

INSPECTION REPORT

WARDLE HIGH SCHOOL

Rochdale, Lancashire

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105852

Headteacher: Mr J. Fryett

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

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

Inspection number: 271766

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Year 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 9 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard; this second part of the course is known as **A2**. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of students: 11 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1339

School address: Birch Road
Wardle
Rochdale
Lancashire

Postcode: OL12 9RD

Telephone number: 01706 373911

Fax number: 01706 377980

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of Mrs S. Cannell
governors:

Date of previous 19th October 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wardle High School is larger than the average comprehensive school, with an average sized sixth form. There are about the same number of boys and girls in the school, although in Year 7 there are considerably more boys than there are girls. The great majority of students are white British, with only a very small number from any other backgrounds; all students are fluent in English.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are above average overall, although the standards of the current Year 7 are only average. Around half of the students stay on to the sixth form, although the number is falling each year; standards on entry to the sixth form are above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN) is below average, while the proportion with a statement is average. Most students are on the SEN register because they have moderate learning difficulties, or physical, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The school has a resourced unit for physically impaired students. There are now many fewer students with special educational needs at the school than there were at the time of the previous inspection, but a similar proportion with statements.

Students come from the local area; socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The school is a specialist performing arts college and is part of the Rochdale Excellence in

Cities group. The school received a 'Healthy Schools' award in 2004 and was awarded 'Investors in People' status in 2003. The school suffered a flood in early 2004, which led to building work in part of the buildings.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Design and technology
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design; English in the sixth form
30973	M. Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography
4829	I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Health and social care
30825	K. Hayton	Team inspector	Biology in the sixth form
19026	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
30072	J. Skivington	Team inspector	Psychology in the sixth form
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship; Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a poor school that provides a **poor** quality of education and **very poor** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is in long-term decline, as a result of poor leadership and management.
- Standards are only average by the end of Year 11; in the key subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT students underachieve.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory or poor in key areas of the curriculum, leading to poor achievement.
- The school fails to insist on a positive ethos; this has led to poor attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour and attendance, through poor provision for students' personal development.
- The school provides insufficient care for the welfare of students.
- Teaching and achievement in art and design are very good.
- The provision for extra-curricular music is outstanding.

In accordance with section 13 (7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **very poor**. Standards are lower and achievement is worse. Results at GCSE have fallen, as has attendance; exclusions have risen significantly. Teaching is now much worse and the school has lost the confidence of parents. The main weakness identified at the last inspection, that of ICT provision, has not been resolved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is **poor**. Students arrive with standards that are above average, but these have fallen to average by the end of Year 9. Students who left school with average GCSE results in 2004 started their courses with above average standards. Achievement is poor in Years 7 to 9, where students do not achieve well enough in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, because of poor achievement in science and ICT, together with unsatisfactory achievement in health and social care. Achievement is consistently good in design and technology and geography. Achievement is very good in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented students do slightly better than others, but their achievement is still unsatisfactory overall.

Standards are above average in the sixth form but achievement is poor; many students fail to finish their courses or gain the grades necessary to continue their studies into Year 13.

Students' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **poor**. Students' attitudes are poor and their behaviour is unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. Students in the sixth form exhibit unsatisfactory attitudes and attendance; their behaviour is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **poor** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **poor**, notably in key subjects; they are poor in Years 7 to 9, and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Teaching is worst in science, but is also unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, ICT and health and social care. Teaching is best in art and design, but is also good in geography and design and technology. Teaching is not good enough to fully interest students and therefore they behave badly.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory in the main school, where there is not enough ICT or citizenship, and satisfactory in the sixth form. There is a satisfactory range of extra clubs and activities – very good in the main school, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. The quality of guidance and support for students in the main school is satisfactory, but is unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Provision for students' welfare is unsatisfactory. The school has an unsatisfactory partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **poor**. The leadership of the school by the headteacher and senior staff is **poor**, as is the school's governance. Members of staff receive insufficient support and the ethos of the school is poor.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents no longer have confidence in the school. They are concerned about behaviour, the leadership of the headteacher, the information they receive and the decline in standards. Students too are unhappy. They are worried about poor behaviour and falling standards. They express concern for their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to improve the quality of education the school provides, senior staff and governors should:

- improve the quality of teaching, by ensuring students receive challenging and interesting tasks;
- establish an ethos based on respect and hard work, so that students' attitudes and behaviour are improved and they feel safe in the school;
- provide more support to teachers in dealing with students;
- ensure that senior staff set better role models for their colleagues;
- identify weaknesses more rigorously and deal with them more quickly;

and in the sixth form:

- ensure students receive adequate guidance on their choice of courses;

and to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship;
- draw up and implement policies for racial equality and race relations;
- teach the requirements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology and citizenship;

- provide reports to parents on students' progress in citizenship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WARDLE HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Provision in the sixth form is inadequate. The sixth form provides a **poor** education and its cost-effectiveness is **very poor**. There has been poor improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Many students fail to complete their courses or gain the grades necessary to continue to Year 13, because they have been poorly advised and the teaching is not good enough.
- Standards are above average, but achievement is poor as a result of unsatisfactory teaching and attendance.
- Standards are declining because of poor leadership and management.
- Teaching and achievement in English literature are good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Teachers prepare students well for the examination, and teach them to study independently.
Mathematics	Satisfactory . Satisfactory teaching results in satisfactory achievement.
Science	Provision in biology is satisfactory . Lessons are well prepared, but there is too little use of ICT.
Humanities	Provision in psychology is unsatisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory, but students are allowed to start the course with little chance of success.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory, but many students drop out when they find the course is not what they were expecting.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in music is satisfactory . Satisfactory teaching results in satisfactory achievement.

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'.

Whilst only one lesson observed was less than satisfactory, there is other evidence that clearly points to an unsatisfactory provision. There is clear evidence of underachievement on a large scale. The proportion of lessons that were taught to a good or better standard during the inspection was much lower than usually seen.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **unsatisfactory** support and guidance. Personal advice on welfare matters is satisfactory, but guidance on which courses to study is not good enough. Arrangements to promote their welfare and health and safety are very good. Students do not get enough opportunities to express their views and influence the running of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **poor**. The sixth form has made poor progress in recent years, with declining numbers and an increasing drop-out rate. Nobody is tackling the issues of underachievement or unsatisfactory teaching.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are unhappy with the school's decline. They have very strong views on behaviour in the main school, which they feel is poor; they feel powerless to do anything about it.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is poor in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Overall, students do much worse by Year 11 than would usually be expected given their standards on joining the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in English, mathematics and health and social care is unsatisfactory; in science and information and communication technology (ICT) it is poor.
- Students achieve very well in art and design.
- Standards and examination results are in rapid decline.

Commentary

1. Students join the school with above average standards. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, as they are in music; in other subjects standards on entry are broadly average.
2. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and students' achievement is poor in their first three years at the school. The biggest problems are in English, mathematics and ICT, where achievement is unsatisfactory, and science where achievement is poor. Results from the national tests in 2004 were average in English and mathematics, and below average in science. Overall, students underachieved in the tests, although they did as expected in mathematics and particularly badly in science.
3. The main cause of the underachievement in Years 7 to 9 is the poor teaching that students receive. However, where teaching is good, students do well. In art and design, geography, history and design and technology, students achieve well and attain better standards than would be expected given their standards on entry to the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.2 (33.8)	33.3 (33.4)
Mathematics	35.8 (34.6)	36.5 (35.4)
Science	31.2 (33.5)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 229 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In Years 10 and 11, students' standards do not improve quickly enough and they underachieve. Results in the GCSE examinations were average in 2004, representing unsatisfactory achievement given students' standards when they were in Year 9. The main cause of the underachievement in 2004 was the performance of students in science; only one in four students gained a higher grade in the double award, which counts as two GCSE passes. This accounts for the poor level of achievement at the

higher grades; students who were middle attainers gained grades D and E in science, instead of the grade C of which they were capable.

5. Lower attainers generally did very well at the school; the proportion leaving with at least one GCSE was well above average and much better than would be predicted from their standards at the end of Year 9. Girls' results were better than those of the boys, but there was little difference in their achievement, as girls' standards were higher than boys' when they started their GCSEs. Nevertheless, there are now signs of some differences in the achievement of girls and boys. In some subjects, notably science, English and religious education, boys are now achieving worse than the girls because their attitudes to work are poor; they are less likely to do homework and more likely to misbehave in lessons. Girls do slightly better, although their attitudes are worsening, as is evident in physical education. However, higher attaining girls get together to form their own self-help group outside of lessons, which improves their achievement. The achievement of students with special educational needs is similar to that of their peers and closely linked to the quality of teaching they receive. Many of the students with special educational needs are high attainers, but have other physical difficulties that are the reason for their inclusion on the register of students with special educational needs.
6. Students who are gifted and talented do better than other students; their achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Much of this better achievement is a result of the extra provision that is made in the performing arts and sport. However, it is in music that such students can really shine, with many opportunities to play with one of the top bands in the country.
7. Just as in Years 7 to 9, there are some subjects, such as design and technology, geography, music and religious education, where students are taught well and so achieve well. In art and design, where the teaching is very good, students achieve very well; over 90 per cent gained a GCSE grade of A* to C in 2004. However, with the exception of religious education, all of these subjects are options and the good achievement of smaller groups of students in these subjects is undone for the majority by the poor achievement in science and ICT, together with the unsatisfactory achievement in health and social care. While much of the underachievement is a result of unsatisfactory or poor teaching, other factors play a part in ICT. Only a very small proportion of students study ICT as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11, and the teaching of ICT through other subjects is unsatisfactory. In all years, the unsatisfactory attendance reduces students' achievement.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45 (49)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34.4 (34.1)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 238 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Standards in the basic skills of language, literacy and mathematics are average. Nevertheless, standards could, and should, be better across the school, especially for

boys. Standards in ICT are below average; lessons have only recently been introduced in Years 7 to 9 and few students receive lessons in Years 10 and 11. There is no co-ordinated approach to raising students' standards in any of these skills and boys in particular are not careful enough with their written work.

9. Standards and achievement are now much worse than they were at the time of the previous inspection; in particular, GCSE results have fallen rapidly. Results did improve a little in 2004, but this was mainly because the students were higher attainers when they started their courses, rather than any improvement in achievement. The school failed to meet its targets in 2003 and 2004.

Sixth form

Standards are above average by the end of Year 13, but students' achievement is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many students either leave during Year 12 or do not obtain the grades necessary to continue to Year 13.
- Students underachieve in most subjects they study.
- Students achieve well in English literature.

Commentary

10. Results in the 2004 A-level examinations were above average, for both males and females. These results would appear to represent satisfactory achievement for the students concerned, as they joined the sixth form with above average standards. However, many of those who started the sixth form in Year 12 did not make it to either the end of the year or did not stay on to Year 13.
11. A relatively high proportion of students leave during the Year 12. Last year more than 10 per cent dropped out of English language and literature (combined), general studies, geography, history, mathematics, media studies, physical education, psychology, sociology and ICT. Many others failed to obtain the grades necessary to continue their studies into Year 13. In all, the school loses around one in three students before the start of Year 13. This high drop-out rate means that the students who are left to start Year 13 are the highest attainers; they start the year with standards that are, at least, well above average, but end up with only above average results. Some students in the sixth form have special educational needs; their achievement is similar to their peers and is no way affected by the nature of their special needs.
12. The inspectors looked at six subjects in detail. Achievement in English literature is good, reflecting the good teaching. In psychology and ICT, achievement is unsatisfactory. Many students are poorly advised as to the content and nature of the courses, and do not have the qualifications necessary for success. In psychology and ICT, for example, students are disillusioned by the course and many drop out. In psychology in particular, many students do not have a good GCSE in science and so do not have the background that is required for success; around half the students in the sixth form study psychology. Many students fail to complete their course, or fail their examinations, because of these factors. Many students also do not attend lessons regularly, because they have become disillusioned, and their achievement suffers.

13. The school's own data shows that students do well in English literature, but underachieve in chemistry, English language and literature (combined), French, geography, media studies, physics, psychology, sociology and ICT. Many of these subjects were not inspected in detail. The data also shows that achievement overall is getting worse; standards and achievement are now much worse than they were at the time of the previous inspection.

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	88.0 (92.5)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	24.4 (28.4)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	275.4 (278.8)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 71 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Main school

Although many students are well behaved and keen to learn, attitudes, values and personal qualities are poor overall. Provision for students' personal development is also poor. Behaviour and attendance are both unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's procedures for promoting attendance and good behaviour are ineffective because they are not applied with sufficient rigour and consistency.
- A significant minority of students show little respect for members of staff or for their peers.
- Most students are loyal to the school and are keen to see standards improve.
- Students have positive attitudes when lessons are taught well.
- Poor attitudes impede students' learning because teachers have to devote much time in lessons to controlling behaviour.

Commentary

14. Students' attitudes to learning are poor overall, with the majority showing little enthusiasm for school life and activities. Their disenchantment stems from their experience of the school, and is not something that they bring from their home backgrounds or from their prior education. Most students have supportive parents and start in Year 7 with above average attainment. They want to learn and, when given good opportunities to do so, respond positively.
15. During the inspection, attitudes were satisfactory or better in all lessons where the quality of teaching was good. Students are keen to participate in activities that inspire their interest. Many of them choose to join the school's brass bands, where they show outstanding enthusiasm for learning. They have high aspirations and are committed to developing their skills because they regard what they are doing as worthwhile and fulfilling. However, significant numbers of students are adversely influenced by the general ethos of the school, which is not one that promotes positive attitudes.
16. The turnover of staff is high, and there are many new and inexperienced teachers who are not skilled in managing behaviour. They spend a good deal of time in lessons trying to control a disruptive minority of their class, often with limited success. This

impairs the learning and progress of the majority of students. The situation also causes considerable resentment. Well-behaved students believe that they do not get the attention they deserve because teachers devote too much to individuals who cause trouble. This perception discourages them from learning and achieving well. Instead, they become accustomed to low expectations, slow paced lessons and a climate in which hard work is not regarded as 'cool'. This is evident in Years 7 to 9. Students in these year groups have poor attitudes to learning because of the prevailing environment and the quality of teaching. Older students are a little more positive about learning, but are less satisfied with school in general. In the pre-inspection questionnaire significant numbers of them expressed negative views about most aspects of the school's work. Many of these students are extremely concerned by the decline in standards in recent years. They are sympathetic to the plight of teachers who cannot cope with poor behaviour, and they want senior staff to take effective action to restore good discipline.

17. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. In the year 2003/04 the school's rate of attendance was well below the national average; the truancy rate places the school in the bottom 10 per cent of schools nationally. The registers for the current year show a major improvement, but attendance at lessons was low during the inspection, and the punctuality of many students was poor. Several students were identified by inspectors as truanting from school. The school has sound procedures for recording and monitoring attendance at registrations, and for identifying and dealing with persistent absentees. However, its systems are not effective in dealing with absence from lessons. Some teachers do not have, or do not use, lesson registers. Others have inaccurate lists of students and therefore do not know who should be present. They cannot check on truancy or monitor attendance at lessons adequately.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2003-2004) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.5	School data	3.0
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

18. Parents and students are extremely concerned about behaviour. The pre-inspection questionnaires, and meetings and discussions with them, show that the majority think that standards are low and falling. Inspectors agree with this judgement. The quality of behaviour has declined substantially since the previous inspection and is now poor in Years 7 to 9, and unsatisfactory overall. Many students are very polite, friendly and considerate, and behave well in lessons. Nevertheless, the school is not the orderly, harmonious community that it should be. Relationships are often poor, with students openly showing disrespect for members of staff and visitors. There is much unacceptable and immature behaviour, such as disruption to lessons, vandalism, stone throwing and smoking. Bullying and deliberate intimidation are less common, but students of all ages and levels of attainment feel threatened by the loutish behaviour of their peers. The school has taken some measures to improve discipline and to raise standards. It has excluded more students recently, although the number of exclusions does not exceed the national average, and has introduced a new behaviour policy and referral procedure. These measures have not been effective because the system of discipline is not applied with sufficient rigour and consistency. Too many members of staff, including members of the senior management team, have low expectations and ignore poor behaviour around the school. When they do intervene, students take scant notice of them. Students have very little fear of being called to account for poor behaviour, as when smokers light up cigarettes without any attempt at concealment. Sanctions against poor behaviour are applied ineffectively. Students are given detentions but often fail to attend them. Rewards are also used inappropriately. For example, some students receive excessive praise for negligible improvements in their behaviour. This does not inspire respect for the system of discipline or for members of staff.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1260	84	
White – Irish	2	4	
No ethnic group recorded	17	43	2

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

19. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is poor. Where they have the opportunity to develop their self-esteem and to take responsibility, students display confidence and very positive attitudes. The sense of responsibility, pride and the level of social interaction displayed by students who take part in extra-curricular music are very high. They have the opportunity to contribute to the community and to

take leadership roles supporting rehearsals and music groups. A quartet of drummers in Year 8 displayed exemplary attitudes and self-motivation, composing and rehearsing with minimal supervision. Too often in lessons however, students are not encouraged to work together independently or to take responsibility for their learning. As a result they do not take initiative and their skills of collaboration and teamwork are undeveloped. The attitudes and behaviour of students inhibit teachers from providing opportunities for reflection in lessons.

20. Students have a clear sense of right and wrong, and in geography, history and religious education, for example, they have very good opportunities to debate moral issues and display a strong sense of justice. This understanding is not generally applied to the school community however, and although they identify the poor behaviour of some students, and recognise that they are falling short of the school's expectations, many disregard the rights of others to learn, without concern. Overall, provision for moral development of students is unsatisfactory.
21. The opportunities for the cultural development of students are satisfactory. Music plays a significant role in the life of the school and the regular concerts and showcases provide very good opportunities to appreciate the performances of others. The annual visit by the 'service band' provides a significant experience for the students involved. Visits to galleries and theatre performances enable students to appreciate professional artists. Through geography and religious education, students study the culture of other countries. For example Year 9 students study the population in China and this involves them in the moral debate about the one-child policy, and reflection on different attitudes in the world. They respond well and demonstrate appreciation of the different cultures they study. Elsewhere in the school there is little evidence of appreciation of the multi-cultural diversity of Britain or evidence of spirituality being developed.
22. Students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are now much worse than at the time of the previous inspection; exclusions have risen exceptionally quickly.

Sixth form

Students' behaviour and relationships are good, but their attitudes to school do not enhance their learning and are unsatisfactory. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory and there is a high drop-out rate.
- Students respond well to good teaching.
- Students have good relationships with one another and with members of staff, but are not given the opportunities to play a full role in the life of the school.

Commentary

23. Students' attitudes to school are unsatisfactory. Their attendance is patchy and they are often late for lessons. Many of them are intolerant of what they regard as mundane teaching and are unwilling to persist with courses that they find difficult. If they find lessons dull they do not bother to attend them regularly. There is a high drop-out rate from some courses, and a significant number of students quit the sixth form altogether. The school is taking steps to improve students' attendance. For example, members of staff now telephone the homes of students who are absent without good reason. However, some teachers do not keep accurate records of attendance in

lessons, or inform the office about absentees. As a result the school's measures are not wholly effective in practice, and students' poor attendance is continuing to have an adverse effect on achievement in some subjects.

24. Most students want to learn and are keen to complete their courses. They showed positive attitudes in lessons and responded well to good teaching. They have good relations with one another and with members of staff. They appreciate being treated as young adults by teachers, but some students dislike the new attendance checks for treating them as though they were children. They regard telephone calls to parents as inappropriate to the sixth form. Students behave well, and like many students in the main school are indignant about falling standards of behaviour.
25. Opportunities for spiritual development are few, although there are good opportunities in English literature through their study of Blake, and in the spiritual nature of their performance of 'Fever Swamp' in dance. Students have little involvement in the work of the main school and despite being senior members they are not expected to support the smooth running of the school. They are not encouraged to become involved. Few students have the confidence to uphold and reinforce the school's discipline policy as they feel they have little support. They feel themselves unable to act as role models within the main school. This lack of authority and responsibility restricts the development of confidence and self-esteem amongst many in the sixth form. Where students organise activities, such as their end of year ball, they find they enjoy the responsibility although working together proves to be a challenge. Where opportunities for responsibility are taken, for example mentoring individual students from the main school, or in running rehearsal sessions in extra-curricular music and practices in physical education, students show themselves to be capable of good leadership and authority.
26. There is little opportunity for enrichment and, with the main exception of the extra-curricular music, students find their experiences in school limited to the fields of their A-level choices. They do not feel valued as senior members of the school and do not develop their sense of community either within the sixth form or in the wider school community.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a poor quality of education. Teaching and learning are poor; the curriculum, provision for students' welfare and links with parents are unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Main school

Teaching and learning are poor; they are poor in Years 7 to 9, and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers spend too long simply controlling behaviour, rather than helping students learn.
- There is great variation in the quality of teaching.
- Too many teachers set undemanding tasks in which students have little interest.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 179 lessons (including the sixth form)

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1%)	16 (9%)	60 (34%)	63 (35%)	28 (15%)	10 (6%)	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.

Commentary

27. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching, and the learning it promotes, across the school, both between subjects and within them. Teachers in most subjects have a good command of their subjects, although this is not the case in ICT where many lessons are taught by non-specialists who do not get the opportunity to meet with their specialist colleagues. The main weaknesses in the teaching are best illustrated by the views of the students. Students enjoy subjects such as art and design and geography because they say that teachers set them difficult tasks in an interesting way. When this is not the case, they lose interest and start to misbehave; they are fully aware of those teachers who are unable to control such misbehaviour. A walk down the corridor confirms students' views. On one side is design and technology, where all is calm and the lesson is filled with purposeful activity on the part of students who are working hard and learning well. On the other side is science, with students running around the room, shouting, and paying no attention to the teacher.
28. Because of poor management, teachers have become isolated. In some cases they are supported by other members of the department, but this is not always the case. This leads to great differences in the quality of teaching from lesson to lesson. Some teachers are aware of the above average standards that students possess when they arrive at school and set demanding tasks that make them think for themselves; these teachers insist that students answer questions fully and in their own words. The same students may well then go to the next lesson, where they are told to colour in a picture or listen to a teacher read aloud from a text they can read for themselves. On one hand they are developing their skills to learn independently, while on the other such skills are quashed.
29. In many lessons the teacher has to spend much of the time trying to control behaviour. Some impose the school's systems for behaviour management, and this was seen to work. However, others are unaware of the systems or do not know who to turn to for help and spend the whole lesson simply trying to maintain order, often with little success. On these occasions, it is usually a minority of students who cause problems, but the learning for all the class is made unsatisfactory because of the way that the teacher is taken away from *teaching* in order to spend time *controlling*.
30. Many teachers have now given up setting homework, because so few students hand it in. The system of giving detentions for failing to complete homework has lapsed as so few turned up for their detention. Some departments, such as design and technology, have kept the system going; for them it works. Similarly, in art and design, extra sessions are put on after school to complete homework; attendance is compulsory and all obey the rule. Students attend not out of fear of the consequences, but because they are interested in the work and want to do well.
31. Support for students with special educational needs is mainly through in-class support; withdrawal is kept to a minimum. Support is provided by a devoted and caring team of support assistants. However, they do not all have the knowledge of how best to

provide effective support and there is often a tendency for them to do the actual work for the students in order to keep up with the pace of the lesson. Support assistants have not received appropriate training and guidance as to how to best give assistance in the mainstream classroom. Likewise, many teachers are also unaware of how to use support effectively; very few teachers plan their lessons with support assistants. Support assistants know the students very well. Relationships between support assistants and students are very good indeed. On the whole, though, the learning of students with special educational needs is similar to their peers, because they experience the same quality of teaching.

32. Teaching is now of a much worse quality than at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is worse than that in Years 10 and 11, because students' attitudes to learning are getting progressively poorer. Students in Year 11, for example, can remember a time when they were taught well, but now feel sorry for their teachers who have to deal with falling standards of behaviour on a more frequent basis.

Assessment

33. The school has been slow to develop a central system that collates quality data on the attainment and achievement of students. Consequently, the use of such data for tracking achievement, and taking decisive action to remedy under-achievement by students, is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Resulting from unsatisfactory central direction and monitoring, teachers are left to their own devices and there are great variations in the quality of assessment practice between subjects. Very good assessment practice was seen in art and design and geography, for example. In music, science and citizenship assessment is unsatisfactory, and in ICT and health and social care assessment is poor.
34. Where practice is good or better the assessment of students' work and achievement is thorough and constructive and is used effectively to respond to the learning needs of individual students. Those students understand clearly what they must do to improve. An important deficiency in the school's provision is that underachievement goes undetected in so many areas of learning.
35. The assessment of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Information obtained from primary schools and from later testing is used to identify targets in students' individual educational plans. These plans vary in quality. Many students are unaware of the targets that they are working towards. In the humanities subjects teachers do take note of students' individual education plans when preparing their lessons and generally provide appropriate work. In geography, work is very well matched to individual needs. However, in subjects such as science, the work is not always suitable and students do not learn as well as they should.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is unsatisfactory and brings about unsatisfactory learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are satisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	2 (6%)	17 (50%)	14 (41%)	1 (3%)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of lessons taught to a good or better standard is much lower than usually seen.
- Students do not get enough opportunities to work independently.
- Teaching in English literature is good, so students learn well.

Commentary

36. Whilst few lessons observed were less than satisfactory, there is other evidence that clearly points to an unsatisfactory provision. The high rates of drop-out and failure suggest that teaching in Wardle is not up to standard; it was not possible to talk to or see the work of those who had left. There is clear evidence of underachievement on a large scale. The proportion of lessons that were taught to a good or better standard during the inspection was much lower than usually seen. Furthermore, students say that one of the main reasons for their poor attendance to lessons is that they feel they are not learning enough, for example copying from text books when they could do this at home. Finally, the school has data which is used to generate a report that concludes that teaching is unsatisfactory.
37. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was good in English literature, where teachers prepare students well for the examination and, more importantly, develop their skills of independent learning. This latter feature is not the case in other subjects, and in general, students' capacity to work on their own initiative is underdeveloped.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Enrichment opportunities are satisfactory; they are very good in the main school, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. The match of staff to the curriculum is satisfactory, as are resources and accommodation. The match of support staff to the curriculum is good.

Main school

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of ICT and citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- There is outstanding provision for students to play in the brass bands.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- The curriculum is not changing quickly enough to meet the needs of students.

Commentary

38. All students follow the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. In addition, all students study drama. However, students can only take French although the school is planning to introduce a second language.
39. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because the vast majority of students do not follow a course in ICT which is a breach of statutory requirements. Also, the curriculum is very narrow, with most students taking GCSEs; there is currently only one vocational subject. There is satisfactory alternative curriculum provision for a small group of students. These students follow a programme that includes studying courses at a local college. There is also provision for a group of five students who are attending work placements each week. The current Year 11 is the first group of students to have the recommended curricular time for science; previously the amount of time had been too low and is one of the reasons for students underachieving.
40. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 does not meet the requirements for citizenship. This provision is still in its infancy. Whilst the intention is to teach citizenship partly in the time provided for morning tutorial and through other subjects, this is very inconsistent with only a few teachers or tutors making any attempt to promote citizenship.
41. The provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school is the designated Rochdale secondary school for students with statements of special educational needs who have a physical disability which precludes them from attending their local secondary school. In addition it serves as a base for students with serious visual impairments and this is resourced by specialist staff from the local education authority. The school is very well adapted to the needs of students, with ramped access, a special entrance, electric doors, and a lift for students in wheelchairs. However, at the time of the inspection this lift was out of action – as it had been since December 2004 – and this has had a significant effect upon lessons which have had to be re-scheduled in order for students to receive their normal curriculum. There is a hydrotherapy pool, which can only be used in conjunction with the physiotherapy service and a swimming pool with a hydraulic lift at deck level to facilitate entry. Dining facilities are also provided for students who may require assistance at meal times but these do not help social integration. There are a large number of support assistants who give freely of their time and expertise. They all work with tremendous energy and enthusiasm but many lack appropriate training and receive insufficient guidance and support from the special educational needs co-ordinator.
42. Curricular innovation is unsatisfactory. There is very little vocational education and the government initiatives for literacy and numeracy in Years 7 to 9 are not effective. The school's management has been slow to respond to such initiatives. For example, the school numeracy policy was produced and disseminated in the week prior to the

inspection and is having very little impact on improving standards of numeracy throughout the school.

43. The school provides very good support for students' learning outside of the normal school day. There are extensive curricular clubs for students who need to catch up with coursework. For example, in design and technology, students can stay in school until 5 pm each evening; as a result students achieve well in design and technology.
44. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities for students. There are many opportunities for students to take part in sport. In the arts, there is outstanding provision for students to play in one of the leading brass bands in the country; this opportunity is taken up by large numbers of students. A recent skiing trip to France was very successful with many students saying what a good experience it was. However, younger students, in particular, say that one of the main reasons they attend clubs is because they feel safer when a member of staff is present.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are not enough opportunities for students to participate in enrichment activities.

Commentary

45. The curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. The school provides an appropriate number of courses for sixth form students, most of them being advanced level courses. There are no courses for students who may want to follow a vocational pathway or courses at a lower level, but local colleges make adequate provision for students who wish to follow such courses.
46. Opportunities for students to take part in enrichment activities are unsatisfactory. Students themselves speak of the unsatisfactory provision and are unhappy. Some programmes are provided for students, but many decide not to participate or give up after a few weeks.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Although the school provides satisfactory advice and guidance to students, its arrangements for promoting their welfare, health and safety are unsatisfactory because they fail to ensure good discipline. Procedures for consulting students and taking their views into account are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a good choice of sources of advice from approachable, supportive members of staff.
- Poor standards of behaviour and ineffective discipline result in students feeling unsafe and insecure in school.
- The new school and year councils are valued by students for giving them some influence over the running of the school.
- There is a 'no grassing' culture among students; this limits effectiveness of the school's arrangements for support and guidance.

Commentary

47. The school makes satisfactory arrangements for child protection and for ensuring that its buildings and grounds meet health and safety requirements. There is adequate provision for first aid and for risk assessment. In the case of physical education the quality of risk assessment is excellent. In spite of these measures, students feel unsafe in school, and their feelings of insecurity have a harmful effect on their welfare. All year groups feel intimidated and threatened by poor behaviour around the school and on the buses. Quieter students often seek refuge at lunchtime clubs and classes where they feel safe because the activities are supervised. During the inspection a significant number of students complained of dangerous incidents, such as aerosol cans being set alight and bottles being thrown from school buses. The school has not been successful in eradicating this kind of behaviour. The school's large grounds are lightly supervised. In the week of the inspection senior members of staff were observed out and about during the lunch hour, but to little effect. The majority of students perceive supervision as being inadequate, which gives them cause for concern.
48. Arrangements for the induction of new students are good. Year 6 pupils attend induction events that give them good opportunities to get to know one another and their new teachers. They now benefit from advice and guidance from Wardle students who used to be at their primary schools. There is satisfactory support for Year 9 when they choose their options for GCSE. Guidance on choice of courses is a standard part of the programme of personal, social and health education for that year. Students also have good access to careers advisers during this time. In general students think that the quality of guidance through personal, social and health education is satisfactory. They say that the fortnightly formal lessons in the subject are helpful. However, they regard the 25-minute registration period as a waste of time. Inspectors' observations of registrations confirmed this view. Only a minority of form tutors used this time effectively to provide support and guidance to students.
49. There is a sound system of pastoral care for individuals, based on form tutors and heads of year who get to know students well and develop ongoing links with their families. Learning mentors, careers advisers and the school nurse are also on hand to provide additional support and guidance. This gives students a good choice of sources of personal advice; most of them are happy with the school's provision. They say that there is always an adult in the school to whom they can turn if they need help. Individuals who are identified as having serious difficulties receive extra support and guidance. The majority of students have satisfactory relations with members of staff. They regard them as approachable and believe that they would listen sympathetically to complaints and concerns. However, there is a strong culture among students of not 'grassing' on their peers. This means that problems sometimes go unreported to members of staff. Consequently, students do not always get the help that they need.
50. Arrangements for academic monitoring and support are satisfactory overall. Their main strength is the provision of clubs and extra classes. Students have good access to activities that promote learning outside normal school hours. This includes opportunities for GCSE candidates to attend classes during the Easter holidays. Selected students also benefit from academic mentoring. The school has a satisfactory system for setting targets to raise attainment. All students receive individual targets and get good opportunities to discuss them in one-to-one interviews with their form tutors during the termly consultation days. The majority of them feel that teachers are helpful and give them good guidance on how to improve. The quality of assessment is the main weakness in the school's system of academic monitoring

and support. It is unsatisfactory overall, which means that not all students have a secure understanding of their attainment or how to raise it.

51. Procedures for seeking out and acting on students' views are satisfactory. Years 7, 8 and 9 are more satisfied with the school's provision than Years 10 and 11. More than seven out of ten younger students think that members of staff are interested in their views. Arrangements have been strengthened by the introduction this year of a system of formal consultations through school and year councils. The majority of students believe that this gives them more influence over the running of the school. For example, they say that the school council obtained major modifications to the school's proposals for a new uniform.

Sixth form

The provision of care is unsatisfactory. The quality of advice and guidance on academic courses is unsatisfactory, and arrangements for consulting and acting on the views of students are inadequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not receive adequate guidance when they choose their sixth form courses, leading to a high drop-out rate during Year 12.
- Students receive good support with regard to applications to universities and colleges.
- The opportunities that students have to express their views and influence the running of the school are limited.

Commentary

52. Students receive unsatisfactory advice on sixth form courses when they are in Year 11. Many of them start the sixth form without a clear understanding of the demands that will be made on them. In some courses, such as AS-level physical education and dance, students are unprepared for the amount of theory in the syllabus. A number of them have given up these subjects as a result. The school also allows students without the minimum entry qualifications to start courses on a probationary basis. Some of them succeed through hard work and the help of their teachers, but others drop out before the end of Year 12, or get a poor grade in their examinations.
53. Provision for personal advice and guidance is satisfactory overall. There is a rota of one-to-one discussions between tutors and students in morning tutorials. The usefulness of these interviews is variable. Some tutors provide their students with very good support. In other cases students say that they get very little benefit.
54. Most students feel that they get good informal support and guidance on improving their work. They say that teachers are very willing to provide extra help and the advice they receive about higher education is good. They are less happy with formal reporting on progress through interviews with form tutors at consultation days. They find this system less helpful than discussions with subject teachers at traditional parents' evenings.
55. Only a small number of students responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but half of those who completed it said that the school did not seek and respond to their views. There is a sixth form council, but it has a relatively limited role. It does not give students the opportunity to express their views on matters such as the leadership and management of the school, teaching methods, and discipline in the main school. Sixth formers have very strong feelings about the last issue. They believe that standards of behaviour are poor, but feel powerless to do anything about it.
56. Provision for health and safety is similar to that in the main school. However, the practice of some students of skipping registration and going straight to lessons poses a risk in the event of an emergency evacuation. The school could not be sure of accounting for, and ensuring the safety of, everyone on site.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

Relations between home and school have deteriorated significantly since the previous inspection, and the school now has an unsatisfactory partnership with parents. Links with the local community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has lost the confidence of a large number of parents, although parents are supportive of their children's learning.
- Arrangements for consulting parents and meeting their concerns are unsatisfactory.
- The school's specialist college status has strengthened links with other schools in respect of the performing arts.
- There are good procedures for the transfer of students from primary schools to Wardle High School.
- The school's brass bands have excellent links with local community.
- A significant number of parents are unhappy with information on their child's progress.

Commentary

57. The majority of parents give qualified approval to the school. Most of them are fairly satisfied with what it does and the way that it is run, except in respect of behaviour and discipline. Few parents think that students behave very well, and almost half the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with standards of conduct. Approximately a quarter of parents are also unhappy with the way the school is run, information on students' progress, homework, and arrangements to seek and act on their views. In all, there is a serious lack of confidence in the leadership and management of the school. In the judgement of inspectors, parents' concerns are fully justified.
58. Links between home and school are unsatisfactory. The quality of information for parents is inadequate. There are some good features such as the fortnightly newsletters and the mailing list that is sent home in September. This tells parents what they can expect to receive during the school year. When properly used, students' planners provide a good ongoing line of communication between home and school. However, some form tutors do not check them, and therefore are unaware when parents use them to raise concerns. Information on students' progress is unsatisfactory. The school has introduced a system of reporting based on termly written reports combined with consultation days. The written reports provide valuable information such as grades for actual attainment and target grades, but do not contain comments on students' strengths, weaknesses or areas for improvement. They do not report on progress in citizenship, and therefore fail to meet legal requirements. Parents are able to discuss their child's attainment, progress and targets with members of staff at consultation days. However, their appointments are with form tutors who have a good overview of students' progress and personal development, but not specialist knowledge of all subjects. For this reason some parents would prefer the old system of parents' evenings based on discussions with subject teachers.
59. Although parents have been consulted on some major decisions such as introduction of the new anti-bullying policy, the school's arrangements for involving them through seeking and acting on their views are unsatisfactory. Senior members of staff are not sufficiently aware of parents' priorities and concerns. The widespread disquiet over declining standards of behaviour has come as a surprise to some of them, for example. In the opinion of parents, the issue has not yet been effectively resolved, as the pre-inspection questionnaire shows. A number of them are also dissatisfied with the way in which the school deals with their particular concerns. They say that their complaints are ignored, or that the response to them is slow and inadequate.
60. Parents are interested in their children's learning and keen for them to make good progress, which is why so many of them are concerned about poor behaviour and lack of homework. In general they are willing to work closely with members of staff if there are problems with their child's attendance, punctuality or application to task. However, there is some absence condoned by parents. The majority of parents attend consultation days, and their attendance at the Year 9 options evening is excellent. Parents also give very good support to school plays, concerts and instrumental music, and, when given the opportunity, parents' input has a positive effect on the life of the school.
61. Links with the local community are good. They significantly enrich the curriculum and enhance students' learning. The school has developed valuable contacts with local employers; its curriculum of work-related learning and careers education benefit

greatly from their input. For example, these employers give the whole of Year 11 mock interviews, and provide work experience placements for students who are taking vocational courses. The school has very good links with the community in the performing arts. Its partnership with 'Spiral Dance' enhances provision for dance, and its brass bands are a major feature of the life of the local community. They are very well known locally. They take part in numerous competitions and events, and perform in front of large audiences. Many of their concerts are staged in support of charities and for the benefit of local people. The school's bands receive very good support from the community. Many volunteers come into school to act as helpers. A number of them were formerly members of the bands and are therefore able to provide relevant expertise.

62. Links with other schools, colleges and universities are satisfactory. The school has established a good partnership with a local college over the provision of work-related learning in Years 10 and 11. There is good liaison with primary schools over the transfer of pupils to secondary education. Members of staff meet and discuss in detail attainment, progress and friendship groups. Wardle High School has strengthened the arrangements by appointing a transition mentor. She works with target pupils at primary schools on improving their attitudes and behaviour. Wardle High School's status as a specialist college has strengthened its collaboration with primary schools through the performing arts. Its music teachers go to teach students at a local primary school, and there are now good links between the schools in dance. Contacts are less well developed in English, mathematics and science. For example, the mathematics department has limited links with partner schools.

Sixth form

Links with parents are unsatisfactory. The sixth form has a satisfactory partnership with other schools and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the other schools extend the range of courses open to sixth-form students.
- Arrangements to inform parents about students' progress are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

63. The sixth form's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. The inadequate quality of information on progress is similar to that in the main school. The sixth form follows the same cycle of reporting and consultation, and written reports use the same form, focusing on grades rather than diagnostic comment. As in the main school, parents meet form tutors on consultation days, but not their children's subject teachers. Arrangements for seeking and acting on parents' views are the same as in the main school.
64. There are satisfactory links between the sixth form and other schools; they make a positive contribution to the curriculum. Collaboration with other local schools extends students' opportunities for learning by giving them the chance to take AS-level law and A-level level textiles. Links with the local community, specialist agencies and universities are satisfactory. They make a positive contribution to careers guidance. Advisers from Connexions give good support to students who are in danger of dropping out of sixth form courses. Links officers from universities come to the school to carry out mock interviews with students who intend to go on to higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are poor. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is poor, as is the school's governance. The leadership of other key staff and the quality of the school's management are poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff morale is very low as a result of poor leadership from senior managers.
- Senior managers, including governors, are failing to halt the school's decline.
- Support for staff is inadequate.
- Financial management is poor.

Commentary

65. The school has been in decline for several years now, suffering from a lack of leadership and direction. Staff, both teachers and non-teaching staff, are becoming fed up with the poor attitudes of students and the lack of respect they are shown; morale is now very low. Many members of staff have left over the past two years; the turnover in teaching staff is very high. Other teachers talk openly about leaving because they cannot take any more. The main reason for their disenchantment is the lack of support they receive from senior managers.
66. There are established procedures for the induction of staff new to the school and for the professional development of teachers, but the monitoring of the quality of the provision is poor because no checks are made on how well teachers and other staff are supported in departments. There is much variability across subjects in the quality of support to teachers with over-reliance on each department to 'do its own thing' without management intervention to ensure good practice exists throughout the school. Some observation of lessons has taken place, with all staff having been observed last year. However, the emphasis has been on describing what happens, rather than judging its effectiveness, so teachers do not get feedback on how well, or badly, they are doing. In turn, this means that senior staff are not getting a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and teaching is getting worse rather than improving.
67. The headteacher and other senior staff are failing to stamp their authority on the school. They often ignore bad behaviour or disrespect towards adults around the school and students take advantage of this in their dealings with other staff. Some staff try to stop the foul language or poor behaviour in corridors, only to be given a mouthful of abuse by students who no longer care about the sanction of being sent to a senior member of staff. This poor behaviour spills over into lessons and teachers, especially those who are new to the school, do not know who to turn to for support. Disciplinary action is taken against more junior members of staff who are not carrying out their roles satisfactorily, but no action is taken against senior staff, despite an awareness of their weaknesses. The headteacher is spending much of his time carrying out tasks that would usually be delegated to another senior manager, because of a lack of confidence in the capabilities of other staff.
68. The long-term decline of the school is not being tackled well enough. The headteacher is aware of the deficiencies in some areas of performance, such as in science, attendance and behaviour, but these do not then form part of the school's priorities for development. Actions are taken to resolve weaknesses, but these are too often slow or piecemeal. Actions were taken to improve attendance, for example, but nobody checks that students are in lessons so now they register in the morning and do not attend lessons. The school plans to introduce a seclusion room to improve behaviour

and reduce exclusions, but this could have been put in place a long time ago. Some other deficiencies, such as falling standards in English, go unnoticed, leaving the school believing that they are strengths rather than weaknesses. National initiatives, such as that for improving numeracy, have not been implemented or have lapsed and key weaknesses from the previous inspection have not been tackled and put right.

69. There are, however, some areas of significant strength in the school. Some subjects, including English and mathematics, are led well by heads of department who work closely with their teams. However, they are spending much of their time dealing with the many issues that arise on a day-to-day basis, especially trying to help new staff, so other aspects of management are unsatisfactory. In particular, development planning and analysis of data are areas of weakness, so many departments are now providing a lower standard of education than they were in the past. The management of the specialist school initiative has been good; it has had a significant impact on the performing arts in particular, broadening the curriculum and improving links with the community.
70. Leadership of special educational needs lacks vision and direction. Not all teachers are aware of their responsibility to provide appropriately for students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom. Teachers also receive insufficient direction and guidance as to how to best use the support assistants in the classroom. Administration is carried out efficiently and annual reviews are carefully planned. Since the last inspection the quality of provision for students with special educational needs has declined.
71. The governors carry some responsibility for the school's failings. Long-term weaknesses, such as the curriculum for ICT, have not been dealt with and governors have not ensured that new subjects, such as citizenship, are taught properly. Governors do not get a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, because they rely on the senior managers' analysis, which is not good enough. Governors are aware, however, of the school's decline but have carried out little in the way of decisive action to improve matters. They have not kept up to date with current legislation and fail to ensure that the school meets its legal requirements in respect of the race relations act, the race equality act, reporting to parents, provision of courses in ICT and citizenship, and providing a daily act of collective worship.
72. The school's management of its finances is poor. Its budget is far above the average for other schools, yet it is in deficit. While there may have been understandable reasons for the original deficit, the size has increased this year. None of the school's priorities are properly costed and little account is taken of the principles of providing best value. The school has many more teachers than would be expected for a school of this size, but they also spend less than average time teaching. That the school provides such a poor education with such a high income demonstrates the school's very poor value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6 958 238	Balance from previous year	-195 511

Total expenditure	6 962 689
Expenditure per student	5188

Balance carried forward to the next	-199 962
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Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form are poor, as is its governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient actions are being taken to improve the education provided.
- Achievement is poor and getting worse.

Commentary

73. The decline in the sixth form has mirrored that of the main school. The number joining the sixth form is falling, as the achievement of students declines. Concerns about the performance of students are not taken seriously enough; the action plan for the sixth form mentions none of the obvious weaknesses in performance. The monitoring of the work of the sixth form has been minimal, so managers are unclear about what actions need to be taken in order to improve. Policies, such as minimum entrance requirements, are not applied consistently and students get poor advice on what courses to choose. As in the main school, governors are not sufficiently aware of the weaknesses in performance and fail to take actions to prevent its further decline.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory**.

No judgements were made for teaching, learning or achievement; only one WRL lesson could be observed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is good and successfully supports learning in school.
- Few subjects make use of the world of work to enrich students' learning.

Commentary

74. Students value their work experience placements and talk confidently about how they enhance their knowledge of the world of work and help with their general learning. Preparation and debriefing for work experience are good. Local employers are positive and comment favourably on aspects like enthusiasm, initiative, independence and collaboration. Some subjects such as art and design, dance, business studies and design and technology make good use of experiences from the work place, for example an artist in residence and work with a dance company. These are consequences of the school's arts college status.

75. The school is making good use of links to enhance the curriculum, especially for lower attaining students and for those who prefer a practical subject. Year 10 and 11 students who attend Hopwood Hall College and Rochdale Training Association enjoy working in a range of purposeful environments like car maintenance and catering. Links with the City Learning College have enhanced music and technology in product design. Currently there are few specific vocational courses on offer in the main school. A very small group of disaffected students successfully follow an enterprise course designing, making and marketing soft toy products. This course is very well matched

to meet the needs of these students and successfully motivates them to achieve well. However, many subjects do not give sufficient emphasis to work-related skills to make the curriculum more relevant.

76. Careers guidance is satisfactory. Students are beginning to understand the needs of employers, and the changing world of industry and commerce. They write letters of application, complete CVs and undertake interviews. The local Rotary Club gives support with these processes, especially with interview preparation.
77. The school recognises that WRL is at an early stage of development. There has been no audit of the programme so the school is unable to evaluate the contribution made by WRL courses.

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 **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, because of ineffective discipline and poor behaviour.
- Higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 achieve relatively well.
- The head of department has provided good leadership and helped to maintain morale during a period of staffing difficulties.

Commentary

Examination results

78. Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average. Results have been falling for the last two years. In 2004, results in GCSE English and English literature were average. The proportion of Year 11 entered for English literature was higher than average. Overall, boys' results have been falling since 2000, whilst girls' results have been improving.

Standards and achievement

79. Students' standards on entry are above average but by the end of Year 9 they have dropped to being average. Their achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. Standards remain average in Years 10 and 11; students' achievement in these years is satisfactory.
80. Overall, girls achieve better than boys. This difference is most marked in written work. Whilst there is no simple or single explanation for this, in general girls tend to be more self-disciplined than boys and this is especially seen in the quality of written homework they produce.
81. By Year 9 many students possess a sound vocabulary, express themselves clearly and make a worthwhile contribution to whole-class or group discussion. However, the extent to which they do so varies from one class to another and depends upon how confident students feel. Standards of reading are generally average. The vast majority of students read independently and make some analysis of a writer's technique. Only a few students read aloud with good expression and voice projection. In their written work, higher attaining students write for different purposes and use an extensive vocabulary. The writing of other students, however, lacks sophistication and lower

attainers rely heavily upon colloquialism. The work of many middle and lower attaining students is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and is often untidy.

82. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of higher attaining students further develop their skills in the subject. They become increasingly confident speakers, able to present a point of view and to offer supporting evidence. They understand more challenging literature and express their responses with clarity and using the appropriate vocabulary. However, middle and lower attaining students develop their skills at a slower rate. Many of their oral contributions to lessons remain brief and they have a limited ability to explain themselves more fully in response to questions. Such students do not learn how to structure their work to best advantage, or how to improve it through careful redrafting, to the extent that might be expected. Their understanding is often confined to the gist of what they have read rather than by closely considering the language.

Teaching and learning

83. Whilst the department has retained a core of suitably qualified and experienced teachers since the previous inspection, in recent years there have also been a number of staff changes and other difficulties, for example those arising from absences. At the time of the inspection, a significant proportion of the teaching was being covered by recently qualified teachers, supply staff and teachers who were not subject specialists. This lack of continuity was having an adverse effect on the achievement of some groups of students, most notably in Years 7 to 9.
84. When teaching is most effective, more often in Years 10 and 11, the teacher is aware of students' prior attainment and ensures that the work in the lesson is adapted to meet their needs. In response, students concentrate well because they realise they are making progress. Students also respond well when they are provided with good resources and have the chance to be active in their own learning. Teachers who are specialists in the subject probe students' understanding effectively and so lead them to think more deeply and independently. This in turn often leads to a brisk pace so students behave well and concentrate upon their studies. When teachers' marking is detailed and contains relevant guidance, students take more pride in their work and try harder.
85. The main reason for poor or unsatisfactory teaching and learning, seen especially in Years 7 to 9, is ineffective discipline by teachers and poor behaviour by students. Too often, students refuse to co-operate with the teacher, are rude to the teacher and other students and generally disrupt the work planned for the lesson. Teaching is also unsatisfactory when the teacher does not sufficiently take into account the prior attainment of the students and their current needs. In some instances this results in the tasks being too easy, so students lose interest, behave inappropriately and underachieve. In other cases the work is too difficult for the group and the tasks are not satisfactorily explained with the result that students become confused, give up and also start to behave inappropriately and underachieve. More generally, in the more effective lessons, students were shown how to perform tasks; in the less effective ones, they were told how to complete them. In some lessons, the support assistants who normally support the teacher were absent. This created an additional responsibility for the teacher in motivating and controlling some of the more challenging groups of students.

Leadership and management

86. The head of department is a good role model. She and her second in department have revised schemes of work and these provide a valuable guide for their colleagues. Above all, she has provided good leadership and helped to maintain morale within the department over the last two years when there have been pronounced staffing difficulties. Despite this, standards have fallen since the previous inspection and teaching and learning are worse. However, these are not simply management issues for the English department but are issues for the whole school. Much of the head of department's time has been taken up by dealing with day-to-day problems and, as a result, other areas of management, such as the detailed planning for the department's future, have not been carried out. This lack of analysis, in turn, means that the head of department has been unable to draw up a satisfactory plan for the department's future.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

87. Standards are average and students possess a sufficient level of skills to give them access to the National Curriculum. However, the school's work to improve literacy skills is unsatisfactory.
88. The school has only recently appointed a literacy co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has a good vision of how improvement might take place and has introduced some new initiatives, such as a period of silent reading during tutor periods. However, there is inconsistency as to how these are being applied in practice. Across the curriculum, much depends on the individual department and, again, there is inconsistency. In general, therefore, the school does not have a systematic programme of study in place that ensures that students develop a full range of reading and writing skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection.	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good progress has been made since the last inspection because of the good leadership of the head of department.
- The marking of students' written work is unsatisfactory, so students do not get a clear idea of how to improve.

Commentary

Examination results

89. GCSE results in French over the last four years at A*-C have fluctuated between above and below average, with a varying percentage of the year group having been entered. Results in 2004 were average for the three-quarters of the year group entered. This is an improvement on 2003. Girls performed just above and boys just below those nationally.

Standards and achievement

90. Current standards in French by Year 9 are average; this represents satisfactory achievement as the students who enter the school have the same experience of a foreign language as most others in the country.
91. Understanding of the foreign language in the classroom is generally good, because teachers use it regularly. Students speak more than at the time of the last inspection, when it was a weakness. Speaking and reading are now average. Students are familiar with the vocabulary and undertake the tasks with which they are presented. In their written work, higher attaining students in Years 8 and 9 display good knowledge of the perfect tense and write successfully about past events. Average students know the past tense or the immediate future quite well. Lower attaining students are less accurate and some tasks are left incomplete.
92. Now an option, French is studied by two classes in Year 11 with a high proportion of girls. One class studies Spanish. Standards by Year 11 in each language are average, representing satisfactory achievement given their standards in Year 9. Students in French understand texts and match up statements in each language successfully. Year 11 students in Spanish demonstrate quite a good understanding of text. In French and Spanish writing, higher attaining students demonstrate a good knowledge of a wide range of different tenses and they write accurately. Average and lower attaining students are less accurate, particularly in the use of accents.
93. In school and examinations, girls perform better than boys, with the difference being greater than that seen nationally. The relatively poorer attendance of boys means they do not do as well as the girls.

Teaching and learning

94. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, so most use the foreign language well in class. All lessons start with a short exercise to revise past work, which helps students to remember what they did last and puts the current lesson into context. Teachers explain the objectives, so that all students are clear about what has to be learnt. Teachers plan their lessons to include different activities, skills and games to motivate students; however, the pace of the lessons falls when these activities are not then used. Teachers use resources well, and students consolidate vocabulary and constructions in chorus, but teachers do not always challenge them enough individually in such activities. Lessons do not always end with a crisp evaluation of what students have retained, so the teacher is not aware of whether or not the lesson has been successful. Students' written work is not marked consistently by all teachers with grades and helpful comments; students do not always know what to do to improve, or even respond positively to the comments.

Leadership and management

95. The head of department provides clear educational direction and leadership is good. He has achieved much in a short time since his appointment. Management is satisfactory. Modern languages were a major weakness in the school at the time of the last inspection and all the issues from that time have been dealt with successfully.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A lack of interest and general passivity to learning by some students, remaining unchallenged by weaker teaching, result in students' underachievement.
- Computers are not used sufficiently as a resource to consolidate or extend students' learning.
- Students' work is not sufficiently matched to their needs to ensure all are appropriately challenged to achieve their potential.
- Good leadership creates a team which is working hard to raise standards and counteract the legacy of weaker teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

96. Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average and were higher than those in 2003. The GCSE results in 2004 were average, but were lower than those in 2003.

Standards and achievement

97. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and consequently achievement is unsatisfactory as students do not achieve as expected, having started Year 7 with above average standards. This fall in standards is due to the staffing problems and weaker teaching experienced in recent years. By Year 9 higher attaining students have average algebraic skills. However, the lower attainers have well below average numerical skills; they add fractions with the same denominator but cannot add those with different denominators. Standards at Year 11 are average. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement for a cohort that entered Year 10 with average standards. The lower attaining students have well below average numerical skills. Whilst they have developed a basic understanding of how to work out 10 per cent of a number ending in zero, they make basic mistakes when adding decimals. The higher attaining students have above average algebraic skills and solve quadratic equations by factorisation, formula and completing the square.

Teaching and learning

98. Teachers help students achieve by planning lessons clearly and having a good understanding of mathematics. However, apart from the aim or objective, this planning is rarely relayed to the students in terms of lesson content and expectations of progress to be made. Consequently in the weaker lessons this results in a drop in pace as students become unsure what is expected of them. Teachers use starter activities, to get students learning, but the finishes do not check what has been learnt sufficiently. This is especially the case in Years 7 to 9 where a higher proportion of weaker teaching takes place. In these weaker lessons students' lack of interest and general passivity are not challenged and result in unsatisfactory learning. In the majority of lessons work is not sufficiently matched to the individual needs of the students, with middle attainers in particular not been sufficiently challenged to achieve their potential. Only in the best lessons does helpful diagnostic marking take place.

Inconsistencies between classes leave groups of students unclear as to how well they are doing in terms of grades or levels and how to improve. Homework is used to extend students' learning; however, the consistency, level of challenge and presentation vary between classes, with some students rarely getting homework. Computers are not used as a teaching aid and they are rarely used by students to consolidate and develop their understanding of mathematics.

Leadership and management

99. The head of department is a good role model for both staff and students with a good vision for improvement, resulting in teachers working hard as a team to raise standards. However, over the last two years the head of department has had to manage the department through very difficult times. Problems resulting from the recruitment and retention of good teachers as well as staff illness have prevented a focus on management issues. For example, schemes of work are in place, but are not sufficiently developed to support teachers. Monitoring of both teaching and of students' work does take place, albeit at a basic level, but does not go far enough to challenge and support the weaker teaching. Students are assessed regularly, but are not sure of how well they are doing or their areas for improvement. Students' self-assessment of their learning is embryonic and consequently has not yet assisted in raising achievement. Assessment data is not sufficiently monitored to enable students' value-added achievement to be measured or targets substantiated. Departmental self-review does take place and has resulted in a development plan. Links with the local primary feeder schools are limited and do not assist the pupils' move up to the school. However, better links are in place with other secondary mathematics departments to facilitate the sharing of good practice. Good extra-curricular activities take place with sessions for revision and homework as well as time freely given to support students on a drop-in basis.

Mathematics across the curriculum

100. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill across curricular subjects is unsatisfactory overall. Students' standards of mathematical skills in these other subjects are average. The mathematics department has not delivered a training session, nor carried out an audit of provision and there has been very limited support to the other subjects on the teaching and learning of mathematics. Consequently, the development of mathematical skills rarely features in subjects' lessons. Little has been done to embed numeracy across the curriculum in order to fully support students. This has not been helped in the past by the absence of a numeracy co-ordinator for a considerable period of time.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Poor	Poor
Teaching and learning	Poor	Poor

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Very poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' GCSE results were very much worse than they should have been in 2004.
- Teachers are often unsuccessful in managing students' behaviour so that learning is disrupted, or slowed down, for the whole class.
- Action was not taken early enough to halt the decline in results and the deterioration in students' attitudes to science.

Commentary

Examination results

101. In the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average. Results had been following the national trend until 2003 but fell significantly in 2004. GCSE results for double award science were well below the national average in 2004 and boys did worse than girls. Students did much worse in science than they did in their other subjects. GCSE results have been falling since the previous inspection but they fell particularly sharply between 2003 and 2004.

Standards and achievement

102. The standards seen in students' work reflect those indicated by the 2004 test and examination results. In all year groups, some students gain standards that are around, and occasionally above, average for their age. For example, some students in Year 7 showed good understanding of the behaviour of particles and had better investigative skills than expected for their age. In Year 11, a group of higher attainers demonstrated good knowledge of evolution and accurately identified the various objections to evolutionary theory. However, most students attain standards that are below, and often well below, average. These students often have weak listening skills, do not take in the teacher's explanations and then later have only limited recall of topics they have studied earlier.

103. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, students do much worse in tests and examinations than might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school or when they started their GCSE course; their achievement is poor. The most important cause of this poor achievement is the poor quality of teaching that students receive. However, there are other important factors. Until this year, students in Years 10 and 11 have not had as much lesson time for double award science as students in other schools. Many students have been taught by several different teachers, including temporary teachers; their progress has been disrupted and they have developed poor attitudes towards science. These students have become lazy, particularly in middle sets. Some students' attendance at school is poor. Their absences result in gaps in their notebooks and corresponding gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

Teaching and learning

104. Teachers generally have satisfactory knowledge of their subject and provide appropriate information and explanations for students. Some teaching is satisfactory and, occasionally, good. Nevertheless, in the majority of lessons, there are significant weaknesses in teaching and learning. In particular, teachers are often not successful in managing students' behaviour. The poor behaviour of some students, and the constant need for the teacher to deal with these students, slows down learning for the whole class. The teaching for higher attainers is often not sufficiently demanding; activities are too easy or too much time is allowed for their completion.
105. The teaching of physics topics is a particular weakness for the department. Many students say that they are not doing as well in physics as they are in chemistry and biology and this reflects recent test and examination results. Students' books show that physics calculations are not taught as carefully as they should be. A physics lesson prior to a module test did not meet students' need for clear, strong emphasis on the main points they needed to remember.

Leadership and management

106. The department was disappointed by the examination results in 2004 and has since taken some sensible steps to bring about improvement. However, the results in GCSE science have been falling ever since the previous inspection, alongside deterioration in students' attitudes to the subject. Students' poor attitudes are now well established, making it increasingly difficult for teachers to gain their attention and co-operation. Action should have been taken much earlier to arrest both the decline in standards and the growth in students' disenchantment with the subject. Even now, there is not enough monitoring of teaching, together with appropriate support and remedial action, to ensure that all students experience at least a satisfactory quality of teaching.
107. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have fallen from well above average to well below average and the quality of education provided is much worse; the department has made very poor progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Poor
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Very poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The first key area for improvement from the previous inspection has not been tackled so students in Years 10 and 11 still do not receive their entitlement under the National Curriculum.
- Lack of monitoring leads to unsatisfactory teaching not being identified and improved.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not learn as well as they should because their attitudes to work are unsatisfactory.

- Students taking GCSE receive detailed, helpful comment to help them improve their work.

Commentary

Examination results

108. GCSE results in 2004 were above average for the relatively small number of students who studied the subject. These results represent very good achievement as the students had not studied much ICT in Years 7 to 9.

Standards and achievement

109. Students enter the school with average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average. These standards represent unsatisfactory achievement. By the end of Year 9 students can use the basic features of a range of computer programs, for example to make simple websites. Their evaluation skills are below average, partly because they do not annotate their work to record what they have done and why they did it. Students are not prepared to try things out for themselves but depend on their teacher to show them.
110. Most students do not take an ICT course in Years 10 and 11. Whilst they may make good use of computers in subjects such as media studies, the school does not ensure that all students cover the material in the National Curriculum. Some students may use ICT very little in Years 10 and 11 and the standard of their work will be barely higher than it was at the end of Year 9. For this reason, standards of work by the end of Year 11 are well below the national average and achievement is poor. Students taking the GCSE course design spreadsheets and data bases. Many of these students do not plan their work sufficiently well and so do not complete the documentation required to a level which reflects the standards of their practical work.

Teaching and learning

111. In Years 7 to 9 over two thirds of lessons are taught by teachers who are not trained or experienced in the teaching of the subject. This frequently leads to teaching not being geared to the needs of the students, time being spent unprofitably and students not being encouraged to explore computer programs. Experienced teachers use discussion well so that students develop the skill of using reasons to support their ideas. Learning is often unsatisfactory because students do not have positive attitudes towards their work; they check e-mails when they should be designing a leaflet, do not listen to teachers and work at a slow rate; this goes unchecked by teachers.
112. In Years 10 and 11, the lack of a planned approach for all students has the consequence of teaching and learning being unsatisfactory; what happens in GCSE lessons is satisfactory, but there is far too little taught to students who do not study for GCSE. The teaching of students taking GCSE ensures that students cover the course adequately. Teachers provide students with extensive comments when GCSE work is marked so that students know the current standard of their work and how to make further improvement. At all ages students take good advantage of teachers being in ICT rooms at lunchtimes and after school. In these sessions students work conscientiously developing work they have undertaken in class and make good use of the Internet when carrying out research.

Leadership and management

113. The previous inspection informed the school that it was not delivering the National Curriculum to all students in Years 10 and 11. This remains the case. No manager has

made any impression on these weaknesses. A common approach to the teaching of the subject and the sharing of good practice are enormously hampered by the fact that teachers of ICT do not meet regularly as a team. A lack of systematic procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning leads to unsatisfactory teaching not being swiftly identified and improved. Work is not assessed to a consistent standard. Information on what students have learnt whilst at primary school is not obtained, leading to work being set at an incorrect level. The development plan for the subject fails to address the major weaknesses.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

114. Students have below average levels of competence in the use of ICT. Although the school has an adequate number of computers for a school of its size, some subjects report difficulties in arranging for classes to use ICT. The school employs only one ICT technician and this is insufficient to meet the day-to-day demands. Hence, teachers cannot approach the use of ICT with reasonable expectations that there will be no technical problems. Good use is made of ICT in subjects such as art and design, where students manipulate images effectively and in history where students research the Internet to great effect to produce high quality work on the holocaust. Insufficient use of ICT is made in subjects such as mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- Very good assessment systems ensure that students know how well they are doing.
- Teachers do not pay enough attention to correcting errors in written work.

Commentary

Examination results

115. Results in the 2004 examination were above average; the proportion at grades A* and A was twice the national average.

Standards and achievement

116. By the end of Year 9, students have above average map skills and independently research information on projects such as population growth in China. Many students, particularly higher attainers, have good number skills and improve their work through ICT. Students broaden their knowledge of topics such as the way that places are affected by earthquakes and volcanoes and understand why areas like south-east Asia are more likely to experience these events than Britain. Many students write well-explained accounts, but the quality of writing of others is reduced because of grammatical weaknesses, particularly spelling. By the end of Year 11 students have made substantial gains in knowledge of topics and improve their question answering skills. This leads to a better understanding of what is expected and, as result, students achieve well. The current group of students in Year 11 started the course with only average standards. Standards of coursework are very good because topics are thoroughly researched and well illustrated with graphs and annotated diagrams. Written work is above average, but standards are reduced because students do not explain answers or use data enough to support explanations. Weaknesses in writing, accuracy and presentation reduce standards for a minority of students.

Teaching and learning

117. In Years 7 to 9, lessons have clear aims and are well planned with work matched to the needs of students, particularly low attainers. Students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and other adults and this leads to them achieving well. Resources are used well and help generate interest and enthusiasm for learning, but homework tasks are not always appropriate because they do not stretch students. Teachers mark work regularly but not enough attention is given to correcting grammatical errors. Students know how well they are doing through the very good systems to track progress and the information gained is used well to

improve learning. In Years 10 and 11 students benefit from specialist teaching and teachers have a good understanding of the examination requirements, so students know what is expected of them. Teachers give good support through regular assessment and guidance about improvement. It raises self-confidence and willingness to learn. Occasionally teachers talk for a long time with the result that students lose concentration and progress slows. At times a small minority of students do not co-operate and interrupt the lesson and it reduces the achievement of other students.

Leadership and management

118. The standards and quality of education apparent at the time of the last inspection have been maintained despite a deteriorating situation in much of the rest of the school. Much of the success of the department is due to good leadership. Teachers are supported well through the sharing of good practice and training opportunities and this helps generate a good team spirit. The effectiveness of teaching and learning is monitored well and leads to curriculum improvement and strategies to support and improve learning. Development planning is good but strategies to evaluate the outcomes are not rigorous enough. The quality of education provided and the standards achieved have been maintained.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because teachers understand their learning needs and have high expectations of them.
- Teaching of reading and writing is good, but teaching of speaking is not yet of the same standard.
- Teachers ensure that students understand how to improve on their written work, although the quality of marking varies between teachers.

Commentary

Examination results

119. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were average. This was similar to 2003 but below the consistently above average standards of previous years. Reasons for this drop have been identified and teachers have now adopted appropriate strategies to improve students' attainment.

Standards and achievement

120. In Year 9, students reach above average standards and, as their attainment is average when they enter the school, their achievement is good. In their oral and written work students show that their skills have developed well in using sources of evidence to interpret events. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others

because teachers provide different materials and teaching styles that enable them to understand difficult concepts.

121. More students than in most schools choose to continue studying history at GCSE level. In Years 10 and 11 students develop further their analytical and reasoning skills. GCSE results in 2004 show that they achieve satisfactory standards. The standard of written work seen, however, is of better quality than those results would suggest, but still reflects satisfactory achievement given these students' above average standards at the end of Year 9.

Teaching and learning

122. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Over the last two years re-allocation of key responsibilities has significantly strengthened the subject's team of teachers, and students of all levels of attainment benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Lower attaining students, for instance, learned as well as others in a very good lesson about Jewish people who resisted the Nazis, because the teacher used resources and strategies that were very closely matched to their needs. Students' work is assessed accurately and they know, because of informative marking, how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Homework is used well to extend learning beyond the lesson. Students like the subject and their teachers so they have good attitudes that result in good learning and behaviour in lessons. The teaching of literacy is effective in helping students to improve their writing but the development of speaking skills is not yet so effectively embedded in teachers' planning.
123. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards have improved following analysis of recent drops in GCSE outcomes but these have yet to be reflected in improved examination results. Students produce good coursework assignments because teachers emphasise the importance of this to the gaining of good GCSE grades. Assessments of other written answers are accurate and students often benefit from informed feedback about how to improve, although there is still some inconsistency between teachers in the detail of written feedback.

Leadership and management

124. The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed by a caring and experienced head of department who has welcomed the lively and enthusiastic contributions of young teachers. The department development plan demonstrates the good vision in the department; it focuses on further improving learning and teaching, and on improving GCSE results. The response to the dip in GCSE standards in 2003 and 2004 was somewhat belated but appropriate strategies to remedy the problem are now in place and, consequently, management is satisfactory. Good progress has been made in implementing the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and the subject is well placed to carry the benefits through into later years. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory as standards have been maintained.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, because teachers expect them to work hard and behave well.
- Assessment does not enable the monitoring of achievement across the department.
- Students have too few opportunities to collaborate over independent research and presentation.

Commentary

Examination results

125. The first cohort of students sat the short course GCSE in 2004. This represented the first Year 11 to have their statutory right to a religious education for a significant period. Results in 2004 were below average. The achievement of girls was broadly average, while that of boys was well below average. This reflects a negative attitude by boys who had not expected to study religious education in Year 11.

Standards and achievement

126. Standards in Year 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Students recognise the principles of Buddhist belief; the experience for some students of meeting a Buddhist monk is raising their level of understanding. Through the study of prayer in Sikhism, students understand the purpose and importance of prayer to a believer. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of the Christian tradition of baptism and confirmation. Where they have the opportunity, students present their opinions about the relevance of these rights of passage in clear prose. The standards of some students are reduced by their absence and missing work as a result. Achievement is affected in some classes by the time spent by the teacher coping with a minority of disruptive students.

127. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is good as these students started the course with below average standards. The achievement of some students is affected by poor attitudes to religious education that are reflected in their minimal answers. Students have a clear understanding of Christian teaching on a variety of moral issues. They are able to discuss different views of life after death and the biblical teachings that support the belief. Higher attaining students present well-argued response with personal judgements and supporting reason. They have a very good understanding of the causes of poverty and this provides good opportunities for reflection and awareness of citizenship. All students identify the effects of poverty and investigate the actions to alleviate it by countries and individuals.

Teaching and learning

128. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have good expectations of behaviour and treat the responses of their students with respect. As a result, students gain confidence and are quick to respond. Lessons are planned well to be challenging academically. In Years 7 to 9, these features are not so prominent, so teaching is not as good as that in Years 10 and 11. While teachers include a variety of stimuli in their lessons, opportunities for individual and group presentations and research are limited. There is little use of ICT to stimulate learning or to encourage research and further investigation. Regular assessment of attainment is at an early stage and students are just beginning to evaluate their own work. Books are marked with constructive comments; however,

there is not enough support for the development of students' writing skills and too little grading of work to enable students and teachers to monitor their progress. There is little use of homework to enable students to prepare for lessons or to follow up individual lines of enquiry.

129. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and they treat the comments of their peers with respect and listen to each other. In a minority of lessons students interrupt the learning of their class and time is lost while teachers attend to the disruptive element.

Leadership and management

130. The department is well led and is now a clearly identifiable subject that promotes the aims of the school, whilst enabling students to develop their own beliefs and values. All students now have the opportunity to gain accreditation for their work. Assessment is not used to monitor teaching or the progress of groups or to identify areas for development. Teachers have high aspirations for the students and a relevant course now provides very good support for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Progress since the last inspection has been good, as religious education was then one of the school's biggest weaknesses.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in textiles are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students do not always use the technical language of the subject in project work.
- The department improvement plan is not a useful tool for bringing about change.

Commentary

Examination results

131. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were average; they were well above average in textiles, above average in food technology and average in the other material areas. These results are an improvement on the 2003 results.

Standards and achievement

132. By the end of Year 9, students' designing and making skills are above average; this represents good achievement given students' attainment on entry to the school. They use a variety of tools and equipment competently and with confidence in all material areas. Students use computer-aided design/manufacture techniques well, for example when designing a motif for a bag in textiles. Higher attainers have a good knowledge and understanding of electronic components, being able to accurately describe the function of a resistor. In resistant materials, students measure, mark out and shape materials accurately but struggle to name tools.

133. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well given their standards on entry to the courses in Year 10. Standards are well above average in textiles, above average in food technology and average in all other material areas. In textiles, the quality of some of the garments produced is very high; folder work is also of a high quality. In food technology, students achieve well because of the good quality teaching. Students use taste-testing techniques well when evaluating their work. In resistant materials and graphics, standards are average. Students use computer software to produce drawings of their products; higher attainers produce exploded views of their products. Students use the Internet well to carry out market research. Students do not always use the technical language of the subject when describing their products.

Teaching and learning

134. In Year 9, students experience a good range of practical activities and design and make interesting products. In most lessons, students work at a good pace and the lessons are planned with clear learning objectives. Teachers manage students well; they set short focused tasks that keep students on task. Homework is set but it is not always collected in and some students see this as being unfair. In textiles, the thoroughness of the planning, pace of lessons and high expectations of the teachers result in very good learning. In contrast, in child development, the lessons are slow, activities lack challenge and teachers' expectations are too low. The marking of students' work is thorough and the clear feedback that is given to students helps them

to improve. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and they enjoy their time in design and technology; they say it is one of their favourite subjects.

135. When teaching is less effective, there are concerns with health and safety practice, such as students using machinery without safety goggles. At the start of the lesson, teachers normally give students a good idea about the content of the lesson but do not always check at the end what students have learnt, which results in some students not knowing how to proceed in the following lesson. When teaching is dull, students become bored, are off task and are rude to staff.

Leadership and management

136. The department is well led. This is an effective team that works together well. The department is organised well. The quality of management is satisfactory. There are good systems for monitoring the work of the department. However, the department improvement plan is weak; there is no focus on improving teaching, learning or achievement and so this plan is not an appropriate tool for improvement. Progress since the previous inspection is good. Students now achieve well as a result of improved teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and contributes directly to the high standards in GCSE.
- There is excellent work in art-textiles.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision for GCSE.
- There is inadequate provision in ICT and no provision for ceramics.

Commentary

Examination results

137. In 2004 GCSE results were well above average with over 90 per cent of students gaining A* to C grades. Results have been at a similar level over the past three years. Results in art-textiles were excellent with all students gaining A* to C grades. Students gained higher grades in art than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

138. Standards in the present Year 9 are above average; this represents good achievement from students' starting points on entry to the school in Year 7. Students acquire very good skills and techniques for achieving tone through procedures such as ink and wax resist methods. They gain inspiration from the work of Picasso that they use effectively in their own portraits. Designs in mask-making are very good.

Compositions are good with imaginative use of line; this forms a very good basis for the later successes in GCSE.

139. By Year 11 standards are well above average and achievement is very good. All work is characterised by very good detail and a fine finish. In Year 10 students have developed some striking work based on the theme of 'Distortion and Reflection'. There is some good use of the digital camera in these studies. The standard of work in art-textiles is excellent. All students have designed and constructed hats to a very high standard with regard to structure and the use of fabric and stitching to add decoration. There is very little use of ICT for the manipulation of images.

Teaching and learning

140. All teachers have very good expertise in the subject. They create very imaginative resources that inspire their students with ideas. Teachers exercise a gentle and very firm discipline that creates a very good climate for learning – quiet, calm and purposeful. This contributes significantly to students' success in all years. Students have very good attitudes to the subject and work diligently and with a sense of purpose in all lessons. Assessment, including self-assessment, is very good in all years. In Year 9 students are given clear illustrations of the levels so that they can learn what has to be done to achieve the higher levels. They are given similar guidance on how to reach the higher grades in GCSE. The teachers make very good provision for extra-curricular work, especially in GCSE; students are required to attend so that homework can be done to a high standard. The main differences in the teaching between the years lie with the level of challenge in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have slightly higher expectations, which in turn lead to more work being done in lessons. There is very good support from the technician that contributes significantly to teaching.

Leadership and management

141. There is a clear commitment to maintaining high standards. There is a good level of mutual support among staff. Documentation is good but not enough emphasis is placed upon planning for literacy, numeracy and citizenship. There is inadequate provision for ICT within the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The already high standards in GCSE have been improved still further. However, there is still no provision for ceramics or high quality printing equipment.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high participation in outstanding extra-curricular music makes a significant impact on achievement and students' personal development.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well as a result of good teaching.

- Standards have fallen as a result of unsatisfactory management.

Commentary

Examination results

142. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were average.

Standards and achievement

143. By the end of Year 9, students' practical skills are above average. Many take instrumental tuition and perform well on a range of instruments, especially brass. Standards in working with notation are well above average, students readily clapping complex rhythms from sight. They have an adequate knowledge of chords and melodic constructions, but few think to apply these in freer compositional tasks, such as underscoring a film track. The strong instrumental tradition reaches down into the primary schools so that students, overall, start at the school with above average standards. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. It is not better as students' attitudes are polarised, being unsatisfactory for a significant minority; teachers find it difficult to cope with the unsatisfactory attitudes of some students.

144. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. When students start the GCSE option course performance skills are strong, but their overall standards are average. They achieve well, many developing instrumental work to a very high level. Most play instruments, many to a very high standard. They know technical vocabulary well, but do not apply it so well when appraising music. Good use of notation helps them to reflect on the processes of composition well. Students' attitudes are good, and well above average uptake for music reflects the strong ethos and traditions for music in the school.

Teaching and learning

145. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, but there is inconsistency in style and approach from teacher to teacher. Where behaviour management is successful, lively starter activities, systematic teaching and strong teacher-student relations engage students very well. Some lessons are casually planned, not adequately tailoring work to students' learning needs, nor addressing unsatisfactory behaviour in Years 7 to 9. In such classes achievement is unsatisfactory. Continuity of learning is limited as homework is too seldom set, and, in Years 10 and 11, links between listening activities and practical activities are inconsistently developed, despite higher expectations and more consistency in teaching methods overall.

Leadership and management

146. The management of music is suffering from the long-term absence of the head of department: lines of communication between staff are inconsistent; monitoring of quality and consistency of teaching is superficial; display is not used to reinforce learning; assessment is not used to inform departmental planning. Since the last inspection standards have fallen markedly. The vast extra-curricular commitments of the school are extremely well led and managed. Many instrumental teachers are employed full-time by the school so that they can be fully involved with the five brass bands and participate in outreach to feeder primary schools. As well as being national finalists and playing in the major concert halls of London, Manchester and Birmingham, some 90 concerts annually result in very close community links and charitable involvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good extra-curricular programme offers all students, especially the gifted and talented, the opportunity to excel in school and beyond.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are over-generous.
- Strong community links enable students to experience exciting new activities.
- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure best practice is identified and shared.

Commentary

Examination results

147. The 2004 GCSE results were below average. In the 2004 GCSE dance examination, students' results were average.

Standards and achievement

148. Standards in Year 9 are average overall; this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' starting point on entering the school. Girls achieve well in badminton, and boys in swimming. Standards in dance are below average. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, and achieve as well as their classmates, as seen in trampolining.
149. Standards in Year 11 are average, representing satisfactory achievement given these students' standards on starting the course. Most students have a sound understanding of the theoretical aspects of the GCSE course. In practical work, students achieve very well in badminton. Standards in GCSE practical dance are broadly average, and students achieve satisfactorily. In the small number of lessons seen in the Year 10 core curriculum course, boys achieve better than girls, partly because the girls' participation and attitudes were poor. Standards in extra-curricular sport are often high, reflected in the success of talented students in district, county and, sometimes, national level in a range of sports.

Teaching and learning

150. Teachers are knowledgeable and lessons are well prepared. Clear objectives and structured tasks enable students to build on previous learning, and provide opportunities for them to improve their skills through practice. Consequently, most students learn and achieve satisfactorily. However, learning is very teacher-directed; students are not given enough opportunities to take some responsibility for their own learning. Students' independent learning skills are slow to develop. When it occurs, good teaching shows enthusiasm, challenge, pace and high expectations of what students can achieve with a strong focus on quality and improvement, as seen in badminton and swimming.
151. Teachers have good relationships with students. In Years 7 to 9, students' attitudes are generally satisfactory and they respond well to encouragement. Levels of participation, dress and behaviour in lessons are usually good. There is a marked change for the worse in a significant number of girls' attitudes in Years 10 and 11. Although most boys maintain interest and motivation, too many girls become disaffected, reflected in failure to bring a change of clothes, refusal to participate and, on occasion, a lack of respect for teachers. This was a contributory factor in a lesson where learning was less than satisfactory, and the teacher failed to capture the girls' interest. Teacher assessments in Years 7 to 9 are over-generous. Marking of theoretical coursework in Years 10 and 11 does not give students enough advice on how to improve their work or make sufficient demands on them to complete homework.

Leadership and management

152. The 2004 decline in the GCSE results coincided with the disruption caused by a period of rapid staff change. Management is now focused on improving the subject's performance in the examination, and appropriate strategies are in place. The poor condition of the outdoor facilities, and timetabling that restricts practical opportunities

for GCSE students, also have a detrimental effect on the achievement of all students. A good extra-curricular programme fosters strong links with the community and makes good provision for all students, especially the gifted and talented. The splendid fitness suite and initiatives, such as 'Project Oarsome' with the local rowing club, are excellent examples. There is still much work to be done. Development planning requires a precise focus on raising standards through the improvement of teaching and learning. More effective monitoring and development of teaching are required. The school does not meet the aim of the national strategy for 85 per cent of students to receive at least two hours a week of quality physical education. Insufficient improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Standards have declined and the quality of teaching is not improving.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Health and social care

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Below average
Achievement	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Unsatisfactory leadership is failing to drive up standards.
- Teachers do not expect enough of students.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently to meet students' individual needs.

Commentary

Examination results

153. The first group of students to take the applied double award GCSE will do so in 2005.

Standards and achievement

154. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Students are underachieving as a result of unsatisfactory teaching. Results from earlier work show that students started well, but their progress has now slowed and they are not retaining knowledge from work they studied earlier. Students have yet to show a clear understanding of health and social care services. They do not understand how the key values form the basis of all aspects of care work. However, some Year 11 students are beginning to produce competent health plans and identify the various factors which affect an individual's well-being; these students understand the values which influence the way in which support is provided.

Teaching and learning

155. Teachers do not always establish a purposeful atmosphere for learning; students' inappropriate behaviour in lessons impacts upon standards achieved. Whilst teachers seek to make work interesting, students do not always understand what is expected of them. Tasks are too easy and often fail to maintain students' interest. Teachers are sensitive to students' individual needs, but do not then plan to meet these needs in the

classroom; this applies to higher, middle and lower attainers and those with special educational needs. When there is contact with health care professionals, students benefit from the in-depth knowledge they provide. This was clearly demonstrated when the director of a local residential home came in to school to talk to Year 11. Generally, however, the vocational focus of the subject is not raised sufficiently in lessons and staff are not up to date with the changes that are taking place in the care industry. Lack of access to ICT inhibits students' personal research and does not allow them to develop independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

156. The co-ordinator works part-time in the school and has a keen interest in the subject. However, the current leadership and management are unsatisfactory as there is a lack of drive and vision to best promote the subject and a lack of decisiveness to take action when it is needed. Good intentions of staff are not always followed through and insufficient attention is being paid to raising standards within the subject. It is not possible to judge progress since the time of the previous inspection as health and social care was not a focus subject at that time.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

The school has a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education, covering the topics of careers education, relationships and sex education and drug abuse. The programme is adequately planned and makes satisfactory provision for improving students' personal development.

157. There is a satisfactory improvement plan for the subject. It has appropriate priorities. It seeks to raise the profile of personal, social and health education in the school, develop the co-ordinator's role and provide training for the many members of staff who teach the subject.
158. There were no opportunities to observe PSHE lessons during the inspection. Morning registration periods were observed, but these made little contribution to the teaching of subject.

Citizenship

The school has chosen to teach the citizenship programme through PSHE, tutorial lessons and all subjects. It was not possible to make judgements about teaching, learning and achievement as no PSHE lessons could be observed and very little teaching of citizenship took place elsewhere. The sample of work provided proved insufficient to allow judgements to be made.

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	No judgement	No judgement
Achievement	No judgement	No judgement
Teaching and learning	No judgement	No judgement

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The scheme of work for form tutors is good, but not enough is taught through subjects and tutorials.
- Most teachers have had too little training in citizenship.
- Assessment and reporting arrangements for citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- There are good opportunities to take part in a planned active citizenship programme.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

159. No examinations are taken in the subject. No judgements were made about standards or achievement. The scrutiny of students' files could not truly reflect the debate, small group skills and oral interaction needed for judgements about standards and achievement. Work seen in students' folders was mainly based on worksheets, which do not reflect discussion and group work. There was no evidence of students writing in

depth or at length, and only limited opportunities for them to develop their skills of enquiry and communication.

Teaching and learning

160. There is a good scheme of work that supports the large team of tutors who teach citizenship in their weekly PSHE lessons. However, most teachers have very little training for teaching citizenship. Very recently, subjects have identified where citizenship could be taught; however, the contribution made by subjects and tutorial lessons is minimal. Citizenship is not made explicit and consequently does not meet statutory requirements. No evidence was seen of citizenship being taught in form tutorials, although in an assembly there were references to loyalty and racial issues. Outside of formal lessons there are some good opportunities for students to develop skills of participation and responsible action. On occasions a suspended timetable allows for activities like 'Jeans for Genes' for Years 7 and 8 students and fund-raising for CAFOD to support a school in Africa – all of which contribute to citizenship enrichment. The school council is democratically elected and all students have the opportunity to have their views heard through their representatives. Assemblies are used well to promote citizenship themes like loyalty and anti-racism.

Leadership and management

161. The new citizenship co-ordinator has been in post just over one term; she is showing the vision required to develop the subject. She has already developed the schemes of work, which integrate PSHE and citizenship, but there has been insufficient development of citizenship in subjects. The co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to effectively monitor what is going on. Reporting arrangements do not meet statutory requirements. The citizenship co-ordinator is enthusiastic, is committed to ensuring high quality provision and understands how the subject should develop. However, the school has been very slow to introduce the subject.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE 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	9	100.0	98.3	55.6	50.2	100.0	87.1
Biology	21	95.2	96.6	33.3	40.0	71.4	79.3
Business studies	8	100.0	98.9	37.5	39.4	72.5	80.8
Chemistry	9	77.8	97.7	44.4	50.0	98.9	85.7
Communication studies	14	100.0	99.2	14.3	40.4	75.7	83.5
English	12	100.0	99.2	8.3	36.4	68.3	81.1
English literature	7	100.0	99.4	71.4	44.9	100.0	85.5
General studies	44	81.8	94.9	18.2	30.5	56.8	72.9
Geography	22	100.0	98.8	36.4	46.4	78.2	85.2
History	16	100.0	99.0	31.3	45.6	77.5	85.1
Mathematics	6	100.0	96.8	66.7	56.6	93.3	89.5
Music	9	100.0	98.2	33.3	37.1	71.1	79.5
Other social studies	20	100.0	97.4	35.0	42.7	78.0	81.6
Physics	8	75.0	96.7	25.0	45.3	55.0	82.6
Sociology	13	76.9	98.5	0.0	45.3	49.2	84.6
Sports studies	13	100.0	97.8	15.4	30.9	69.2	75.4

The school recruits sufficient numbers for all courses, but many students fail to complete their courses or gain poor results at AS-level, so are unable to go on to study for full A-levels.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this report was on English literature.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and enables students to become good independent learners.
- Examination results are well above average and amongst the best in the school.
- Students are confident and articulate and enjoy the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

162. In 2004 results in A-level were well above average. Results have been at least above average over the past three years. Students generally perform better in English literature than they do in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

163. Standards in the present Years 12 and 13 are above average, not quite as good as those suggested by examination results, but this is more to do with the lower attainment on entry to the course than any worsening of achievement. In both years students show a close knowledge and understanding of the texts studied. They have a good knowledge of the literary devices that writers use to make impact in plays, novels and poetry. They can analyse the effects of figures of speech, showing an ability to think for themselves. As a result, discussion is rigorous and challenging so students learn well. They write concisely, clearly and to the point. Achievement is good. From Year 12 onwards students build consistently on their knowledge and understanding. They learn to apply the skills of analysis and use these logically in subsequent work. Students enjoy the subject and value the opportunities to study literature in detail. Few students drop out of this course during the year.

Teaching and learning

164. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise. They teach the skills of critical analysis formally and in very good depth and detail. In this way they prepare students well for independent learning. Marking is done in very good detail and informs students clearly and graphically how they can improve. Marking to the precise examination criteria gives students very good guidance on how to prepare for the examinations.

Leadership and management

165. There is enthusiasm for the subject and a clear commitment that is reflected in the consistently high standards. There is good deployment of staff and good mutual support. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying these aspects thoroughly in texts such as *Othello*, *Dr Faustus*, and the war poems. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection; standards have been improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

166. Students in the sixth form have average English language and literacy skills. They have an adequate command of the spoken and written language and can use it flexibly in different contexts. These skills are promoted well in English literature and psychology. However, written work is not given enough emphasis in other subjects, although the correct vocabulary is used and promoted in all the subjects inspected.

MATHEMATICS

The focus was on mathematics.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of the core mathematics, pure mathematics, decision mathematics and statistics. In previous years students have had the opportunity to study mechanics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources so that the quality of teaching can be improved further.
- Teachers do not get enough opportunities to learn from each other's strengths.

Commentary

Examination results

167. In 2004, results at A-level level were above average. Students did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects

Standards and achievement

168. Overall achievement is satisfactory, given the students' attainment on entry to the course. In both A-level and AS, the quality of students' written and oral work is above average. In Year 12, there is good progression from the work started at GCSE. For example, students can use radians as a unit for measuring angles and generally apply new learning when solving examination questions based on circles. Lower attainers

have greater difficulty answering the more complex questions. In Year 13, students demonstrate a secure understanding of the probability density function as a model for relative frequency and use calculus techniques well when calculating the cumulative distribution function.

Teaching and learning

169. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. They give comprehensive support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions in articulate ways. Teachers generally structure their lessons well, making sure that students are secure in their understanding of basic skills before progressing to new concepts. However, the methods used do not always capture the interest of students. Students generally participate well in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering answers, but there are often too few opportunities for them to take a more active role in the lesson and to work together in pairs or groups so that they can learn from each other. Students are engaged throughout the lesson and a good level of concentration is maintained. The marking of students' work is inconsistent. The better marking contains good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. However, there is some marking that does not contain sufficient detail to help students see how they can improve.

Leadership and management

170. Teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards. They support students well with informal extra-curricular tuition. However, there are few opportunities for teachers to see each other teach so that their skills can be enhanced further and good practice can be shared. Results of examinations are analysed well and areas for development are identified and acted on. However, there is no overall co-ordinated plan that identifies targets and actions for improvement so that achievement can be raised further. Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources, including the use of ICT, so that the quality of teaching can be improved further. There are few links with universities that would enhance the mathematics curriculum and provide students to look beyond the confines of the syllabus. Few students leave the course during the year, but many choose to drop the subject at the end of Year 12. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous report, with standards being maintained.

Mathematics across the curriculum

171. Competence in mathematics is broadly average and students have sufficient skills to meet the demands of the other courses they study.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. Teaching in the physics lesson was unsatisfactory as the teacher missed an excellent opportunity to work on a one-to-one basis with the single student by simply setting examination questions. Teaching in the chemistry lesson was satisfactory, but only two of the five students attended.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well prepared and planned.
- ICT hardware is very limited in the department and this reduces opportunities for both teaching and students' research.

Commentary

Examination results

172. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were above average. Results in 2004 were average but in both these years the results were consistent with the prior attainment of the students in GCSE.

Standards and achievement

173. Standards on the current AS and A-level courses are average. Students are achieving satisfactorily, taking into account their results at GCSE. In both Year 12 and Year 13 students have good practical skills; in Year 13 students appreciate the need for precise experimental conditions and are able to apply this awareness to their practical investigations. Knowledge and understanding of the topics studied are average. Students in both years take a pride in the presentation of their written work and use biological terms with confidence.

Teaching and learning

174. Lessons are well prepared. Students are given homework regularly to reinforce the work in class and teachers provide a lot of background material to support the notes and help the learning of the students. There is a good variety of teaching styles and students are asked to carry out research and to prepare presentations to give to the group. The pace of working in lessons is satisfactory but at times students are insufficiently challenged and the pace of learning slows. ICT provision in the department is poor and there is no opportunity for ICT work in lessons. Teachers do, however, give guidance on suitable Internet sites and students carry out research using sources outside the department. The good working relationship between students and teachers assists learning as students seek help freely and the teachers give this willingly. Students' work is assessed regularly and they are well aware of both their target grades and their present level of performance.

Leadership and management

175. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The subject leader analyses the examination results carefully and makes appropriate changes in the curriculum. The teaching of all groups is shared and the teachers co-ordinate satisfactorily. There is little drop-out of students during the year but the numbers following onto A-level from AS are disappointing and the numbers starting the A-level course have dropped significantly over the last two years. There is a good range of field trips and visits to enhance the learning experience of the students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology (ICT).

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too many students do not complete the course.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

176. Too few students studied for the examination in 2004 to make judgements against national averages reliable. However, given students' standards on starting the course, their results were among the worst in the school.

Standards and achievement

177. The poor level of achievement represented by the examination result in 2004 was because the students were not taught the course; rather they were provided with resources and taught themselves. The standards of work seen from students currently in Year 13 represent good achievement on the course to date. However, over one third of students who started the course no longer take the subject. They have gained no qualification for the time they have put into their studies. For this reason, overall achievement is unsatisfactory. Students enjoy tackling problems such as producing booking systems for concert venues and produce high quality work. They develop their skills of learning independently well. Students have a good understanding of the needs of different audiences. Students test their work thoroughly and include the necessary level of detail in documentation.

Teaching and learning

178. Teachers have a thorough knowledge not only of the ICT skills but also of what is required by the examination. A good example was seen when a teacher advised students of where their current spreadsheet work fitted in terms of AVCE grades. However, in some lessons, teachers do not check the work of all students. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards such as when one student demonstrated how a complex feature of spreadsheets was used, but on other occasions students do not understand well enough, because no illustrations or demonstrations are used. The atmosphere in the classroom is relaxed yet purposeful so that students work at a good rate yet readily seek help from the teacher if appropriate. Learning is reduced for some students because of absence from lessons.

Leadership and management

179. Insufficient consideration has been given to ensuring that students starting the course are fully aware of what the course involves. Consequently, too many students do not gain a qualification because the course is not what they expect it to be. Some students leave the course because they do not appreciate the nature of the work whilst others do not have sufficiently developed ICT skills to meet the demands of the work. Teachers delivering the course co-operate well and the course runs smoothly.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

180. Students display average levels of competency in the use of ICT. They use the Internet for research but are not always skilled in being able to make appropriate selections from the information they find. Good use is made of ICT in music technology where students have levels of skills more than adequate for the demands of their course. Students appreciate the advantages the use of a word-processor brings to the revising and redrafting of work. They appreciate the availability of laptop computers in the sixth form library to aid private study.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on psychology, but geography, sociology and history were sampled. Teaching was good in history and geography, with almost full attendance. There was insufficient evidence to judge achievement in the history lesson, but the students were achieving satisfactorily in the geography lesson. Teaching was satisfactory in sociology, with only one absentee.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor attendance in lessons leads to significant underachievement.
- Students get poor guidance as to the nature of the course and the qualifications required to study it.
- Effective use of video resources supports learning and a better understanding of psychological perspectives.

Commentary

Examination results

181. Results in the 2004 A-level examination were average but a significant improvement on the previous year. The results at AS-level in 2004 were below average and worse than those in 2003. Given students' previous standards, achievement was satisfactory at A-level, but unsatisfactory at AS-level.

Standards and achievement

182. Standards on the current AS course are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory because of poor attendance and/or serious difficulties in coping with the demands of the course. Students are allowed to take this subject without the required minimum grades at GCSE and are ill-advised when considering the subject as an option at A-level. As a result the retention rate at this level is poor. Higher attaining students cope well with the new terminology and methodology, and work already produced is of good quality. Lower attaining students lack the necessary analytical and extended writing skills, so that their work lacks structure and detail.

183. In the A-level course standards are below, but coming closer to, the national average, and higher attaining students make satisfactory progress. They write coherently using a variety of sources to support their arguments. The lower attainers still struggle to marshal their ideas and evaluate case studies in detail, but have improved over time because of helpful marking. Attendance and retention are a bit better in Year 13, but overall achievement is still unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

184. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons using relevant and helpful video clips and other resources, which really help students understand the application of perspectives to real cases. Students are given the opportunity to work problems out for themselves, but the more didactic style of teaching does not always meet the learning needs of the weaker, mismatched students, and this only serves to highlight their inability to cope with the volume and difficulty of the content of this course. Students work willingly in lessons and homework is handed in on time, although they are inclined to be passive and over-reliant on their teachers. Progress is monitored satisfactorily and marking is good when it really shows the students how to improve; it is not always consistent across the department.

Leadership and management

185. The department is led well with vision and a commitment to improvement, evident in the rising standards at A-level. The course content is kept under regular review and modified in response to examination post mortem. Management of the department,

however, is unsatisfactory, with unrealistic advice being given to lower attaining students, and entry requirements being waived to allow them on to a course which is beyond their levels of prior attainment. The consequent high level of absenteeism goes unchecked and the poor results at AS-level reflect the serious underachievement of these students. The subject makes a good contribution to the personal development of the students in self-reflection and a deeper understanding of human nature and motivation. There is no judgement on improvement since the last inspection as it was not reported on.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses were inspected or sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on music. Lessons in art, dance, drama and media studies were sampled. In art, teaching was good, as was the achievement of the eight out of 11 students who attended. All three dance students learnt well in their lesson, as a result of good teaching. Teaching in the drama lesson was very good and students are clearly making great strides in their learning. Only eight out of the 15 students attended the media studies; their learning and achievement were satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.

Music

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

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to the good teacher-student relations and the experiences acquired through extra-curricular participation, most students work well independently.
- Standards in examinations have fallen in recent years.
- Few of the many students showing strong musicianship in the bands take music courses.

Commentary

Examination results

186. Results in the 2004 A-level examinations were below average, a decline from 2003 when they were average and from the last inspection when they were above average. Achievement in the examinations was satisfactory.

Standards and achievement

187. Standards on the current AS courses are above average in music and below average in music technology. Standards on the current A-level courses are below average in music and average in music technology. Given that the profile of prior attainment for students on each of these courses varies, students on all courses are achieving satisfactorily. In Year 12, music students are strong performers, able to use their

frequent concert and rehearsal experience very well to understand details of musical scores and historical trends in musical composition. In Year 13, music performance standards are more mixed and analytical skills are less well developed. In Year 12, music technology students make satisfactory use sequencing technology to develop arrangements, but lack a sure grasp of more advanced MIDI techniques and concepts. In Year 13, music technology students mix technologies well in integrated composition assignments. The impact of the school's outstanding extra-curricular provision, especially of the nationally recognised brass bands, is limited. While there are many very capable musicians in the sixth form, students view the almost 'professional commitment' demanded of the Youth Band more as a reason not to take GCE courses, than as an excellent supplement to GCE study. Consequently numbers taking the courses are comparatively few. A casual attitude to attendance and punctuality by some students limits the achievement of all.

Teaching and learning

188. Teachers have a good command of their subjects and share very good relations with the students. Teaching encourages and supports students in developing skills, enabling them to work well at coursework independently. Exercises in all lessons are well tailored to the learning needs of the students, but there is insufficient linking of aural perception and theory lessons to practical ones to reinforce and extend students' learning. Students' note-taking is not monitored for accuracy, so that some misconceptions arise and formal written work is given too seldom to develop consistency in expression in preparation for examinations.

Leadership and management

189. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Staff illness, including the long-term sick-leave of the head of the department, has had an adverse impact on continuity and departmental organisation. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped and little is being done to tackle issues of recruitment and retention to courses, or the attendance and punctuality of students in lessons. The bands are very well organised and several students benefit from their high performing standards and the opportunity to make a very positive contribution to the community spirit of the school by helping at rehearsals.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One physical education lesson was sampled; the teaching was satisfactory, but only nine of the 13 students attended.

BUSINESS

No subjects were inspected or sampled.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer courses in this area.

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	6	6
How inclusive the school is		5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	6	7
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	6	7
Overall standards achieved		6
Students' achievement	6	6
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		6
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	5	6
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		6
The quality of education provided by the school		6
The quality of teaching	5	6
How well students learn	5	6
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		5
Support, advice and guidance for students	5	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		5
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		6
The governance of the school	6	6
The leadership of the headteacher		6
The leadership of other key staff	6	6
The effectiveness of management	6	6

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