to study English at a more advanced level.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Curriculum enrichment is good.

Commentary

158. In 2003, standards in English language at A-level were in line with the national average. No student attained a grade A, but all passed. Provisional results for 2004 indicate a similar picture. English literature results in 2003 were well below the national average; no student gained an A grade and only a small percentage gained a B. All students passed. In 2004, the English literature results were lower than they had been in 2003, with no A or B grades, although the numbers taking the examination were very low and national comparisons are not helpful. Standards in both English language and English literature are currently about average.

159. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. The department operates a flexible entry policy which offers the opportunity to study English at a more advanced level to a significant proportion of students whose previous attainment in English does not form a secure or promising basis for study at A-level, but who have shown interest in the subject

and willingness to work hard. These students achieve well to pass the A-level examination. Students who embark on the course with higher previous attainment do not achieve as well, with grade B being the highest grade gained in the last two years; their achievement is satisfactory. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are achieving well, in response to teaching which places increased emphasis on how students' work is assessed by the examination board and which offers good advice to students on how to improve their grade.

160. The quality of English teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are planned purposefully with clear objectives, and students are motivated to do their best. Teachers make good use of challenging questioning and thoughtful discussion to probe and extend students' understanding of demanding ideas and they make perceptible progress in this way. There is a clear emphasis placed on the improvement of grades through understanding how answers will be marked. Teachers' marking is of very good quality and modelled very closely on the way answers will be marked by the examination board. Teachers offer good resources for students' additional reading and encourage them to research extra information independently. Students speak appreciatively of their experience of studying English in the sixth form. They feel they are given very good encouragement to seek the help of teachers when in difficulty and that the support they receive is of a high quality. They are particularly positive about their understanding of their own targets and the advice they are given on how to meet them.
161. Leadership and management of English are good. Good procedures for assessment are carried out consistently, and those for tracking students' progress and identifying under-achievement are very good. Some involve working cooperatively with parents. Curriculum enrichment is good. The choice of two subjects and the flexible policy on entry to the courses offer good opportunities to a wide range of students. Schemes of work are insufficient to offer support to inexperienced teachers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

162. The standard of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory. The quality of speaking and listening is variable between subjects. In chemistry and business education, for example, students are reluctant to contribute at any length and the ideas they express lack development, whilst in art and design the quality of discussion is very good and students express their ideas very clearly. There is a similarly mixed picture for writing, but in all subjects, students' writing enables them to meet course requirements at least satisfactorily.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is satisfactory; some is good.
- Teachers use their knowledge of the subject effectively and the relationship between teacher and student is very good.
- Students work hard, both independently and collaboratively, and are often encouraged to think for themselves.

- ICT is under-used as a resource.
- The entry policy for students wishing to complete the A-level course of study is not sufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

163. In 2003, AS level mathematics results were in line with the national average and represented an improving trend compared to the previous year. Students' achievement was satisfactory compared to their performance at GCSE. In 2004, AS level results were well below those of the previous year and achievement based on pupil performance at GCSE was unsatisfactory. In 2003, an insufficient number of students was entered for the A-level examination for comparisons to be made, although all students passed. Based on their performance at GCSE, students' achievement was satisfactory. In 2004, A-level results declined and students' achievement was unsatisfactory. Current standards of work seen are broadly average and the students are achieving satisfactorily.
164. Year 12 students are well into the new courses and making satisfactory use of their past GCSE work to move into new areas of study. A good example was seen in their investigation of the tangent to a curve, as part of the introduction to calculus. In Year 13, students' files are well organised and full, providing a satisfactory record for review and revision. However, students' recall of past work is not entirely secure and its application is not convincing in lessons. In a statistics lesson, for example, students were hampered by weak algebraic skills when deriving the properties for a continuous random variable with a probability density function.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject effectively and are aware of the next stages in students' learning, though ICT is under-used as a resource. Lessons have a clear purpose which is communicated to students. Teachers challenge students' understanding and encourage them to think for themselves. Work is intellectually demanding and learning is progressive and well planned. As a result, students work hard, both independently and collaboratively, in and out of lessons. Relationships between the teachers and students are very good. Teachers are prepared to give up their time to support the students, which they appreciate. Homework is set regularly and marking is up-to-date with annotation that offers guidance in terms of students' achieving their target grades.
166. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Planning is effective with a range of courses which meet the needs of all students, though the entry levels onto the A-level course are not sufficiently rigorous with respect to basic skills. After some disruption in the previous year, teaching is now ordered, and issues raised in the last report have been addressed. Accommodation is very good. There is a commitment to raising standards and to increasing the number of students on courses. Arrangements for students to improve their GCSE mathematics examination grade are satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

167. All students have the opportunity to work towards improving their key skills in the application of number appropriate to their personal needs. Students work via weekly

tutorials and provision is satisfactory. Mathematics provides the opportunity for those wishing to improve their performance at GCSE to do so after school. The programme encourages students to set personal targets and accept responsibility for their own learning.

SCIENCE

Chemistry was inspected in full. Biology and physics were sampled in two lessons. They were both good and characterised by lively teaching methods with practical work and good use of ICT. In the biology lesson, students were fascinated by their observations of the heart rate of *daphnia viridis* and made good gains in knowledge. In physics, the teacher challenged students well to identify emission spectra for various elements, using discharge tubes and the internet. Standards achieved were average for advanced courses.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff provide good learning opportunities for students.
- The planning of lessons is good, but learning objectives need greater clarification so that teaching and learning may be fully evaluated.
- Teaching methods do not encourage students to become independent learners.

Commentary

168. In 2003, AS and A-level results were both of average standard and this level was repeated in 2004. Many of the students are not reaching their minimum target grade based on overall GCSE performance, but their achievement based on prior attainment in science is satisfactory. The standard of work seen, both written and in class, indicates that present students in both Year 12 and Year 13 are working at an average standard. An assessment of their knowledge, understanding and skills in classwork shows their achievement to be satisfactory in relation to prior attainment. A Year 12 class in a practical session, comparing the reactivity of alkanes and alkenes, made correct observations but could only discuss the results in terms of saturated and unsaturated structures at a GCSE level of understanding. A Year 13 group carrying out reactions involving carbonyl compounds could accurately describe the basic changes but did not have the confidence of skills to explore and explain the redox reactions involved. They experience difficulty in transferring related knowledge to new areas.

169. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, involve a variety of teaching approaches and are taught with enthusiasm. Students' response, though generally good, is at times too passive and they do not think for themselves enough or take greater responsibility for their own learning. Marking is thorough and helpful in showing students how they can improve their work. Classes are small and, although at times this is a handicap to discussion work, teachers manage the situation well. Students form constructive relationships with one another and have positive relationships with teachers. In group work, they are co-operative and support each other whenever possible in the learning process.

170. Leadership is good, the subject leader forming an effective team with the other teachers and the head of department. Management is generally satisfactory but there are some aspects which need attention. Performance data for students is readily available but there are problems with the accuracy and expectations of target setting. Assessment is good in general but strategies need to be introduced to evaluate the extent to which a student's understanding has increased within a lesson and to measure the short-term progress. Very good accommodation, supported by good resources, provides a supportive environment for learning. Although ICT resources are satisfactory, its application and use in the delivery of the curriculum needs developing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The inspection focus was on the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE) in information and communication technology (ICT).

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-informed and effective teaching helps students to build up their knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- Excellent use of ICT by teachers enhances students' learning.
- Students' oral discussion and contributions are not strong.
- Marking and comments on students' work are insufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

171. Results in 2003 Year 12 ICT were above the national average. The majority of students obtained grades above those predicted. Year 13 results in 2004 showed these students attaining A and B grades. In 2003, students were the first to enter for AVCE in Year 12. In 2004, Year 12 results were below average, in part due to the students' prior lack of experience of ICT.
172. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are average. Students on these courses work effectively on coursework, which meets the examination criteria, as seen in the task on creating a logo and documents for different purposes for a forthcoming event in the school. Students explain well what they see as the task requirements. They give satisfactory explanations of how to use the technical facilities available to produce good work. The teaching groups contain students of considerable variation in attainment. Due to good support from teachers, all students make good progress. Higher ability students in Years 12 and 13 use technical language more frequently in oral answers. Work seen shows that students are acquiring good skills across the full range of application of ICT. Achievement is good.
173. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good rapport with their students, who take a mature attitude to their studies. A high level of subject expertise ensures confident teaching at a good pace. In Year 12, for example, spreadsheet work on complex functions such as 'Vlookup' and 'Macros' are explained with clarity. Excellent use is made of ICT to enhance learning and understanding.

174. The leadership of the subject is good; management is satisfactory. Students' needs are addressed and courses provided to match the range. They value the opportunities offered in ICT lessons.

Key skills

175. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory use of ICT in some of their courses, but insufficient in science, mathematics and health and social care. Although they are not given specific training, they have developed satisfactory levels of competence in ICT whilst in the main school, adequate to support their course requirements.

HUMANITIES

Psychology was inspected in full. History and religious education were sampled. Provision for A-level philosophy and religion is good. Standards at AS level are above average and achievement is good because of good teaching. Standards have shown significant improvement over time because of good leadership and management. For timetabling reasons, there was no opportunity to judge standards at A-level during the inspection week. In history, A-level results in 2003 were below average for the higher grades, but all students passed. Small numbers take the exams, making national comparisons unreliable. In work seen, standards match the national average. Achievement is satisfactory and often good, given some students' prior attainment. They use opportunities well to discuss the emancipation of the serfs in Tsarist Russia, for example, and apply their knowledge well from other parts of their course. They do not read widely, however, and do not do enough research. A sixth-form scheme of work is required.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- During the subject's short time in existence, standards have varied yearly but are average overall.
- Recently-introduced specialist teaching has a positive effect on students' achievements.
- Teaching is good and is now encouraging students' independent learning.
- The Year 12 group is too large and restricts the range of learning activities that can be undertaken.
- Assessment does not provide effective guidance for students.
- Insufficient resources are provided for the number of students taking the course.

Commentary

176. This is a relatively new subject to the school. Students' examination results vary from year to year; in 2003, some students achieved A and B grades. Overall achievement is satisfactory.

177. Standards seen in the most recent work are good. Year 13 students have a good understanding of a range of psychological theories and the vocabulary necessary to participate effectively in class discussions. However, some students do not organise their work effectively and do not undertake wider reading outside of the standard text book. Year 12 students are making a good start to their course. They are developing a secure knowledge of psychological theory and are willing to undertake classroom presentations and group discussion in areas such as inter-personal relationships.
178. The quality of teaching in psychology is good. The newly-appointed specialist teacher is working hard to enable students to have a mature and considered response to the subject to learn well. Lessons are well planned and effective use is made of questioning to both develop knowledge and to ensure understanding. However, the teacher's best efforts to encourage independent learning amongst the students are hampered in Year 12 by the size of the group, which limits the teaching styles that can be used. Work is carefully marked but there is a lack of individual targets for students which identify for them how they could improve.
179. Effective leadership has established psychology as a popular option, although the retention rate has been variable. The school has demonstrated its commitment to the subject by ensuring that all students have their own text book. However, the current level of financial support is inadequate for the number of students. The number and range of supporting books and computer material also needs further development.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was sampled. Provision for A-level product design is satisfactory.

The 2003 A-level results were below average for A and B grades but all students passed, which is better than the national average. In 2004, the results were below average. The low number of candidates over recent years in this subject and the inclusive entry policy does affect standards. Current numbers in Year 12 have increased but are still below double figures. The work sampled shows average standards in Year 12 and Year 13, where there are only three students. In their project on retro lighting in Year 12, students used the influence of famous designers or a design period to help them arrive at solutions to a particular design problem. Good research was seen in tennis racquet design solutions in Year 13, leading to an individual student proposal for futuristic designs. Previous work on the Dyson cleaner used good ICT skills in the presentation of the work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent and the majority of students achieve highly.
- Teachers and students enjoy excellent relationships and students benefit from high levels of personal tuition and guidance.

- Students share ideas fully and work very well together.
- Accommodation is inadequate for courses with such a diversity of media choice.
- Technical support is inadequate for developing media activities in both two and three dimensions on a large scale.

Commentary

180. The proportion of students in both AS and A-level examinations in 2003 achieving grades A and B was average. The most recent results show upward trends, with girls achieving well above the national average at A-level. The AS level examination results provide a very good foundation for A-level study.
181. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above average, with students achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE and AS results. The quality in students' sketch books and portfolios confirms these high standards. Students speak with confidence about their work and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. The working environment is particularly stimulating, with high quality work on display. Very good progress is evident, especially in painting and textiles, and large scale interpretation is exemplary. Art and design sketch books show excellent annotation and understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for development of coursework assignments. Students' independence and maturity enable them to manage their own studies in completing coursework and working towards examinations. Initially in Year 12, they sustain their interest and skill from their GCSE work. These high standards are maintained and built on in Year 13 and there is evidence from students' work that independent research skills are being well developed. Excellent sharing of ideas and opinions on the influence of styles, genres and approaches to their own work and the work of other artists was evident. Progress was ensured by the challenging demands of the work and the guidance offered by teachers.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is always very good and mostly excellent. The art and design staff have very good subject knowledge and technical skills. All students speak well of the support provided by teachers. They are informed of how work can be improved and theory and practical work are well integrated. Teachers' expectations are always high and lessons have very good pace and productivity. Visits to galleries and a shared commitment to extra-curricular enrichment, including excellent community links, are some of the factors contributing to the success of the department. The sixth-form courses run most effectively.
183. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department is inspirational and her passion for art is clearly communicated to all students and staff. The strong departmental teamwork has enabled the department to achieve very good improvement since the previous inspection. The absence of full technical support and inadequate accommodation undermine the potential development of further media activities in both two and three dimensions. Overall, this is a most successful area of sixth form provision and it is becoming increasingly popular.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 13 lesson, students working independently on large panels in mixed media.

Outstanding and inspirational teaching resulted in very high standards. Students were able to present, disseminate and discuss how they arrived at their final outcomes. Excellent sharing of ideas and opinions on

the influence of style, genres and approaches to their work and the work of other artists was evident. Progress was ensured by the challenging demands of the work, vivid and humorous explanations and guidance offered by the teacher. The excellent display and examples of students' work created an exemplary stimulating environment. High expectations and teaching methods generated a high level of interest from all students. There was a perfect balance between praising students' efforts and giving them pointers on how to improve. Achievement was very good and relationships with each other and the teacher were excellent. Learning objectives were made very clear and students understood the assessment objectives for the examination.

Performing arts

The provision for Performing arts is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good expertise.
- Standards in dance are below average because of little prior experience.
- Handbook guidance from the curriculum leaders is very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

Commentary

184. The recently introduced Advanced VCE in Performing arts is a two-year vocational course that relates music, dance and drama to the industry, equivalent to two A-levels. Students work on all three aspects with very good specialist teachers.
185. The majority of students following the course are musicians who gained at least grade C in GCSE music. As a result, standards displayed in dance-focused lessons were below average as students had little prior knowledge or experience of this. Standards seen in Year 12 drama and music groups, one month into the course, were average. In summer 2004, Year 12 students on the course completed the examination module successfully and have continued into Year 13.
186. It was not possible during the inspection week to see a Year 13 drama-focused group in action but students in discussion paid tribute to that element of the course. They believed all aspects of the course had helped them widen their horizons and open up opportunities. Helping on the technical side with the production of 'Les Miserables' and setting up equipment for Achievement Assemblies had allowed them to put theory into practice and had given them a feel for the industry. The commitment demonstrated by the students is very good. They approach all aspects of their work with serious intent and lend their support, when appropriate, to extra-curricular activities.
187. The clear vision of the performing arts curriculum leader is reflected in a very good subject-specific handbook. Very good knowledge of students and their potential is evident, and strategies have been reviewed to help students meet their targets, for example, individual tutorials. The performing arts area provides very good accommodation and resources. It benefits from the effective support provided by two full-time technicians. The technical equipment that is available in the drama studio is of industrial standard, the music element links with eight peripatetic teachers for instrumental and vocal tuition and the dance studio is purpose designed. Cross-curricular links are made to other subjects: for example, the theory behind costing and spending £3,500 on a public address system and the consideration of the role of the unions in the industry.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment and achievement are good.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and usually very good.
- Students are well motivated, interested and make very good progress.
- Students do not learn independently.
- The range of courses on offer is limited.

Commentary

188. Attainment compared with national expectations in Year 12 is above average and, in Year 13, well above average, although this group comprises only seven students. There is some participative learning but students do little independently. Achievement is also good and students show positive attitudes.
189. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use a variety of approaches and students make very good progress. They are well motivated, take notes well and show considerable interest. In a Year 12 lesson on the break-even curve, the teacher had prepared a very good presentation using the PowerPoint computer program. This developed cost and revenue graphs and left the students to make several calculations. They were given a printout of the slides and used these to work in pairs to find answers. The lesson was interesting and generated lively student interest, with excellent use of ICT. In a Year 13 lesson, students were presented with a case study on product diversification within the Coca Cola group. They had access to The Times 100 storyboard on Coca-Cola, and they made very effective use of it to discuss the issue and were interested in formulating conclusions within a marketing context.
190. The department is well led and managed. Organisation is good and assessment is addressed well. Students are clearly informed of what they need to do to improve grades and of the progress they are making. Accommodation and resources are good but there is limited use of the college accommodation because of the need to have computers readily available. There is a good variety of learning techniques – good numeracy and very good use of ICT - both to teach the course and for students to work on computers. Students' folders are well kept and indicate a good range of work.
191. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. A-level results have improved, the provision of textbooks and other resource materials is now better and leadership is good. Only the appropriate provision of sixth-form courses remains an issue since the school only offers A-level.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good relationships with their students which encourage participation in lessons.
- The department is led by a committed practitioner who has developed a team approach to teaching health and social care.
- The limited use of ICT by students in lessons and private study restricts their opportunities to develop a range of presentation and research techniques.
- The school recognises that teachers do not fully meet the needs of the wide range of student ability.

Commentary

192. Results in the health and social care AVCE examination in 2003 were below the national average and the same level is reflected in the 2004 results. Standards seen in lessons and in students' files reflect these results. The department accepts a wide range of students onto the course, including some without the required GCSE grades; these students work well to achieve the lower grades at AVCE level. The department has a good retention rate in Year 13, reflecting the good relationships and support in the department. However, the school has decided that this subject is better taught at Priestley College and is directing students there as part of the three-year plan to make the sixth form more viable.
193. Students make satisfactory progress overall. Most students are interested in the range of topics studied and they display knowledge of the new disability legislation and its potential impact on health centres. They are developing a basic understanding of genetics, although this is a subject which some lower ability students find difficult, due to their lack of science background. Students' critical and analytical skills are satisfactory. The literacy skills of some students are weak and ICT is under-used.
194. Teaching and learning in health and social care AVCE are satisfactory, with some good features. Where teaching is good, teachers plan well with a variety of activities, including paired discussion, research activities and video illustrations. Students focus well in these lessons and they enjoy their work. The very good student-teacher relationships encourage students to participate fully in lessons and there is good support, both during and outside the lessons. However, in some lessons, the needs of higher ability students are not met and, as a result, they do not make sufficient progress. Students know what grade they are expected to get but they are not clear how they might improve their work to reach a higher level.
195. Leadership and management in health and social care are good. The department is led by a committed practitioner who works well with her team of staff. There is a good range of activities and visits to enrich the subject, such as a first-aid course, disability awareness training and visits to local care settings. The assessment of students' work is accurate and well organised. Teaching is monitored, there are regular meetings outside the school planned cycle and the department has produced a series of support booklets for each unit, which students find very helpful in their learning. Schemes of work do not take account of the diverse ability range of students and opportunities for the use of ICT

are not integrated into the health and social care units. This subject has not been inspected before.

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	4	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
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	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	4	3
The effectiveness of management	4	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); not applicable (8).