

INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC HIGH
SCHOOL**

Skelmersdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119782

Headteacher: Mrs A C Foster

Lead inspector: Mrs J Tracey

Dates of inspection: 07 – 10 February 2005

Inspection number: 272708

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 812

School address: Glenburn Road
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
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Telephone number: 01695 725635
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs K Gresty
governors:

Date of previous October 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Our Lady Queen of Peace is smaller than most other secondary schools with about 812 pupils on roll. It is situated in Skelmersdale and draws most of its pupils from Roman Catholic primary schools in neighbouring parishes. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The school is popular. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is about average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the local education authority and national averages. The school has recently become a specialist Engineering College. Its facilities have been extended to accommodate the wider curriculum that this entails. In addition, since the previous inspection, a sports hall has been added and theatre upgraded. Attainment on entry is consistently below average. The school works very closely with the community and neighbouring schools, both by teaching in them and inviting pupils from primary schools to use the specialist facilities. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. Most have specific learning difficulties. Others have social, emotional, behavioural or physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils with statements of need is well above the national average. Almost all students are of white ethnic origin. The proportion for whom English is not the first language is low.

The Liverpool diocese conducted a separate inspection for religious education at about the same time as the Ofsted inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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11457	Mrs J Beattie	Lay inspector	
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33183	Ms J Pickard	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language English
22985	Mrs J Sparkes	Team inspector	Science
27803	Mr J Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	Mr A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
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32340	Mr P McKay	Team inspector	Geography History
33242	Mr S Wall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Our Lady Queen of Peace is a good and improving school. Pupils achieve well academically and very well in their personal development because the teaching is good and the culture in the school encourages them to want to do well. Currently, standards are average in Years 9 and 11. The school is well led and managed. Its recent designation as an Engineering College is adding a new dimension to its work that is having a good effect on the curriculum and strengthening links with the community. The school provides good value for money. The main barrier to learning is some pupils' lack of self-esteem and perception of what is available to them when they leave school at 16.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the very good leadership of the headteacher and the clear vision for the future that is driving the school forward and raising the aspirations of all those connected with it;
- the sharp focus on raising achievement is improving standards; there is scope for some of the more able pupils to raise standards further in English in Years 7-9;
- the high level of care for every pupil reflects the school's Christian mission;
- the curriculum is innovative; it underpins pupils' personal development as young adults, especially though the citizenship and work-related learning (WRL) programmes;
- the marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent; it is not linked closely enough to assessment procedures to help pupils know how to improve;
- the productive working relationships with local schools, colleges and employers are benefiting both the school and the local community;
- governors are effective; they set the school's strategic direction and are realistic about the time scale in which initiatives can be achieved;
- provision for physical education is very good; it supports well the national initiative to improve physical fitness;
- the management of art and design and information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory.

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection in 1999. The most significant improvements, in response to the key issues of the report, are improved standards of work, better teaching and a redesigned management structure that involves staff at all levels in self-evaluation and shared responsibilities. Behaviour management systems have also improved. In addition, links with the community have been extended, particularly so in relation to the school's new status as an Engineering College, and a wider and more appropriate curriculum is available at 14+.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	C	C	C	A

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

Pupils achieve well overall throughout the school. Some achieve very well at GCSE, which is reflected in the well above average performance in 2004 compared with similar schools. The targets set by the governors were met. Currently, standards of work are

average in Years 9 and 11. Achievement is improving year-on-year. It is now very similar in Years 7-9 to that in Years 10 and 11, whereas, prior to 2003, achievement in the younger year groups lagged behind. Throughout the school, standards are above average in physical education and below average in art and design and ICT. Standards in English, mathematics and science are average in Years 9 and 11. Pupils achieve well overall in these subjects although some of the more able pupils underachieve in English, mainly in Years 7-9. The vast majority of pupils use basic literacy, numerical and ICT skills competently by the time they leave the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because their learning is carefully built up step by step. The few pupils for whom English is not the first language are fully integrated into the school and achieve equally well. The school's culture and mission nurture pupils towards becoming responsible young adults. Their very good attitudes and good behaviour, **combined with very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**, result in very good personal development overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The curriculum provides a broad and diverse range of opportunities that include a good mixture of traditional and vocational courses in Year 10 and 11. These lead toward personalised programmes of study for older pupils. The school is well advanced in its thinking in line with national initiatives in WRL and continuity in education in the 14-19 age range. It identifies the needs of pupils with special talents or difficulties, of whatever kind, and provides well for them. The school's care for pupils' welfare is very good. A high proportion of pupils participates in the very good range of extra-curricular activities. **The quality of teaching and learning is good.** Teaching is very good throughout the school in physical education. It is unsatisfactory in art and design in Year 7-9. The development of teaching and learning methods is at the heart of the school's improvement plan. The effect is evident in the improved results and better achievement over time. Good features of the best practices are: challenging teaching that builds on pupils' prior learning; teaching that encourages pupils to transfer the knowledge and skills they acquire to other subjects; and enthusiastic teaching that captures pupils' imagination and makes them want to learn. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace was slow and the work was undemanding. The use of information from tests and assessment procedures is satisfactory but the marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. It is successful in linking priorities to the aspirations to raise achievement. Management is good overall but is unsatisfactory in art and design and ICT. The school runs smoothly on a daily basis. Finances are well managed with funds being allocated prudently to match the targets in the school improvement plan. Governance is good. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and targets for improvement. They challenge the school about its decisions and performance.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' response at the meeting and in the questionnaires indicated that they were very pleased with what the school offered and how it was reaching out to the community. Most felt that their children were given good support that was directly related to their personal needs. They recognised that test and GCSE results have improved over time, as have the

accommodation and facilities for technology, science, drama and physical education. Pupils' responses mirrored that of the parents. They spoke with passion about the work of the School Council and the opportunities it provided for them to influence school affairs.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- use the marking of pupils' work more consistently to show individual pupils how to improve their work further;
- ensure that more able pupils are challenged suitably in English lessons in Years 7-9;
- improve the management of art and design and ICT through regular monitoring of teaching and learning and more rigorous assessment of pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards of work are average for pupils' age in Years 9 and 11. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well throughout the school from their starting point in Year 7 due to their positive response to good teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's focus on raising achievement has brought about a steady improvement in test and examination results.
- Standards of work are above average in physical education because of very good teaching and provision that caters for the wide range of pupils' interests.
- Some of the more able pupils are underachieving in English, mainly in Years 7-9.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are challenged and encouraged to aspire to their potential.
- Pupils are not achieving as well as they could in art and design because teaching is not challenging enough and pupils' work is not monitored closely enough for them to know what to do to improve.

Commentary

1. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is below average, sometimes with as much as one third well below average. Pupils' literacy skills are the most variable at this stage because many pupils do not have a wide vocabulary to aid their communication skills. This, together with the well above average proportion of pupils with statements of need, focuses teachers' attention from the outset on finding strategies that boost pupils' confidence by helping them to move on quickly and take pride in their progress.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.6 (34.1)	32.0 (33.4)
Mathematics	34.2 (32.4)	33.9 (35.4)
Science	32.4 (30.2)	31.7(33.6)

There were 176 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average in English and similar to it in mathematics and science. Compared with schools with similar prior attainment in Year 6, these results were well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. The school had anticipated the dip in English with this year group because their verbal skills on entry were lower overall than other year groups. Pupils' results rose significantly in mathematics and science in 2004. The school attributes this to the effect of the National Strategy and support from consultants from the local education authority. The trend in the school's average point score up to 2003 followed the national trend. Comparisons including the 2004 figures are not available at present. In the current Year 9, the overall standard of work is average. Standards are above average in physical education and below average in art

and design, and ICT. They are average in other subjects. Religious education was inspected separately by the diocese. Taking into account pupils' attainment on entry they achieve well overall in Years 7-9 but achievement is unsatisfactory in art and design. Where pupils' achieve well, the teaching is very closely focused on pupils' individual needs and the way they learn

best. In English, although pupils achieve well overall, there is some underachievement amongst more able pupils. The school is aware of this and is developing strategies to provide greater challenge for them in lessons.

3. The school consolidates the development of pupils' basic literacy, numerical and ICT skills in Years 7-11. The large majority of pupils use these skills competently by the time they leave school so as to have a reasonable degree of independence in their work and social life.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	43 (48)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (91)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.2 (33.6)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 155 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The trend in pupils' average point score at GCSE over recent years is above that found nationally. In 2004, results were below the national average at five or more grades A*-C and average at five or more grades A*-G. The school met the targets set by the governors for this year group. The average point score was well above average compared with these pupils' prior attainment in Year 9 in 2002.
5. The school has made a determined effort over time to improve GCSE results, mainly through focusing teaching on what pupils need to do to fulfil their potential and meet their target grades. The effect is clearly evident in the improved results. In the current Year 11, standards are average overall. They are above average in physical education, below average in art and design, history, geography and ICT and average in other subjects. Taking into account pupils' prior attainment in Year 9, pupils achieve well overall.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make comparable progress to other pupils because of the high level of support from teachers and learning support assistants, both in lessons and in group work in small classes. The small number of pupils for whom English is not the first language is fully integrated into school life. Pupils receive sufficient help from adults in the school to enable them to benefit from all the school has to offer, which in itself adds to their grasp of language and communication skills. The needs of able and talented pupils are recognised; the provision made for them satisfactorily advances their innate talents.
7. The school's analysis of pupils' attainment is accurate and well-focused on detecting discrepancies in achievement. Action taken over time has raised standards throughout the school and brought the rate of pupils' progress in Years 7-9 closer to that in Years 10 and 11. The school has identified slight differences between the achievement of boys and girls in some subjects, mainly in Years 10 and 11. These are being tackled well through regular monitoring of work to show pupils how to improve and close monitoring of course work for GCSE.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Behaviour is good. Relationships are very good and the school's stance against all forms of bullying is effective. Attendance is satisfactory. Procedures to promote aspects of personal development are very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works very well to achieve them. A small minority of pupils have problems with behaviour.
- The school has good procedures to support the small minority of pupils who feel vulnerable to bullying.
- There is a real sense of purpose about this school that is generated by mutual respect of one person for another and a desire to put the school at the hub of the local community.

Commentary

8. The large majority of pupils attend regularly; some have excellent attendance records. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely and the school responds rapidly when absence is unexplained. Pupils respond well to the rewards for good attendance. Very good procedures are in place to work with the educational welfare service in support of families where children's attendance gives cause for concern.
9. Pupils' attitudes to school and their work are very good. Most think that this is a good school where they are taught well and expected to work hard. They are confident that there is an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils with special educational needs co-operate fully with teachers and learning support assistants; they gain from, and have much to contribute to, the different facets of school life. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups and particularly enjoy practical lessons, for example in physical education. They also value the opportunities for role-play in citizenship classes because they can relate it to the real life situation. Members of the School Council take a lively and active interest in the running of the school and have been innovative in their initiatives. Pupils gradually take on more responsibilities as they progress through the school; prefects take on a range of duties showing a strong sense of pride and ownership of their school.
10. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the very good range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school offers. They appreciate the many chances of extra support with their studies that the staff provide out of lessons and during the weekends and holidays. All pupils speak with much enthusiasm about the summer school opportunities and the trips and visits the school provides.
11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils understand that they all have a right to learn in an environment conducive to study. As a result, they respond well to the rewards for good conduct and respect the need for sanctions when the code of conduct is broken. The current strategies to promote good behaviour were introduced in the Autumn term 2003. During that year the school made 55 fixed term and two permanent exclusions, which emphasised the rigour with which the disciplinary code was applied. Since September 2004 to the present, the rate of exclusions has declined significantly. The school has very good procedures to eliminate bullying and pupils know that bullying of any kind is never tolerated. A charter for action against bullying is displayed prominently and the School Council is proactive in supporting the anti-bullying policy, including the use of trained pupil mentors. A small minority of pupils expressed concern about bullying. Inspectors found that the school reacted quickly and positively to support any pupil who felt vulnerable and made the situation known to an adult. Overall, relationships in school are very good both amongst pupils and between pupils and staff.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.3
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.9
National data	1.1

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	798	55	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0

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

12. Pupils' spiritual development is very good; it is at the heart of the school's work. It lives its mission statement 'In Christ we grow', which has been extended to incorporate 'engineering the future' in response the school's new status as an Engineering College. Each tutor group makes an annual pledge of actions they will take to support the school's mission statement and reviews its success termly. The school's chaplain has a very strong impact on the spiritual life of the school and provides pupils with good opportunities for reflection and self-awareness by, for example, promoting the work of the pupils' Justice and Peace Group.
13. Pupils' moral and social development is also very good. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They express their satisfaction and pride in the school. Tutor groups of pupils of mixed age provide good opportunities for the sharing of viewpoints and understanding of the interdependence of persons within a community. In addition, the system promotes good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for, and learn from, their peers. Discussions relating to citizenship and WRL are key features in the tutor groups; pupils see the effect of them being put into practice.
14. The school is active in promoting pupils' cultural development, which is good. The programme of religious education provides a comprehensive introduction to major world faiths and prepares pupils well for life in a multi-cultural society. Understanding and respect for other cultures is also promoted in the performing arts curriculum through the study of arts in foreign cultures. Although pupils learn about the traditions and culture of other nations and races there are not many opportunities for them to gain first-hand experience of the richness of cultural diversity to be found amongst people of different ethnic backgrounds from their own. The school has an effective Racial Equality Policy that is monitored properly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education through effective teaching and an innovative curriculum that is tailored to individual pupil's needs in Year 10 and 11. These, combined with very good provision for pupils' care and welfare and partnership with parents and external agencies, support pupils very well through their teenage years.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The use of information from assessment procedures is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's focus on developing teaching is having a direct and positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement.
- The very good teaching in physical education is improving pupils' physical fitness and enabling them to participate with success in extra-curricular activities and competitive sport.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It is not linked closely enough to whole-school assessment procedures to help pupils know what to do to improve further.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in art and design in Years 7-9 because pupils are not gaining the basic skills to reach the level expected for their age in Year 9.

Commentary

15. The school has been proactive in developing teaching and learning styles in response to national initiatives and understanding of how different pupils learn. The focus on teaching and learning has been central to the teachers' professional development programme. It is the single most important factor in the rising standard of pupils' work. Information from the monitoring of teaching is closely linked to the work of the Pupil Progress Co-ordinators who help pupils to identify methods of working to best suit their own ways of learning. Some teachers are more advanced than others in trying out new techniques. Their pupils are benefiting from the richer and more diverse range of teaching styles used in lessons. The school's designation as an Engineering College and the acquisition of better ICT facilities, including interactive white boards, are beneficial in that the use of new technology is becoming a natural and integral part of lessons. In addition, WRL features in planning in many lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very good in physical education. It is unsatisfactory in art and design in Years 7-9.
16. Pupils' response to good teaching contributes to their achievement and enjoyment of lessons. Some good and very good lessons were observed in which pupils' communication skills were developed as an integral part of the main aim, for example, when pupils expressed their own viewpoints in citizenship lessons. It was encouraging to hear pupils review their opinions in the light of reasoned argument. Other good features include planning that takes account of previous learning, so that pupils recognise progression in their learning, and high expectations of pupils of all abilities. A clear priority in teachers' planning is the focus on assisting pupils to reach the nationally expected levels for their age. This has had a good effect, evident from the improved results, particularly of the lower and middle-attaining pupils. Occasionally, challenge for the highest-attaining pupils is missing, for example in English in Year 7-9. In the satisfactory rather than good lessons, teachers' explanations were sometimes too long and there was very little input from the pupils. These lessons tended to be over-directed

by the teacher leaving insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their independence. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons observed, teaching was undemanding, pupils' expectations of themselves were low and pupils were unsure of how to improve their work further.

17. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, as are those who have difficulties relating to language or personal problems. Most curriculum areas make good use of pupils' individual education plans to support planning and to focus on the personalised targets. Pupils' work is tracked and regularly tested to check progress in reading and writing. Adults are adept at determining when and when not to intervene with an individual pupil's work, which helps to promote their independence.
18. Teachers are conscious of their responsibility to contribute to the development of pupils' literacy, numerical and ICT skills, but, at present, there is no clear overview of what is happening in every subject. The school has this in hand as part of school improvement issues. Planning in individual lessons, such as for the use of ICT skills as a tool for learning alongside other resources, indicates that most teachers recognise the need to incorporate the direct teaching of basic skills in their planning. This improves the accuracy and quality of written work and enables pupils to communicate more confidently.
19. Information from external results and assessment procedures is systematically analysed. It is used well to identify underachievement and provide information for teachers and senior staff who monitor and guide pupils' progress towards their targets. The collection and use of data are satisfactory but they are not being used to full effect because the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. Hence, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve. The school identified this for itself earlier this year through its monitoring systems and already has plans to change the marking policy. Currently, the use of information from assessment is having a greater effect in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 97 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2.1%)	16 (16.5 %)	51 (52.6%)	24 (24.7%)	4 (4.1%)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum as a whole, including provision for pupils with special educational needs, is very good. It is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for enrichment are very good and enhanced by the school's recent designation as an Engineering College. The quality of accommodation and facilities is good in redesigned areas such as technology, science, drama and physical education. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective response to curriculum issues raised in the previous report has resulted in a very good curriculum, with particular strengths in Years 10 and 11.

- The wide range of vocational courses, including the skillforce option and work-place learning, personalises the curriculum for each pupil in Years 10 and 11.
- The PSHE and citizenship programmes and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The impact of specialist college status is bringing WRL into all areas of the curriculum and aspects of the school's work.
- The inadequate dining facilities restrict opportunities for pupils to gain the full benefit from lunchtime activities.

Commentary

20. The curriculum in Years 7-9 meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. It is enriched by the opportunity for all pupils to take an accredited certificate of achievement in expressive arts at the end of Year 9. This contributes well to pupils' personal development because it develops their oral communication skills and self-confidence. Pupils benefit from being taught in classes grouped by ability in most subjects.
21. There is a wide and very good range of opportunities in Years 10 and 11 based on vocational and skill-based courses running alongside the more traditional GCSE courses. The curriculum is innovative because it seeks to make the curriculum fit pupils' personal needs rather than direct them to fixed programmes of study. Pupils are encouraged and guided towards courses in which they are likely to succeed. The skillforce option, for example, caters for pupils from the whole range of abilities, who, for one reason or another, show less inclination to follow the main programmes of optional subjects. The course is exciting but less conventional in that pupils are involved in a broader range of activities leading to accreditation in subjects such as first-aid, the Duke of Edinburgh Award (bronze level) and the Junior Sports Leadership Award. Several pupils are following courses of study which involve work-place learning, such as hairdressing and motor vehicle maintenance, for two days a week. This balance of study and practical experience is proving to be more relevant and motivating for this small group of pupils. The Engineering College status has had a beneficial effect in bringing the world of work into the classroom; WRL is a growing strength of the curriculum.
22. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good, as is reported on in a later section of the report. Pupils also enjoy a wealth of opportunities for enrichment activities beyond the school day, at the weekends and in the holidays. There are creative arts clubs and practical activities linked to engineering. Numerous sporting activities take place every week as well as matches with other schools. Opportunities to catch up or consolidate work are readily available through extra study sessions on Sunday mornings as well as homework clubs. The school regularly organises engineering days and activity weeks as well as providing for pupils to undertake two weeks of work-experience at the end of Year 10. In keeping with the focus on engineering, pupils built and flew rockets in one of the projects in the summer school last August. The numerous opportunities to visit local factories and businesses as well as to listen to visiting speakers from the wider community have a significant impact on pupils' thinking about their career paths.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for both in mainstream lessons and when working in small groups with specialist teachers and learning support assistants. There is a real sense of achievement because step-by-step progress is recognised and celebrated. Provision for the few pupils for whom English is not the first

language is equally good. Teachers are watchful of their needs and provide just the right level of support when language seems to be impeding progress. Able and talented pupils are targeted through the Aim Higher initiative, which raises the awareness of pupils who might not otherwise consider higher education. Their critical thinking skills are being challenged through more demanding activities in and out of school, for example, when a group of girls attended a four-day taster session on studying science at university.

24. Staffing and accommodation are satisfactory overall. The new engineering rooms, sports hall, arts theatre and refurbished laboratories are making a significant contribution to the effectiveness of pupils' learning. A cause for concern, however, reiterated by pupils and parents, is the dining facility. The dining room is very small and pupils have to pass through too quickly to enable teachers and assistants to develop pupils' social skills and encourage healthy eating options. Lengthy queuing restricts opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular lunchtime activities. Pupils' learning is well supported by computers, books, materials and new teaching aids, for example, interactive whiteboards. The number of computers available to pupils is above average for a school of this size.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very well for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It has outstandingly good procedures to ensure that all pupils are included and benefit according to their need. Procedures to monitor pupils' personal and academic progress are very good. The school has excellent links with primary schools, which ensure a smooth transfer to secondary education. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to voice their views and influence aspects of school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's care for its pupils and concern for their future is marked by the high level of staff commitment and the clear focus on individual pupil's needs.
- Pupils' views are taken seriously. The school listens to them and takes them into account when decisions are made.

Commentary

25. Good procedures are in place to monitor the premises and pupils' activities to reduce hazards. Risk assessments are carried out for all travelling arrangements and visits out of school. There is an appropriate number of trained first-aiders to meet the school's needs. All personnel, including new and temporary staff, are aware of child protection procedures and know what to do if they have any concerns.
26. The high level of care is a reflection of the school's mission and purpose. A large team of care and welfare workers, learning mentors and behaviour support personnel work alongside teachers and the school chaplain to make the network of provision totally interactive. The positive effect of the care provided is underpinned by the very good relationships between staff, pupils and families and the wide range of extra and alternative provision designed to meet the specific needs of each and every pupil.

27. The school has very good procedures to monitor pupils' progress and to identify any areas where progress could be improved. Pupils review the progress they are making towards their targets at regular intervals with subject teachers and a member of the senior leadership team. This contributes to pupils' awareness of how well they are doing and whether there are any discrepancies between subjects.
28. Most pupils have a good feel for the school before entry in Year 7 because of the very good working relationships between the primary schools and Our Lady Queen of Peace. Pupils can attend an Open Day before they apply and also taster sessions of work in science, mathematics, design and technology and engineering. The introduction to life in the secondary school is carefully planned with regular opportunities for pupils and parents to talk individually with the form tutor.
29. The school prepares pupils very well to make informed choices about their work and education after 16. Pupils learn to assess their own skills and aptitudes and to use this information well to choose their path after leaving school. The careers teacher and Connexions adviser are valued members of the school pastoral team and provide excellent individual support and guidance.
30. Pupils voice their views with honesty and without fear. The mixed-age tutor groups encourage informed discussion that leads to topics for debate at the School Council. This body plays a significant part in ensuring that pupils have a meaningful say in decisions that impinge on their well-being.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

This is very good and an exceptionally strong feature of the school's work. It is closely linked to the school's status as a specialist Engineering College. The school has very good and effective procedures to work in partnership with parents, who have a high opinion of the quality of education provided. Links with the community, industry and other schools, colleges and educational institutions are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is committed to providing for the local community. It does so in a way that encourages pupils and parents to become involved in activities that reach out beyond the school.
- Activities associated with the bid to become an Engineering College have led to very good levels of co-operation between employers, industry and school personnel. The spin-off is pupils' greater awareness of the importance of engineering and new technology, both to their own future and that of the country.
- Opportunities for pupils and teachers from local primary schools to work on curricular projects with staff from Our Lady Queen of Peace ease and support pupils' transition at 11+ and enable the schools to make the best use of resources.

Commentary

31. Parents are warmly welcomed into school from the outset. Good opportunities are provided for parents to discuss their children's progress and they are closely involved in helping their children to make important curriculum choices in the older year groups. The school has kept parents fully informed about additional opportunities that are opening up in engineering. Parents are very well informed of school activities via letters, newsletters, the prospectus and the governors' annual report.

32. Parents are involved in their children's curriculum through the personal study programmes and the pupils' log books. The school gives very useful advice on how parents can help their children develop good skills of personal study and independent learning as well as helping them with their homework. Parents are well informed about the 'catch up' opportunities the school provides. The school is keen to encourage and provide for parents to further their own careers. Appropriate courses are provided by the school, such as, currently, GCSE mathematics.
33. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good; parents consider that the care is outstanding. They are fully consulted about, and involved in, annual reviews. The school promotes 'parent partnership' whereby parents are invited to meetings with learning support assistants and the educational psychologist. These evenings are well attended. The school ethos for the inclusion of all pupils in every aspect of school life is recognised by parents as an integral part of the school's success in making every pupil feel valued. Welfare and support staff have very good contacts with parents and visit families at home when it is felt to be more helpful.
34. Parents are generous in support of fund-raising activities, both for charity and for the school. They responded quickly and positively to the fundraising campaign for the Engineering College by helping to seek out sponsorship for the school's contribution to the bid.
35. The school's status as an Engineering College is enriching the links with, and for, the community. Companies and other institutions across the country supported the school's financial bid. In addition, local companies are providing very good opportunities for pupils to learn about engineering through visits out of school and during the school's engineering day. Governors' links with the local community are strong so the school's work is far reaching in its effect. In addition, the chaplain works closely with local parishes and with the priest responsible for school liaison. This forges and supports links between pupils, their homes and the community at large.
36. Partnership with other schools is very good and cost-effective. Links with feeder primary schools are excellent. Links with colleges of further and higher education are extensive, with the result that pupils are very well informed about opportunities for further study. For some more able pupils, the chance to see an engineering project through from start to finish using the facilities of a university is a catalyst for the development of independent, problem solving skills. The school constantly seeks out opportunities to provide pupils with wide-ranging skills that they will be able to draw on in future life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher's leadership and vision for the strategic development of the school are very good. They are leading the school forward at a good pace. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is strong and ambitious for the school. It takes into account the needs of the local community and is proactive in endeavouring to meet them.
- Teachers and non-teaching staff make every pupil feel valued for their own particular talents.

- The governors are effective in their role because they have a good understanding of the school and community's needs and the will to see them fulfilled.
- The management of art and design and ICT are not sufficiently focused on the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress so pupils are not attaining as highly as they could.

Commentary

37. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's future, which has been a catalyst for action. The senior leadership team uses its entrepreneurial skills well to move the school on, for example, in galvanising support and collaboration leading to Engineering College status. The impact of this is already evident because facets of engineering are appearing in every aspect of the school's provision - the curriculum, personal development, citizenship, careers education and extra-curricular activities, for example. There is much still to be achieved but the school is buoyant about its capability to extend its work further, including networks into local schools, colleges and the community. The school is further advanced than many schools in its provision for WRL. Staff morale is high and adults in the school work well together as a team.
38. There is a sense of purpose and order about the school that generates confidence. It reflects well the school's Christian mission and is exemplified in pupils' pride in the school. The headteacher and key staff have a high profile and know the pupils well. Their offices are sited strategically about the school so they have a good awareness of what is going on and can intervene quickly if necessary. Raising and sustaining achievement is central to the school's aims. 'Learning matters' is the overarching theme of the school's improvement plan. The implications are woven well into subject departments' work. Currently, professional development is focused on 'leading from the middle', which encourages middle managers to play a full part in monitoring and evaluation. Some departments are more advanced than others in this but all are aware of their accountability for achievement and progress in their areas of responsibility. The leadership and management of mathematics, history, physical education and citizenship are very good. They embrace good practices that are shared amongst staff. Management in art and design and ICT are unsatisfactory because the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress lacks the rigour to move pupils on fast enough. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved since the previous inspection because of the very good focus on targeting support sharply on individual pupil's exact needs. This extends to able and talented pupils.
39. Governors are totally involved in strategic planning, both for the short and long-term. They are well informed about the school's successes and disappointments through self-evaluative reports prepared by managers and subject leaders. Governors' training is 'in house' so it is linked directly to the school's needs. Governors know what is expected of them. They are not afraid to challenge managers, which leads to healthy debate and positive action. Governors have supported the school well in its endeavour to provide for all pupils from the disaffected to the most able. They have encouraged the school to be proactive in reaching out to the local community. The most significant barriers to raising achievement are some pupils' lack of self-esteem and motivation, which tend to be a reflection of the culture in the local community.
40. Financial control is very good. The school seeks out funds from many sources and uses them prudently to provide for current pupils and contingencies that might arise. Financial planning is closely linked to the school improvement plan and strategic

developments. Staff and governors who manage the finances are resourceful in ensuring that they get the best value from them.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,866,539	Balance from previous year	384,097
Total expenditure	3,107,704	Balance carried forward to the next	142,932
Expenditure per pupil	3,849		

The expenditure in 2003/4 and the carry forward to 2004/05 include funds for capital projects linked to provision for the Engineering College.

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Engineering College status has had a significant impact in bringing the world of work into the classroom.
- The quality of work-experience provided is very good; it enables pupils to transfer their learning in school to the reality of the work place.
- Provision for WRL is skilfully managed, bringing together personnel from many backgrounds with a common purpose and a desire to create a continuum in learning from 14-19.

Commentary

41. Standards are above average because WRL is threaded very effectively through the curriculum and the pupils have many opportunities to learn about the world of work. They are taught to see that the skills they learn in school are transferable to the outside world. Most, but not all, departments include work-related themes and tasks within their lesson plans. The acquisition of Engineering College status has brought the world of work into school, both by promoting extensive links between the school, local colleges, industry and business and by drawing attention to the importance of engineering to the nation's prosperity. The school provides engineering days and a full 'engineering week' in which all subjects in the curriculum take engineering as their theme. The very high quality of the work done is evident in the many displays around the school relating to these experiences.
42. A comprehensive range of vocational courses is available to pupils and there are opportunities for pupils to engage in work-place learning. All Year 10 and 11 pupils take a design and technology course and have the option of taking at least one vocational course. Recent results for the range of vocational courses show that pupils achieved in line with their predicted grades and in some subjects, such as leisure and tourism, well above expectations. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.
43. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Some of the projects in the engineering course are set by, and worked in conjunction with, local industries. This is of mutual benefit because pupils and employers share viewpoints and ideas about the

practicalities of producing technical goods. Many visitors bring their expertise into school, for example, last July, activities included sessions run by local businesses and industries on forensic science, the development of ICT skills for Year 9 pupils and advice on job applications and career development for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are encouraged to use the internet for careers research and are thoroughly prepared, and later given time to reflect upon, their two weeks of work-experience at the end of Year 10.

44. A further contribution to pupils' experience beyond school is the four-week summer school held each year. In 2004, over 90 pupils took part in a wide range of activities in which there was a strong element of WRL. Different groups of pupils were responsible each week for the planning, purchase, preparation and serving of lunch each day.
45. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear commitment to continue to develop and enhance provision. The school has made very good use of the time and expertise of an enterprise adviser who has carried out a rigorous evaluation of all that has been done so far and made recommendations for the next steps.

Engineering College status

46. The school's mission to integrate the work of the school and the community of Skelmersdale was at the heart of the decision to seek Engineering College status. It was envisaged that it would complement the provision of other specialist colleges in the area and expose pupils to the importance of engineering to the national economy. The vision, strategic management and pursuit of this aim caused business and industry, schools and colleges linked with Our Lady Queen of Peace, pupils, staff and parents to work closely together with a common purpose.
47. There has been a change in the attitude towards engineering in the school's culture since it became an Engineering College in September 2004. The focus on engineering manifests in the provision across all subjects. Hence, all pupils are receiving a basic grounding in aspects of engineering. There is a distinct thrust on encouraging the more able pupils to consider the academic route through subjects such as mathematics, science, design and technology and ICT as the pathway to managerial positions. For other pupils, the approach to a career in engineering may be more practical. This aspect is the focal point of current discussions about the next phase of development. The school has good capacity to build on the progress made in the first few months of its new status. There is an air of expectancy and excitement about the future, which is shared by the local primary schools, governors and the local community.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A variety of good teaching strategies appeal to pupils' different learning styles.
- The subject provides very good opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and opinions and to relate them to personal and social issues.
- Marking and assessment for learning are inconsistent.
- Pace and challenge for more able pupils are lacking in some classes.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning requires further development.

Commentary

48. In 2004, pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 were well below the national average compared with all and similar schools. The trend in previous years showed steady improvement culminating in above average results in 2003. The dip in results in 2004 is attributed to the low level of verbal skills of this year group on entry. The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age compared favourably with schools of similar prior attainment. GCSE results at grades A*-C in English in 2004 were broadly similar to the national average but were lower in English Literature. Poetry was identified as the weaker component in pupils' work so teachers are focusing more closely on this aspect in the current year. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils throughout the school, which represents good achievement considering the low level of literacy skills of many on entry. Currently, standards are average in Years 9 and 11. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school although there is scope for some of the more able pupils to attain higher grades, particularly in Years 7-9.
49. Overall, pupils of all abilities speak and listen well. They are eager to contribute in group and class discussion, although at times the tendency to use colloquial phrases rather than the more appropriate Standard English impinges on the quality of the language. This sometimes spills over into pupils' written work and creative writing, which are otherwise fluent and imaginative. This applies to pupils of all abilities, even the higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils respond well to the variety of teaching strategies in use. These are suitably adjusted to support pupils for whom English is not the first language so that they comprehend what is expected of them and understand how to set about it. They make similar progress to other pupils and reach standards compatible with the targets set for them. Pupils who have not reached the standard expected for their age on entry receive additional support for literacy in the form of 'catch up'. They make rapid and measurable progress, which helps their comprehension in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very effectively by learning support teachers and assistants. Pupils meet, and sometimes exceed, the targets in their individual education plans. In Years 10 and 11, teachers provide structures around which these pupils can plan and draft their written

work to improve its quality. This gives pupils confidence and they rise to expectations. Throughout the school, the work of more able pupils shows a lack of grammatical accuracy and of more complex language structures.

50. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Most teachers are subject specialists with good expertise and a wide range of experience. Well-planned lessons are particularly supportive of middle and lower-attaining pupils and there is a growing awareness of teaching strategies to support pupils' different learning styles. In Years 7-9, many of the lessons are based on the structure outlined in the National Strategy. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning, and, ultimately, on standards. For example, in Year 8, group discussion of a poem dealing with illness and disability highlighted how Our Lady Queen of Peace lives out its mission as a school where everyone matters. Pupils showed a very good understanding of poetic devices and their effect, and in fluent, intelligent discussion demonstrated an ability to empathise with what it's like to be different. Lower-attaining pupils are taught particularly well and good relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to want to do well. Pupils respond well when their writing is stimulated by experiences that they can understand. For instance, pupils in a Year 10 class were prepared well for writing to persuade, argue and inform after watching a particularly harrowing video extract. One pupil remarked that he was "appalled" by what he saw. A lively discussion followed. Interactive whiteboard technology is being used to good effect where it is available. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the department. Grades for effort, with no explanation as to the criteria for awarding such grades, appear alongside national curriculum levels. Pupils find this confusing and not all are aware of what they need to do to improve in English.
51. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A vision for the future is beginning to emerge after a period of instability in staffing. There is a good team spirit in the department, which manifests itself in support for colleagues and the sharing of responsibilities, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils' competency in literacy is average across the school, with standards of literacy on entry well below average. Strategies for improving literacy are being embedded in the English department and literacy skills are well taught in English. Speaking and listening skills are better promoted than reading and writing skills in many subjects. Poor use of the learning resource area (library) by subjects other than English is a factor and pupils are not widely encouraged to research from books. Their preferred method of research is the internet and thus many pupils use the computer facilities on offer in the learning resource area rather than the non-fiction texts. Pupils use the resource area well at break, lunchtime and after school but it is underused during the day. The learning resource area is a stimulating learning environment that is not yet used to its full potential.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well prepared with a good variety of activities in most lessons.

- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.
- In some lessons too much English is used in teaching.
- Leadership is strong, gives good direction and presents a very good role model.

Commentary

53. Spanish was introduced as the first foreign language for all Year 7 pupils in September 2004. In Years 8 and 9 French is taught to all pupils. In Years 10 and 11, nearly all pupils continue with French to GCSE in Years 10 and 11; a few also study Spanish. French was the focus subject of the inspection. One lesson of Year 7 Spanish was sampled in which learning was good because of the well planned and enthusiastic teaching the pupils received. Standards observed in the lesson were average, representing good achievement for pupils who entered the school with below average attainment levels.
54. In 2004, GCSE results in French were average for the larger than average number of pupils entered for the examination. The 2004 results were much higher than those in 2003. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
55. Standards of work in Year 9 in French are similar to those expected for pupils' age, representing good achievement considering their below average attainment overall on entry. By Year 9, pupils are using a variety of tenses but many are struggling for accuracy. Reading and listening skills are well developed but speaking skills are more limited. Pupils' range of vocabulary is rather narrow and, although connective words are promoted in teaching, pupils rarely speak in other than simple sentences. They rely heavily on written prompts. Standards of work are average in Year 11; pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They have well developed listening and reading skills and use a variety of tenses and more complex sentence structure in their writing. However, oral skills remain limited and some serious weaknesses in basic vocabulary were observed in some classes.
56. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. Lessons are prepared in detail and most contain a good variety of activities to keep pupils interested and engaged in their learning. In a few lessons where variety and pace were lacking, pupils soon lost interest and the quality of their learning fell. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relate pupils' work well to national curriculum levels and GCSE grades, with the result that pupils have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve and reach their potential. Teachers' use of French in teaching is inconsistent and in too many lessons over-reliance on English does not present a good role model to the pupils. Teaching and learning are starting to benefit from the use of electronic whiteboards to add variety and interest to lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and respectful with the result that pupils' attitudes and behaviour in nearly all lessons are positive and support their learning. Pupils work very well and effectively in groups and pairs. Teachers capitalise on opportunities to promote the importance of languages within the framework of the Engineering College status. They are heavily and successfully engaged in teaching Spanish in seven local primary schools.
57. Leadership of modern languages is very good. It is dynamic and ambitious. It presents a very good role model and promotes effective teamwork. It has a strong focus on improvement and sets challenging but realistic targets for future success. Leadership is not afraid to innovate and is prepared to adopt initiatives in the pursuit of raising standards. Management is good. Data is used effectively to analyse performance, set

targets and track pupil progress. Imaginative links have been established with schools in France and Spain. Marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The use of the target language in teaching, identified as an issue in the last inspection, remains an area to be tackled.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching is leading to improving standards of work throughout the school.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages pupils to enjoy the work and gain satisfaction from it.
- Relationships in lessons are very good; the pupils behave very well and work hard.
- Inconsistent marking of pupils' work sometimes prevents them from knowing what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

58. Pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 in 2004 were close to the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age has risen considerably over recent years. In 2004, it was well above average compared with schools with similar prior attainment in Year 6 in 2001. Boys and girls performed similarly. The mathematics department has responded very positively to the National Numeracy Strategy, which has contributed to the rising standards. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly over the last four years. In 2004, they were below the national average at grades A*-C but above average at grades A*-G. The boys' results were marginally better than those of the girls.
59. Standards of work seen in lessons and in the pupils' books throughout the school were average, reflecting the upward trend in test and examination results in recent years. This represents particularly good achievement for pupils in Year 11 taking into account their well below average results in national tests in 2003. GCSE coursework is of a good quality and this is a contributory factor to the good achievement of many pupils. Poor retention of knowledge prevents some pupils' performance in tests and examinations from being as good as it might be. Most pupils draw accurate graphs and have a good grasp of number work. They use ICT skills well to analyse data and to present information for visual impact. Attainment on entry is below average. Consistently good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work contribute to the good overall achievement throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups because they receive well-focused support to consolidate basic mathematical skills.
60. Teaching and learning are good overall. All the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and some were very good. Lessons are well planned, with clear aims that are shared with pupils. In the best lessons, the teachers have high expectations, the pace is good and the variety of the tasks challenges pupils to the limit. For example, in a Year 9 lesson for high attainers, pupils used their measuring and estimating skills well to work out the amount of paint needed to paint part of the school. Teachers make very good use of interactive white boards to demonstrate mathematical concepts and to engage pupils actively in their learning. Lessons were generally well planned, with clear aims that were shared with pupils. Progression was based realistically on pupils'

previous learning. Some good introductory exercises were seen but the endings of some lessons were rushed and did not always consolidate learning appropriately. Teachers make effective use of questioning, encouraging pupils to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. Teaching was satisfactory rather than good in lessons where there was too much dependence on the text-book and not enough variety in the activities. The overall effectiveness of teaching enables most pupils to acquire sufficient knowledge and basic skills to work independently and to improve their understanding. Teachers' insistence on the correct use of mathematical language and the good oral work in lessons make a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils have a very positive attitude to mathematics; they behave very well in lessons and relationships between the pupils and with their teachers are very good.

61. Leadership and management of the subject are very good, which is the reason for the very good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved, results have risen and there is much closer monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the department's work. There is a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards even further. The subject contributes well to the school's status as an Engineering College through subtle and overt references to it in lessons and in discussion with pupils about their future plans. Teachers are enthusiastic. They give freely of their time to help the pupils individually. Assessment information is well used to inform planning and check individual pupil's progress but day-to-day marking of written work is inconsistent. The department makes a considerable contribution to the teaching of mathematics in several local primary schools. One excellent lesson was seen in which carefully prepared practical work led to pupils' greater understanding of the properties of triangles and quadrilaterals and the completion of work that was advanced for their age.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory. The key features of the National Numeracy Strategy have been shared with all staff and aspects of mathematics have been identified in most subject schemes of work. Pupils are using their mathematical knowledge and skills well in other subjects to analyse and interpret data, underpin practical work and present information in a form that adds to the reader's understanding. In citizenship, for instance, a good unit on the national economy and managing money promoted pupils' awareness of the importance of mathematics in everyday life.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are improving.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute significantly to the good achievement overall.
- Pupils do not make enough use of ICT, mainly due to the lack of equipment until recently.
- Pupils' targets in Years 7-9 are not defined sharply enough to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent.

Commentary

63. Pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 in 2004 were similar to the national average. These results were a significant improvement on those achieved in 2003 and in previous years. The GCSE results in 2004 were broadly average. All the pupils entered gained grades A*-G; the proportion gaining grades A*-C was below average. The results were similar to those for 2003.
64. Standards of work are average for pupils' age in Year 9. Pupils achieve well from their below average starting point on entry. Standards are similar to those normally found in Year 11. This represents good achievement because these pupils' results in national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were well below average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls during lessons. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils due to the effective support that they receive throughout the school. Pupils in Year 9 have a good working knowledge of scientific facts, which they apply to test out hypotheses and explain the outcomes of practical work. By Year 11, many pupils tackle more complex work and problem solving with a degree of independence that encourages critical thinking. Their standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and their practical skills are good. Pupils are well behaved during lessons; relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and keep to their task during practical and written work.
65. Pupils learn well because of the good teaching overall. Lessons are well prepared and the teachers have sound subject knowledge, enabling them to give clear explanations to pupils to enhance their learning. Mathematical skills are successfully practised through the use of scientific formulae and in the interpretation of graphs and sets of data. Science contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy skills through emphasis on technical vocabulary and opportunities for pupils to read aloud and discuss topics in small groups. Teachers make good use of technology in class teaching but pupils' ICT skills are underused, partly because data-loggers have only been purchased very recently. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used well to reinforce work completed in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is variable, some of it is good and offers sound advice to pupils on areas for improvement, but some is superficial. In Year 8, parents are involved in the marking of pupils' homework, which gives them a feel for the work being done in school. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly at the end of units of work in all year groups. The information gained is used well to inform planning for lessons. The setting of targets for individual pupils in Years 7-9 is not as well developed as in the older year groups.
66. The leadership and management of the department are good. Staff work well together as a team. Recent initiatives, such as the new scheme of work for Years 7-9, are moving the subject on at a good pace. The monitoring of teaching and learning is limited at present due to timetable constraints. Hence, there are not as many opportunities to share useful practices as in some other subjects. Teachers make good provision for pupils to broaden their horizons in science through a lunchtime science club for younger pupils. In Years 10 and 11, extra revision lessons provide well for pupils to consolidate their earlier learning. Good technical support for lessons enables teachers to focus their efforts on the actual teaching. Excellent displays around the department are informative and support learning. The subject is benefiting from the Engineering College status because of the wider links with industry and pupils' greater awareness of the opportunities open to them in later life through links between science,

mathematics and new technology. Improvement since the previous inspection is good; results have improved, as have teaching, leadership and management.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils use computers effectively to present information and engage other people's interest.
- Management of ICT is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not get enough feedback from their teachers to indicate what they have to do to achieve their targets. Pupils' progress is not tracked effectively enough.
- Pupils have good access to computers outside of lesson times.
- Teachers and technicians promote pupils' independence in the use of ICT skills.
- Pupils make good use of their ICT skills in other subjects.

Commentary

67. Pupils' GNVQ (Intermediate) results in Year 11 in 2004 were average. A relatively small number of pupils were entered. Approximately half obtained grades A*-C. There were no merits or distinctions. These results were an improvement on previous years' results.
68. In Year 9, standards vary in the different strands of the subject. Pupils' basic ICT skills are average. Standards in presenting information through, for example, the use of PowerPoint, are above average because a great deal of teaching time is devoted to this aspect of the subject. Pupils' ability to work on their own or in small groups is above average because they are given a great deal of freedom to plan, organise and complete their work at their own pace within a given timescale. In discussions with pupils, it was evident that their understanding and experience of how computers are increasingly used to control machines, for example by writing a set of computer commands, entering them and running them to see if they produce the desired effect, are well below average. Overall, current standards of work in Year 9 are below average but this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' below average starting point in Year 7. Standards in the GNVQ group are average. These pupils demonstrate above average skills in finding things out for themselves. Design skills, for example in analysing the business needs of an imaginary bakery and preparing an action plan using ICT solutions, are average. Standards in other groups in Year 11 are below average. Pupils have average operational skills in ICT, sufficient for use in everyday life and to apply in other subjects, but design skills are below average. Pupils in all groups are achieving satisfactorily given their attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs and able and talented pupils make satisfactory progress.
69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are very encouraging, which boosts pupils' confidence. Consequently, pupils have good attitudes to their work. They are encouraged to work independently and find things out for themselves. Lessons are managed well; they proceed according to plan and without disruption. Teachers make very effective use of time in lessons, moving around the room and helping individual pupils. Insufficient attention is paid to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Spelling mistakes are rarely corrected in written work and teachers do not emphasise enough

the advantage of using the spellchecker when working on the computer. Marking and assessment are unsatisfactory. In Years 7 - 9, pupils' attainment is not assessed regularly enough and they have very little written work to show them how to improve either presentation or content. Although pupils have targets they are not informed what they have to do to achieve them, nor do they know how well they are doing in relation to pupils nationally. In Years 10 and 11, files of work for GNVQ are poorly organised. There are too few pieces of written work to show pupils what they have to do to improve in order to achieve the higher grades.

70. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. New courses have been successfully introduced and the specialist team of teachers give generously of their time to raise standards through lunchtime and after-school sessions. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There is not enough monitoring of how well pupils are doing in ICT because assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and pupils' progress is not tracked as they move through the school. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically in the department, which prevents the sharing of expertise and the best practices. Resources are above average. The quantity and quality of technical support is very good. It provides very good back-up to teachers in maintaining the momentum of learning when hardware proves unreliable or shuts down. Pupils have good access to computers outside of lessons, both at lunchtimes and after school. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The use of ICT in other subjects has improved, as have resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Pupils' ICT skills are average and are used well in most subjects. In engineering, for example, the use of computers for design and manufacturing work is good and pupils have full access to specialist software and computers, both during and outside of lessons. Throughout the school, pupils use PowerPoint well for presentations. Data loggers are not used enough in science because these are a very recent purchase. Only in art and design, where the incorporation of ICT is not planned for, either in schemes of work or in lesson planning, is the use of computers unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected separately by the diocese.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in developing geographical skills in Year 7-9 as a result of their positive attitudes.
- Higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- ICT is used well to support teaching and learning.
- Marking in Years 7 -9 does not provide pupils with enough information about how to improve their work.
- Weak literacy skills restrict what lower-attaining pupils achieve.

Commentary

72. Teacher assessments of pupils' work in Year 9 in 2004 were close to the national average and showed a slight improvement on those for the previous year. Standards seen in the inspection were similar and represent good achievement in relation to pupils' relatively low attainment in geography on entry to Year 7. Many have limited knowledge of places and underdeveloped mapping and interpretive skills. By Year 9, middle and higher-attaining pupils satisfactorily select information from sources to describe and explain geographical features and processes, presenting their work through a range of written and graphical techniques. Weak literacy skills restrict lower-attaining pupils to short descriptive writing, though many are better in expressing their understanding orally.
73. In 2004, GCSE results were below the national average at grades A*-C. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G was average but relatively few pupils gained the highest grades A*/A. Standards seen in Year 11 show a similar pattern. Pupils use ICT very effectively to produce high quality coursework based on river study fieldwork. They use a range of techniques to collect, record and analyse evidence and to present their findings. Pupils are less successful when drawing on case studies to produce the detailed explanatory writing required to attain the highest GCSE grades. Currently, the achievement overall of pupils in Year 11 is satisfactory. Whilst most are on course to achieve their target grades, results in the trial examinations show a significant number are not, mainly because of inadequate revision. In all year groups, pupils' positive attitudes are a significant factor in their achievement. They work hard and productively and show good application and concentration. Pupils form good relationships with teachers and each other and work co-operatively in groups.
74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject. Most lessons are well managed and are planned to build on pupils' prior learning. Resources are generally well matched to pupils' capabilities. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively for illustration and demonstration. In some lessons, however, there is too little variation in methods and teachers' explanations are too long, with little input from pupils. Tasks are insufficiently stimulating or challenging, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. Marking in Years 7-9 does not give pupils enough subject-specific information about why they have done well or how they could improve.
75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Planning identifies action to raise standards but emphasises developments in curriculum and resources rather than improvements in teaching. Procedures for target setting and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress are in place but they do not have enough effect because not enough is done to make pupils aware of targets or to check their progress towards them. Good working relationships within the department ensure the sharing of ideas and good practice. However, other than the school system of performance management, there are no formal arrangements for monitoring teaching.
76. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There is a wider range of teaching strategies and management is now more formal. Not enough progress has been made on providing more challenge for higher-attaining pupils.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good grounding they receive in history from Year 7 upwards.
- Marking in Years 7 - 9 does not give enough guidance on how pupils can improve their work.
- Very good leadership and management is identifying and responding to pupils' specific needs and promoting good interest in the subject.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support learning.

Commentary

77. Teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2004 were as expected for pupils' age. They showed a significant improvement on those for the previous year. Standards seen in the inspection were similar, with pupils achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 7 - 9, pupils make good progress in overcoming weaknesses in chronology and the interpretation of historical evidence. Higher-attaining pupils write fluently and at length when explaining cause and effect. They are less confident in dealing with more complex events such as the causes of the First World War, so few attain the highest National Curriculum levels. Pupils of average ability do not always support arguments with evidence. Lower-attaining pupils are restricted by weak literacy skills; their writing is mainly factual and descriptive.
78. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average, a significant decline from those in the previous year. Though a majority reached or exceeded their target grades, a number underachieved as a result of poor attendance and lack of revision. Currently, standards in Year 11 are below average. Achievement is satisfactory taking into account pupils' attainment at the start of the GCSE course but too few pupils are working at the highest levels because they use evidence uncritically and do not give sufficient detail to support arguments. Pupils use ICT effectively in Years 10 and 11 to research, process and present information. Most pupils are on course to attain their targets. A few are underachieving because of lack of revision before the trial examination and failure to meet coursework requirements. This is despite the very good strategies put in place to support and help them.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; some is very good. Lessons are very well planned and managed, with varied and stimulating tasks and activities well matched to pupils' capabilities and needs. Pupils are set clear objectives and learn incrementally through short tasks of increasing challenge. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively for demonstration, such as in the analysis of sources of evidence. Teachers give good support to individual pupils. Those with special educational needs are very well supported both by suitable tasks and materials and by help from learning support assistants. There are effective strategies to promote the specific writing skills required for history and good opportunities for pupils to express their understanding orally. Very thorough marking in Years 10 and 11 gives detailed feedback on what has been done well and on what is needed to improve. Marking in Years 7 - 9 is less effective in this respect. Pupils respond to good teaching with enthusiasm, hard work and good behaviour. They work collaboratively in groups and form good relationships with teachers and each other.
80. Leadership and management are very good. Thorough and detailed arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review inform departmental planning. Good procedures for

tracking pupils' progress tackle underachievement and produce a positive response in most cases. A strong sense of teamwork and effective monitoring has led to improvements in teaching. Detailed schemes of work provide the basis for very effective lesson planning and a good resource base has been developed. Accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory as the small room size restricts activities, such as for group work, and makes it difficult for teachers and assistants to circulate.

81. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn history through the use of ICT.
82. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Standards in Year 9 are higher, achievement is better, management has improved and good strategies are in place for classroom management and to develop literacy skills.

TECHNOLOGY

A wide range of subjects contributes to the whole-school design and technology programme. The latest addition to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is engineering, which was sampled. At present, the number of pupils in the groups is small. The department is making strenuous efforts to encourage girls to take up engineering. Links with industry have been exploited to good effect, for example, pupils have designed products to a design brief set by a local company.

Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were satisfactory. Regular monitoring and assessment of work, linked to feedback in lessons, is effective in reinforcing learning and informing pupils how to improve their work. Expectations of what pupils will complete in their own time are reasonable, but not always fulfilled by all. For example, pupils have amassed plenty of material for their portfolios but it is not yet organised well enough to accurately display the knowledge, understanding and practical skills that underpin the work that has gone into it.

There is good scope for further development of engineering in the context of an academic and technological subject for aspirant engineers and, separately, for a more practical course leading to modern apprenticeships.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum area makes a significant contribution to the specialist school status through a rich and broad curriculum.
- All pupils are included well in lesson activities and their positive attitudes and very good behaviour contribute to their learning.
- The use of ICT for design, manufacturing and learning is beginning to show in standards of work.
- The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in graphic products at GCSE is not as high as in other design and technology subjects.
- Design drawing and presentation skills are not developed systematically in Years 7-9.

Commentary

83. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average. Currently, standards in Year 9 are average overall across the range of design and technology subjects. This represents satisfactory achievement because pupils' skills in these subjects on entry to the school were below the nationally expected level for their age. Work seen in Year 7-9 during the inspection indicates that there are broad variations between the subjects that collectively deliver the national curriculum in design and technology. Basic skills are not developed systematically in some of the aspects of the work. As a result, progress is slower because pupils do not always recognise and use knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly demanding 'design and make' activities in new situations. The recent acquisition of CAD CAM, used as a tool for designing and making, and additional ICT resources are beginning to show in improved standards of work across all areas.
84. Overall, design and technology results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were close to the national average. In 2004, they were similar to the national average at grades A*-G but well below it at grades A*-C. This was largely due to decline in results in one aspect, graphic products. Girls performed better than boys as is found nationally. Since 2002, GCSE results at grades A*-C have been close to the national average in food technology and electronic products; in product design, they have improved and are now close to the national average, which represents good achievement. The poor results in graphic products are attributed to

periods of long-term staff absence and deployment of non-specialist teachers, resulting in the lack of continuity and consistency in pupils' learning. This has adversely affected the achievement of some groups.

85. Overall, the standard of work in the current Years 10 and 11 is average. It varies across the contributory subjects but is showing a marked improvement as pupils move through these two year groups. Achievement is good overall taking into account pupils' prior attainment in Year 9. Pupils' making skills are often better than their design drawing, which is less well developed. Higher-attaining pupils consolidate their work through good research, organisation and evaluation. Their design folders are of a good standard, for example in food technology. The impact of ICT is evident in improving standards of designing and manufacture, which was acknowledged in a recent external moderator's report.
86. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in all year groups. Some good and very good lessons were observed during the inspection. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but in some instances pupils did not learn fast enough. Teachers were occasionally over-directive, lessons being focused on the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. Lesson planning is variable. In some lessons, pupils are not taught a sufficiently wide variety of presentational techniques to promote fluency in design. Relationships and behaviour seen during lessons were almost always very good. All pupils receive high levels of individual support, which enables the vast majority, including those with special educational needs, to make similar progress. Support from learning assistants and technicians is very good. Many pupils take advantage of the supervised access to specialist facilities out of school hours, which noticeably aids their progress.
87. The quality of leadership is good. There is a clear vision for improvement and direction. Management is satisfactory with some good elements. Much effort, energy and time has been devoted to team building. The inconsistencies in teachers' planning, assessment and recording result from significant changes in staffing, deployment of non-specialist teachers and periods of long-term staff absence. This situation is partially resolved. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly, particularly so with respect to the specialist area with suited rooms. The primary school liaison project helps to boost pupils' confidence and makes a positive contribution to the progress these young pupils make in design and technology before joining secondary school. This, along with the innovative industrial partnerships, are key contributors to the school's recently acquired specialist school status. They indicate that this curriculum area is well placed to improve further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama and expressive arts play an important part in the life of the school. In Year 9, all pupils follow a course in expressive arts leading to an accredited award. Pupils achieved well in the lessons observed because they were highly motivated. Pupils in Year 9 are developing good observational and analytical skills. They offer and receive criticism of their own and each other's work in an objective manner. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop further their skills in critical listening and creative thinking. They learn to research, select material, plan systematically, and to refine their work to a good standard.

Pupils' experience is enriched by regular dramatic and musical productions, both in school and in the wider community.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management is unsatisfactory because teaching and learning are not monitored in a way that help pupils know what to do to improve their work.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory for a large proportion of pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' observational drawing skills are weak.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Large class sizes are a barrier to learning.
- The use of ICT facilities is inadequate.

Commentary

88. In 2004, only one third of those entered for GCSE attained grades A* - C. No pupil gained A* or A grades. Results have declined steadily since 2002, when they were close to the national average. The fall in results is largely due to staff changes and low staff morale which the school is working to resolve.
89. When pupils join the school in Year 7 their experience of art is variable; their understanding and skills range from well below average to below average. They show a willingness to learn but weak teaching overall leads to unsatisfactory achievement and standards that are below average in Year 9. Pupils reach satisfactory standards in printmaking. They use both colour and shape soundly to produce prints based on their studies of natural forms. The standard of observational drawing, which underpins all other aspects of the subject, is low. Pupils are made aware of artists' work. However, they do not use the influences reflectively to raise their own standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the very good support they receive. The large class sizes are a barrier to raising standards.
90. Most pupils in Year 11 achieve satisfactorily given their relatively low standards when they start the course in Year 10. Their work on portraits shows satisfactory application. The majority of pupils organise bold compositions satisfactorily but observational drawing skills are weak, which is the main reason why standards remain below average. In the current Year 10 graphics option, pupils achieve satisfactory standards. Their coursework consists of traditional topics that are approached successfully using well-tried methods and techniques.
91. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 - 9. Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject but it is inconsistent. Lesson planning that lacks detail leads to teaching that is undemanding and does not raise achievement. Teachers' expectations are generally low and this lack of challenge leads to many pupils in Years 7 to 9 not gaining adequate basic skills. Pupils are not taught how to capitalise on the influences they research from artists' work. Pupils' learning on GCSE courses is satisfactory because they are taught in smaller groups and they benefit from satisfactory individual tuition. These pupils have greater opportunity to learn in ways that suit them best. Homework plays a minimal role in engaging pupils in independent learning. Opportunities for teaching and learning using ICT are inadequate. Targets, based on prior attainment, are set for pupils but they receive too little advice about how to improve. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to analyse and explain what they are doing.
92. Leadership does not have a satisfactory vision for how the department will develop. Departmental self-evaluation is ineffective because it has not led to the intended

improvements in standards or teaching. Curriculum development reflects teachers' strengths and interests. The day-to-day running of the department is smooth. Management is unsatisfactory because the monitoring of pupils' work is insufficient. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

Music

No judgement is made about the provision in music because there was no specialist teaching during the inspection due to the subject leader's extended period of absence. The situation is likely to be resolved satisfactorily in the near future.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The temporary lack of specialist teaching in music is limiting the impact of the subject on individual pupil's work and across the whole school community.
- The lack of practice spaces for instrumental and work restricts opportunities for pupils to practise in school.

Commentary

93. Numbers entered for GCSE are too low for valid comparison with national figures. In 2004, results were above average; lower-attaining pupils did better in music than in their other subjects. Currently, no music is taught in Years 10 and 11.
94. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above average for pupils' age. Standards in Year 9 seen during the inspection were average. Achievement across Years 7-9 is good. When pupils enter the school their attainment is below average, but they make rapid progress in Year 7. Many learn to play simple keyboard pieces fluently, and some higher-attaining pupils learn to co-ordinate both hands. In Year 9, most pupils have developed good listening skills, and can maintain an independent part in ensemble pieces. They build well on their performing and listening skills in composing, confidently employing simple devices such as drone, sequence and repetition. Higher-attaining pupils compose properly structured pieces with ideas, which are imaginatively developed; lower-attaining pupils can follow guidelines readily but do not develop or extend their ideas. Pupils' recall of general musical knowledge is vague.
95. No judgement is made about leadership and management because of the absence of the subject leader who is the only teacher in music. It is clear, however, that management systems are such that the work of the department is being sustained as a temporary measure. A revision of the scheme of work, relevant to pupils' current needs and abilities, is under way and there is evidence of regular monitoring. The assessment system is allied to national curriculum criteria, but there is no clear link between the topics incorporated in the scheme of work and the levels to be reached by individual pupils. Pupils' work is regularly marked, with helpful comments for further development, but no setting of short-term targets. The department is well resourced with some very good ethnic drums and sufficient keyboards. The quality and variety of pitched percussion instruments is limited. Provision for ICT is good. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are no practice spaces for group work, and spaces set aside for instrumental teaching are unsuitable.
96. A small number of pupils learn to play instruments. The cost of lessons is subsidised by the school. The department has established good links with primary schools and the wider community. Two large-scale musicals were produced within the last year and groups of singers have taken part in local television broadcasts.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, achievement is very good, particularly in the GCSE course.
- The quality of teaching is very good and this, when matched to the very positive attitudes of almost all pupils, ensures that learning is very good.
- The specialist facilities and resources for learning are of a very good standard.
- The department is very well led and managed with clear strategies for further development.
- There is scope for more clearly defined assessment procedures in Years 7-9 so that pupils know what to do to further improve their physical fitness and skills.

Commentary

97. Overall, the level of attainment in physical skills on entry to the school is below average. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are above average overall for pupils' age. This represents very good achievement. Typical of the advance in skills was Year 7 boys' use of stick handling techniques in hockey and Year 9 girls' above average standards of personal physical fitness in following challenging aerobic routines. The quality and control of their movements were of a high standard. Boys and girls make similar progress. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are set challenging but realistic personal targets and given the support to reach them.
98. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. The standard of personal physical fitness for both boys and girls is above average and skills in traditional games are well developed. The GCSE results for 2004 were well above the national average. Overall, pupils achieved better in physical education than in their other subjects. The trend over recent years has been clearly upwards. When set against attainment on entry such performance shows very clearly how well these pupils have achieved over 5 years.
99. The standards achieved are the result of very good teaching and learning. All teachers have very well developed subject expertise and almost all pupils demonstrate a positive approach to their work. Most lessons are well planned and the activities are well devised, offering all pupils the opportunity to make improvement. The teaching style is engaging and encouraging so pupils are well involved in the lessons and know how well they are achieving. However, there is scope for more regular recording of this progress in order to identify short-term improvement for the pupils based on their own personal standards. Relationships both amongst the pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils with special educational needs receive a good level of support all round, and particularly from the committed and capable learning support assistant.
100. The work of the department is very well organised by able and enthusiastic leadership. Vision for future development is clear and the example provided in terms of energy, care and commitment is strongly reflected in the approach of the whole team. This commitment is particularly strong towards the out-of-hours learning programme. A very wide range of activities is offered. They are popular and very highly valued by pupils and parents alike. The programme provides for pupils of all ages and ability to participate in sport at the same time opening up opportunities for the most able to compete, with considerable success, at higher levels.

101. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have been raised and the quality of teaching and learning has risen. Assessment procedures have improved but there is scope for further development in Years 7-9 so that pupils become more aware of their progress and what to do in order to improve further. The department's strengths, allied to the benefits of much improved facilities through the addition of a fine sports hall, ensure that this department is well placed to make further improvement.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

102. The school offers a very good range of vocational courses, some in conjunction with Skelmersdale College. Two of the college-based courses were sampled - in construction and hair and beauty. In both, pupils were highly motivated and making very good progress. The courses provide very good opportunities for pupils to gain vocational qualifications, such as NVQ, which are relevant for transfer to post-16 education. A high proportion of pupils continue with these courses in further education as a result of the qualifications and experience gained during Years 10 and 11.
103. The skillforce option in Years 10 and 11 caters for pupils from all ability levels. It broadens the curriculum creatively for pupils who might otherwise be disaffected with school. During the inspection, the group was engaged in fitness training, first aid theory and life-saving skills. Teaching and learning were good. All pupils were involved and achieving well. The pupils spoke of their appreciation and enjoyment of the course, describing it as "exciting" and "fulfilling". There is very good liaison between the skillforce instructors and the school's Pupil Progress Co-ordinator link.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides a very good programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) that includes the statutory drugs, sex and relationships education. The school utilises the skills and expertise of many outside agencies to complement the work in lessons. Visiting speakers are specialists in their field. Teaching and learning are good. Programmes for citizenship, PSHE and WRL are integrated effectively and each pupil builds up a personal progress record of all their achievements.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership is innovative. It encourages pupils to have considered views on all aspects of life in the school community and beyond.
- The School Council is an articulate and highly motivated group that has a good influence in the school.
- Good use is made of homework and personal studies but there is insufficient formal assessment to allow pupils to track their own progress.

Commentary

104. Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and pupils achieve well. During the preceding three years pupils have learned about the environment, the community, personal safety, rules and the law, disability issues, animal welfare and a variety of other important topics. Their files are full of detailed notes and personal studies showing that they take care and pride in their work. The quantity and quality of some pupils' work is above average. There is no difference between the achievement of girls and boys, able and talented pupils or those with special educational needs. All make good progress.

105. By the end of Year 11, pupils' work is in line with national expectations. They achieve well. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of a democratic society and are familiar with political vocabulary. They have successfully completed projects on the work of an MP, studied taxation and government spending, and developed arguments for and against the national lottery. Other work includes globalisation, poverty and equal rights from all perspectives. Pupils have completed a substantial amount of written work, some of which is above average compared with that seen in many schools. Pupils keep their progress files up-to-date as part of the PSHE and careers programmes. These include records of achievement such as certificates in food skills, design skills, sporting activities, fundraising and their contribution to the community.
106. The School Council is an active and successful group that gives pupils an opportunity to take part in a democratically elected body. The Council has had many successes in making changes for the better. Recently, it has been involved in playground improvements and the use of school buses. An ECO group has just been formed to provide for pupils who are passionate about discussing environmental issues. With help from staff, pupils successfully organise and supervise many events to raise money for charities. This usually follows research and explanation to other pupils as to why the support is needed. The Justice and Peace group in particular works tirelessly for many good causes, such as, during inspection week, Fair Trade.
107. Citizenship, PSHE, careers and some aspects of WRL are fully interwoven into the curriculum yet all three remain identifiable and distinct. Citizenship is placed in the curriculum in an innovative way. A subject specialist works with other staff in a rolling programme of lessons, many of which involve team teaching. For example, the citizenship co-ordinator may take over a day of English lessons and teach citizenship themes with the English teacher. During the inspection, pupils in Year 11 were looking at job applications and recognising the importance of good literacy skills in seeking jobs. In geography, the lesson themes were on personal safety using public transport.
108. Teaching and learning are good because teaching is enthusiastic and well-informed. Lessons are planned with pace and variety. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Promotion of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is an integral part of all lessons. Team-teaching works well and has the additional benefit of ensuring good support for lower-attaining pupils. Homework is set and marked positively. Pupils understand the attainment targets for Year 9 and Year 11 but, as yet, there is not enough formal assessment to allow pupils to track their own progress.
109. Leadership and management are very good and inspiring. Planning and organisation are very good so all pupils receive their entitlement to citizenship within the curriculum. The department is self-aware, evaluative and constantly seeking to improve the quality of its work. Outside agencies are used very well to enrich the curriculum and raise the awareness of pupils to the world beyond school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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