

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Eccles

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 106009

Headteacher: Mrs Janis Triska

Lead inspector: Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 June 2005

Inspection number: 274105

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	163
School address:	Chatsworth Road Ellesmere Park Eccles Manchester
Postcode:	M30 9DY
Telephone number:	0161 921 2140
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Norman Parry
Date of previous inspection:	5 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Oakwood High School is a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in Salford. The school has 155 places for boys and girls. At present there are 163 pupils on roll made up of 115 boys and 48 girls all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are almost all of White British ethnicity. There are no pupils where English is not their first language. Very few pupils move in or out of school other than at the beginning or end of the school year. Many of the pupils live in areas of social and economic deprivation and 51 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Nine pupils are in public care.

Besides moderate learning difficulties, many pupils have additional learning difficulties associated with language and communication difficulties, autism, emotional and behavioural problems, sensory impairments, and physical disabilities. As a result of their special educational needs and additional learning difficulties, pupils' attainment when they enter the school is well below average.

The school has specialist college status in arts and technology. It has achieved many other awards which include Investors in People, Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark Gold. There are numerous School Achievement Awards, the Healthy Schools Award and The Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school has leading teachers in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and two Advanced Skills Teachers. The school participates in the Graduate Teacher programme and currently has one student on placement.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology
8992	Julian Vischer	Lay inspector	
22695	Ray Cardinal	Team inspector	History Geography Citizenship Personal, social and health education Religious education
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	English Modern foreign language Physical education Work-related learning Special educational needs
17260	Jennifer Taylor	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of Oakwood High School is excellent. The excellent vision and exceptional leadership of the headteacher, followed and emulated by the whole staff provide the school with outstanding educational provision. Pupils achieve very well and teaching is very good. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership and management mean the ambitious aims of the school are achieved very successfully.
- The very good teaching, leads to all pupils achieving very well and, in particular, gaining examination results that far outstrip similar schools.
- The whole staff are a unified and very effective team, successful in their pursuit of higher standards resulting in many innovations and awards.
- Educational provision for all pupils gives them an excellent breadth of opportunities and many additional activities to enjoy, most particularly, the youth club.
- Pupils receive excellent support and guidance especially when they first arrive and settle during Year 7.
- There are exceptionally strong relationships with the community, schools and colleges through which the school takes a decisive lead in achieving inclusive provision.
- The excellent accommodation is enlivened with displays of the utmost quality celebrating pupils' achievements.

The school has improved very well since the last inspection. The key issues from then have all been resolved very successfully. The school has continued to build on its strengths and there is much good or very good improvement in pupils' achievements and in all areas of the school's provision.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Very Good	Very Good
Year 11	Very Good	Very Good

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

Pupils' achievement is very good. This is because the school succeeds in developing and maintaining the highest quality of educational provision, especially where it affects teaching, assessment and curriculum. Examination results far exceed those of similar schools and they improve year after year. As a result, pupils throughout the school achieve very well in English, mathematics and science. The very effective promotion of pupils' use of English, mathematics and information and communication technology in other subjects makes a significant contribution to achievement. In information and communication technology pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, overall. The progress of lower attaining pupils is sometimes hindered by work that is too difficult. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well. Extensive opportunities for work-related learning leads to pupils achieving very well by the end of Year 9 and to an excellent extent in Years 10 and 11 where pupils benefit from very good work experience arrangements and vocational education. Overall, pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in religious education and achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 8 and 9, pupils' progress is sometimes affected by not having the opportunity to actively discuss religious issues. Achievement is very good in personal, social and health education as well as in citizenship.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent, overall. Pupils' attitudes are excellent and their behaviour is very good. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is excellent. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is planned meticulously and learning is sharply focused on achieving clear objectives. Teachers and assistants work together exceptionally well. They have a very good knowledge of pupils' needs and of the subjects taught. Expectations are high and extremely effective use of assessment means pupils' work is nearly always matched closely to their capabilities. This provides an excellent amount of encouragement to pupils and their engagement in learning is outstanding.

The curriculum is excellent. It gives all pupils a wide range of accessible learning opportunities in school and beyond that challenge them fully. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very well prepared for further education and employment. Provision for work-related learning and personal, social and health education are excellent. Pupils get excellent support and guidance on their progress and on making decisions on their future. As new pupils they are exceptionally well supported during their first year in school. The school keeps them very closely involved and their care, welfare, health and safety are very good.

The school's partnership with parents is very good. It has excellent links with the community, especially through the youth club. Through its community links the school provides and draws substantial resources and support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher has an exceptional vision for the school, defining in the clearest terms the strong commitment to pupils, parents, the community and other schools and colleges. This sets the highest expectations for educational provision and pupils' achievement. The vision is shared fully by all staff and in large part it has been achieved. All staff are highly motivated and very often capable of excellent leadership in developing their areas of responsibility. Management is excellent. It is comprehensively systematic in ensuring the school succeeds in its purpose. It achieves a high level of communication and teamwork and includes governors in a very active role of both challenging and supporting the school. Governance is excellent and complies with statutory requirements very effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views and are very pleased with the progress of their children. This is the result of the very good partnership promoted by the school in keeping parents very well informed and taking any concerns that might arise extremely seriously. Pupils have extremely positive views. For them, school is an enjoyable and friendly place in which they know they are thriving.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no important areas to be pointed out for the school to improve. The very few issues for development included in the report have already been identified and are being resolved through the school improvement plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils throughout the school achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results achieved by pupils in Year 11 are very good.
- Improvement in the standards achieved has been very good since the last inspection.

Commentary

1. In 2003, sixty-three per cent of Year 11 pupils gained one or more GCSE A* - G grades, compared to 28 per cent achieved in similar schools. In 2004, the school's GCSE results increased to nearly 73 per cent and the trend in GCSE results has been sharply upwards, rising from 34 per cent in 2001 to 73 per cent in 2004. The improvement in pupils' achievements from when they start school in Year 7 to when they leave in Year 11 makes the school a top performer when compared with all schools. The best results were achieved in design and technology subjects followed by art and design, the two areas in which the school has specialist college status. In examinations, pupils performed very well in science, mathematics and English. The results from twelve Entry Level Certificate courses are equally impressive as all pupils gained at least one certificate and most achieved seven certificates with a good proportion scoring the highest level.
2. The improvement in results since the last inspection is because of ambitious and determined leadership in raising the ceiling in every aspect of the school's work. This has had a very positive impact on the quality of educational provision overall. The collection of pupil performance data and its analysis provide the school with an accurate picture of its effectiveness and in giving clear direction to developments. As a result, the school is able to assure that all pupils whatever their differences achieve as well as each other. Targets for improvement in pupils' results and in relation to achievement generally are challenging but realistic and underpin the school's considerable progress. The school's data has given sharp focus to pupils' achievement and has been instrumental throughout the school in how it has set about raising the standards achieved.
3. Achievements in English, mathematics and science are very good. In addition, the very effective emphasis given in all subjects to language, literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology adds considerably to pupils' achievements. Pupils achieve very well in personal, social and health education, including citizenship. While achievement, overall, in information and communication technology and religious education is good in Years 7 to 9, by the end of Year 11 it is very good in both subjects. In information and communication technology, achievement is not as strong in Years 7 to 9 because teaching, although expert in the subject, sometimes demands too much of lower attaining pupils. In religious education, pupils in Years 8 and 9 are occasionally not given opportunities to think on and discuss the issues lesson topics pose. Achievement in work-related learning is very good in Years 7 to 9. It is excellent in Years 10 and 11 where pupils have exceptional opportunities to learn about work, through enterprise activities and work experience. The work of the learning mentor and transition adviser, particularly in making a bridge with colleges, makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress. Common to all the subjects judged is the significant contribution of teaching, assessment and curriculum to the high standards achieved. However, it is the strengths in leadership and management of subjects together with all the provision lending support to them that gives exemplary coherence to educational provision, which leads to consistently high achievements. The accommodation

and resources for subjects are often very good, if not excellent, but as a new school not long occupied, the full impact of these features on achievement is often yet to have its impact.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have excellent attitudes and their behaviour is very good. Attendance is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very self-confident and have high self-esteem.
- They have excellent relationships with one another and with adults.
- Pupils are very interested in school life and the range of opportunities offered.
- The school sets consistently high expectations for behaviour and deals very effectively with any misbehaviour.

Commentary

4. Since the last inspection pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved well. The very positive attitudes to school life are reflected in the high self-esteem pupils have and the confidence with which they tackle challenging work. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The school's very strong ethos of mutual care and support means among pupils there is a continuing awareness of the needs of others and individual responsibility towards each other. Therefore many acts of simple kindness take place every day between pupils. When one pupil was struggling to operate a computer another saw the difficulty and immediately offered help. All pupils know that they are highly valued in school. Their self-esteem is hugely enhanced by the beautifully presented displays of their work. Concentration levels are often very high and the responsiveness of staff to their needs only encourages this further. The numerous activities operated after school by the youth club also encourage involvement and build on self-confidence very effectively. The highly successful school football team is a fine example of these very positive attitudes. In discussion with a group of ex-pupils, they unanimously gave the school top marks for all it provides for them.
5. Relationships between pupils are singularly effective in raising their confidence. They collaborate very well and offer each other help. The inclusive ethos generated by the very positive relationships between everyone in the school is exemplary. Adults set very high expectations that pupils will help and support others. Pupils' social development is very good as a result. A recently instituted School Council allows pupil representatives to have a frank exchange of views. Vote taking is a feature all meetings, and representatives report back decisions to their class. Pupils have very good opportunities to take personal responsibility for books and equipment. After school, the youth club gives many pupils very good opportunities to socialise with others in an alternative setting.
6. The school has very clear and successful behaviour management systems in place. Younger pupils are especially concerned to do well in the grading system used in all classes to monitor behaviour. As a result, pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils know right from wrong and they are taught to behave with respect for others. Pupils have excellent opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas in lessons and particularly in personal and social education and citizenship. They behave extremely well when they are out of school together and mealtimes are very pleasant social occasions. It is very seldom there is bullying but if it occurs it is dealt with very effectively.
7. Pupils' cultural development is very good. They have very good opportunities to study British culture as they tackle a range of classic texts in English, including Dickens and Shakespeare. They have studied the paintings of L S Lowry, the famous local artist. Pupils take part in and enjoy arts festivals. Pupils go to see plays at the theatre and professional actors and musicians visit the school. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. The school arranges for local religious leaders to pay visits. Pupils have experienced African drumming and art and enjoyed a samba band and other aspects of world music such as opera. A range of poetry from other cultures is taught in English as part of the

GCSE course. In their art lessons, pupils create work in aboriginal and African styles. The school has links with a school in Paris and there are cultural links with Poland.

Exclusions

A slight rise in fixed period exclusions is misleading as this was generated by one difficult case. The actual number of pupils involved in fixed term exclusions has reduced.

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	161	9	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0

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

8. Although attendance rates are below average, over the last three years they have risen markedly. Unauthorised absences have been halved. This is a good improvement since the last inspection and reflects the school's very good promotion of attendance. While transport factors affect pupils' punctuality occasionally, nearly all pupils get to school on time. Lessons change over smoothly and in good time, allowing the next lesson to begin promptly.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.8	School data	2.2

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is excellent. There are considerable strengths in teaching and learning. However, strengths are exemplary in assessment, the curriculum and in the support given to pupils.

Teaching and learning

Teaching throughout the school is very good and pupils learn very well as a result. The assessment of pupils' work is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The high quality of lesson planning ensures pupils learn very effectively.
- Teachers set high but realistic expectations.
- Pupils and teachers work together in setting helpful and meaningful individual targets.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 57 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (12%)	28 (49%)	16 (28%)	6 (11%)	0 (0%)	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.

9. Since the last inspection, the percentage of lessons that are very good or excellent has nearly doubled and the school has maintained its record of having no unsatisfactory teaching. While close monitoring of the quality of teaching is a key factor, the unwavering commitment of teachers and their assistants to improve their performance and raise achievement is the main driving force making teaching and learning very effective throughout the school. The very positive picture of teaching and learning is the result of the headteacher setting high expectations, staff having high expectations and the school's support for staff, which is managed very successfully.
10. A strong feature of most lessons is the unified approach to planning developed by the school, which demands clear thinking on what is taught over a year and in each lesson. Curriculum planning, individual lesson plans and assessment form a coherent whole supporting teaching and learning. As a result, teachers are accomplished in identifying clear objectives. In doing so, they relate the ways in which their teaching, lesson activities and classroom resources come together so that pupils have the best opportunities to learn. The sharp focus in each lesson on what pupils ought to achieve is matched to their capabilities and progress. Assessment of learning is an integral part of lesson activities leading teachers to build a detailed picture of what pupils' know, understand and can do. Formal assessment at the end of lessons means pupils evaluate and appreciate what they have achieved. This has a very positive effect on them remembering what they have learnt as, frequently, at the start of lessons pupils have a very good recall of their previous work.
11. Teachers and their assistants know pupils very well and this contributes considerably towards organising teaching in very effective ways. This rarely varies except where teachers are newly appointed and are yet to become fully aware of all their pupils' learning difficulties as is occasionally the case in information and communication technology. In general, teachers have a fine understanding of their learning difficulties and many pupils' problems with retaining information or when it comes to pupils applying what they know in different contexts. This does not deter very high expectations and the frequent repetition in teaching key knowledge and skills, especially in English and mathematics helps counter these problems and leads to pupils consolidating what they learn and making very good progress. A very well organised regime of homework makes a significant contribution. Equally, English and mathematics booster classes in Years 9 and 11 serve to raise achievement.
12. Pupils throughout the school are extremely engaged in learning. Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent. Pupils therefore arrive ready to work and are filled with positive anticipation. While work is demanding, pupils enjoy the challenges because they have the confidence to tackle them. Quite often pupils spontaneously work together on a problem or one will help another who is in difficulties. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, without being asked to do so, those pupils who could set up their laptop computers helped others who were struggling with the operation.
13. Teachers present lessons in lively ways, using their very good expertise to make topics interesting. The pace of learning is very good as a result, especially because time is very well divided into a variety of enjoyable tasks. The very effective use made of information and communication technology generally and the high quality equipment in the technology department contributes much to the smooth flow of learning. Teachers and often their assistants are confident users of interactive whiteboards. Their regular use, for introducing, explaining and demonstrating topics speeds up the rate at which pupils grasp essential points and they function extremely effectively when pupils also use them to show what they have learnt.

14. Pupils' progress towards their targets is regularly recorded and referred to. Assessment procedures are used consistently in all subject areas and assessments are understood by pupils, parents and members of staff. Pupils have remarked how clear they are on what to expect from the work set for them and they accept this is at an appropriately challenging level. Their views are based on their accurate knowledge from assessments of what they can do. The sharing of aims for each lesson are an integral part of the purposeful teaching style, so pupils know what is expected of them, can say what they have learned and what they need to do next. Assessments also enable the school to gather and analyse data on the performance of individuals and groups of pupils and to compare results with similar schools. Data is used to measure the impact on pupils' achievement of particular initiatives, for example an increased emphasis on the experimental aspects of science.

The curriculum

The curriculum is excellent as are curriculum enrichment, accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding planning and innovation of the curriculum provide learning opportunities that are highly responsive to each pupil's needs.
- There is a very strong focus on meeting pupils' additional needs.
- The enrichment of the curriculum has excellent variety and accessibility to which the youth club makes a significant contribution.
- Staff work together extremely effectively to promote pupils' learning and personal development.
- Accommodation and resources for learning are excellent.

Commentary

15. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides an excellent range of learning opportunities throughout the school. There is meticulous planning of what is taught and the planning format used by all teachers provides very well for identifying and promoting the key themes of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. It also makes explicit the planning of citizenship themes in subject areas. The Year 7 programme provides new pupils with a very challenging but highly supportive introduction to the secondary curriculum. This helps establish for them the high expectations that continue across the school. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has a substantial range of options in accredited courses and vocational education. Links with schools and colleges are used most effectively to expand the options, especially for vocational subjects. Art and design and design and technology have a history of strong performance and specialist college status in these curriculum areas is a huge incentive to build on their strengths. Support for study provided by the school includes booster classes after school for Year 9 and Year 11 pupils preparing for tests and examinations.
16. The school's commitment to offer a breadth of learning experiences is aptly demonstrated by its adoption of a longer teaching day, which is in excess of recommended hours. This enables the school to teach the very wide range of subjects it offers and at the same time provide, for example, an excellent personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum. Its commitment to develop flexibility in the timing of the school day starting next year is a further illustration of strategies being developed to further broaden learning experiences with opportunities to study more subjects.
17. Many pupils have additional needs that include sensory impairment, medical conditions or physical disability. The level of attention given to meeting these extra needs is excellent through the use of specialist staff and equipment, which ensures all pupils are fully involved in learning opportunities. The school uses its well-trained support staff to best advantage. The school's disability adviser skilfully undertakes risk assessments and assesses care

requirements for those with physical disabilities, so all can be comfortable in the classroom and mobile within the building.

18. The youth club is central to the excellent enrichment opportunities available. The complications in organising transport home for pupils have been dealt with successfully. It enables pupils to access opportunities immediately after school, later in the evening and at weekends. The take-up of youth club activities by pupils is very high. The youth club offers high quality experiences led by specialist staff in outdoor pursuits, sports and the arts. This excellent range of activities is diverse and also includes Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Residential opportunities at home and abroad are an integral part of the provision, plus summer school and school holiday projects.
19. The school is expert in maintaining an excellent match of staff skills to the demands of the curriculum and pupils' individual needs. It has developed a range of very helpful roles for non-teaching staff through remodelling their responsibilities. Members of staff know that they are valued and consistently give of their best. A significant number of teachers and teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to other schools and local authority developments.
20. The school provides new purpose built accommodation, which became operational in January 2005. Although there have been many teething troubles, still being addressed, the new school has been excellently specified and has superb facilities. Displays are excellent and this is the result of the emphasis they are given and staff work exceptionally hard in maintaining the very high standards of displays. Resources for learning are very well chosen, and show an excellent balance between carefully selected commercial materials and those made in school, tailored to the needs of individuals and the requirements of a particular topic. The specialist college status has ensured excellent information technology facilities in all areas of the school. Appropriate books are available, in all areas with good use being made of library loans.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is very good. The support, advice and guidance pupils receive based on monitoring are excellent and the involvement of pupils through listening to their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Constant consideration is given to the guidance and support of pupils.
- New pupils are very carefully nurtured during their first year in school.
- Pupils have a good trusting relationship with at least one adult which supports them excellently
- Procedures for induction help pupils settle in extremely well

Commentary

21. Since the last inspection there has been a very good improvement to the care, support and guidance for pupils. Support and guidance are sharply focused by very good knowledge of each pupil's academic and pastoral needs and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. There is considerable concern for bringing out the individual's strengths and for building on their self-esteem. The result is a school community that functions in an extremely inclusive and open way. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils play a significant part in pupils' views being gathered and taken into account. A well-established School Council functions effectively in giving pupil representatives the opportunity to express views and to be involved in school improvement. The school responds very positively to pupils' views and suggestions, in particular, by surveying pupils' views and carefully analysing these. The school's two professional counsellors provide pupils with very good advice. Routines for behaviour management and focused advice for individuals to manage their own behaviour are very consistently applied and ensure pupils safety and well-being. If a pupil's

behaviour deteriorates this is closely monitored by the learning mentor in consultation with all staff that work with the pupil.

22. High quality support and guidance are seen in the thorough and welcoming induction procedures for new pupils. Contact is made and information obtained from the schools of prospective new pupils. Schools and pupils are visited by the disability adviser. This results in individual care plans for every pupil. For four afternoons at the end of the summer term new pupils come into school, where they are given a very thorough introduction to the school. They get to know the staff and the routines in a friendly and exciting way and are supported by Year 7 pupils. Pupils' support continues when the new pupils arrive at the start of the autumn term. During this term new pupils are tested to ascertain that nothing has been overlooked. The school maintains contact with pupils who have left. Support for pupils in their first year at college is a significant strength of provision.
23. Child protection procedures are very good with several staff fully trained. The good liaison between staff also ensures concerns are reported quickly. Staff are kept up-to-date very well. New members of staff are fully informed. Notes and records of any concern are filed thus permitting easy factual reference should the matter escalate in seriousness. Similarly health and safety monitoring and procedures are very good. They are thorough and comprehensive. However, a few safety features are not yet complete in the new building but the risks and hindrance to access for some pupils are fully understood by the school. Staff are vigilant and health and safety provision is satisfactory, overall.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents and other schools and colleges Links with the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very welcoming and approachable to parents and procedures to ensure their satisfaction are excellent.
- The school's annual reports to parents on their children's progress are very good.
- Many parents are involved very well in their children's work.
- Links with the community through the youth club are excellent.
- Transition procedures are excellent.

Commentary

24. The school lays particular emphasis on working with parents and carers, as at the time of the last inspection. The school has much in place to make parents partners and they are constantly referred to as such by the school. The school's willingness to see parents and carers as partners ensures they can contact the school at any time for any reason. Concerns are conscientiously dealt with and every effort is made to address them. This is reflected in the extremely positive views parents have of the school and how approachable they feel it is.
25. The information parents are given is very good overall. Clear and detailed information in the pupils' annual progress reports is explained very well. Pupils' achievements, development and future targets are clear, although the latter are occasionally obscured by technical terms that parents may not understand.
26. Parents are very involved with supporting their children's work at home. Homework expectations are clear. Parents are regularly consulted over ongoing issues and meetings are timetabled to relay and discuss these. Questionnaires have been carried out and the results analysed. Response to suggestions is acted on by the school. For example, the creation of a parents' forum resulted from feedback from parents. The feedback forms issued at parents' evenings are analysed and the school tries hard to accommodate parents' wishes. The youth

club sends additional information home on times and dates of clubs and events and on after-school booster classes which keep parents very well informed.

27. The work of the youth club is prodigious and both the deputy headteacher and the learning mentor are very closely involved. It was started up and is managed by the school and is funded separately. Many pupils and other young people use the youth club. It provides a great many activities, for example, drama and sports and has close ties with the local leisure centre. Trips abroad are organised for pupils, with preparation training for a skiing holiday to Austria. Building pupils' independence for travelling and the responsibility this brings is one of its key goals. It organises programmes throughout the summer holidays, arranges residential trips and family taster days. This means the school has a very high profile in the local community. In addition the school holds, in conjunction with four neighbouring schools, a Festival of Arts in June, which is designed to attract the residents in the school's new locality. Business Education partners visit regularly and teach team-building techniques. Business mentors and art mentors specialise in helping pupils look for suitable employment.
28. Transfer arrangements are exemplary. The transition adviser's role has been thoroughly defined to cover a broad range of opportunities for pupils moving on to work or further study and is carried out very conscientiously. A progress route for each pupil is established not merely their next step. Parents are closely involved. Links to neighbouring Eccles College are especially close as many pupils go on there, and the adviser works there on one day of the week. Other colleges visit the school to explain what they can offer – this alleviates the sometimes awkward process of pupils going to visit colleges or exhibitions where their needs are not always responded to. Past pupils return to share their experiences. Staff from the school enquire after and visit pupils after they have left. First year reviews to see how pupils are getting on and if the course is still appropriate, are carried out. The youth club's involvement also extends to pupils after they have left, in line with its commitment to ensuring long-term benefits to pupils. Two ex-pupils have become trustees.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent as is governance. The quality of leadership, overall, of the headteacher, senior team and other staff with responsibilities is excellent, as is the effectiveness of their management of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school is strengthened considerably by the exceptional vision of the headteacher.
- The staff are an extremely effective team, committed and energetic in contributing to the realisation of the school's aims.
- The school is highly systematic in carrying out its work.
- Many of the new initiatives that have taken root are recognised by others as exemplary practice.

Commentary

29. The headteacher is extremely clear in the articulation of the school's mission and resolute in achieving its aims. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The ambition and quest for the highest standards are understood and shared by all staff and governors. Governors fully support the headteacher and the school's aims and actively lend their extensive expertise and experience to helping achieve these and in ensuring that the school fulfils all its statutory duties.
30. The headteacher leads the drive to take on-board and given substance to current thinking in education and the development of special schools. This has been used intelligently throughout the school as a springboard for launching new initiatives, which have led to raising achievement and stronger relationships with the community, schools and colleges. Both the

school and governors are adept at attracting additional funds for initiatives. As a result, the school's development of its place in education at large, the community and the work with its pupils contains much that is original. It is a focal point of support and co-ordination of a multitude of local services to the community. This has given the school a high profile, which is justified by the significant contribution it makes, at local, national and international levels.

31. The provision developed for personal, social and health education including citizenship is used as a model for other schools in the local authority. The policy and plans for workforce re-modelling developed by the senior teaching assistant has been adopted as the way forward in other schools. The school is notable for achieving combined specialist college status in arts and technology. Governors have been especially successful in raising the large sum needed to support the school's application for specialist college status. Gaining this status is a mark of the high standards in these two curriculum areas and the strength of their leadership and management in creating partnerships and giving a lead to other schools. As an example, the new technology resources in design and technology match those in mainstream schools. The department is preparing training for mainstream schools in the use of computer controlled equipment for designing and making products.
32. Systematic management makes stability and accountability across the school highly effective. Computer technology plays a significant role in making procedures efficient and accessible. A multitude of problems with the new school building have been a hindrance that is being managed and overcome very efficiently. The level of communication and agreement is excellent throughout the school. This extends to the governors, who are extremely well informed about the school. In terms of the school's accountability, governors are able to work in an informed and constructive manner. The collection of data on pupils' performance and its analysis are expertly managed. It is understood by staff and governors and are central to decision-making on the way forward at all levels. A strong linkage is made between monitoring activities, evaluation and improvement planning, which results in the school being sensitive and responsive to the priorities it faces. Performance management and training form a coherent part in the management and development of provision. In terms of planning the use of the budget, decision-making dovetails most effectively into the school's management systems. Policy and planning follow whole school procedures, which are carefully designed and ensure high expectations are realised throughout the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1853199	Balance from previous year	97375
Total expenditure	1728275	Balance carried forward to the next	222299
Expenditure per pupil	10203		

33. The unusually large balance being carried forward into the current financial year is the result of a large sum of money in excess of £100,00 being returned to the school as part of contractual arrangements linked to funding the new school building. In addition, the funding related to specialist college status has remained unspent while the school moved from its old site into the new building. The scheduled move was considerably delayed and took place in January 2005.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have extensive opportunities for well supported work experience.
- They are given excellent advice with regard to careers.
- Liaison with colleges, vocational centres and careers providers is exceptionally good.

Commentary

34. By the end of Year 9, pupils have achieved very well, both in response to very good teaching and very well chosen practical tasks, which help them to understand the world of work. Their careers education is included in provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship and links with all subjects are strong and help pupils' progress. Pupils begin to consider careers opportunities because of the very good advice they receive. Action plans supporting each pupil's transition to further education, training or employment are agreed in Year 9 and the progress of their plans continually monitored.
35. Pupils' achievement is excellent by Year 11. In a vocational lesson on hospitality and catering in Year 10, pupils had an excellent opportunity to construct and conduct a survey of food outlets in a large shopping centre. They evaluated the food available in terms of acceptability, value and popularity and presented their findings in a variety of graphs and charts. In a very good careers lesson, pupils identified and wore items of protective clothing and provided reasons for their use. They identified health hazards apparent in a video excerpt and were helped by the teacher to realise that safe working is the joint responsibility of employer and employee.
36. Teaching is excellent, giving good opportunities for active learning and practical tasks. The planning of what is taught is also excellent. The level of challenge is well judged and pupils are interested and extended. The promotion of key skills such as working with others and learning independently is a significant factor in the excellent learning seen.
37. The leadership and management of work-related learning are excellent. Collaboration with the school's learning mentor and transition adviser makes a significant contribution to provision. Learning is enhanced in Years 10 and 11 by well supported experience in the workplace. An accredited key skills course supports lessons at the school in painting and decorating and trowel trades. These practical courses are provided through a very effective link with the local further education college and there are additional courses in hair and beauty and childcare. Specialist advice and experiences are also provided for pupils who wish to work in the arts and engineering. Learning is further supported by an annual careers fair held at the school, and there are opportunities for pupils to visit other regional events including enterprise days. A well experienced business mentor is attached to the school to help individual pupils to fulfil careers ambitions. All pupils have excellent opportunities to undertake community service in the North West Water Conservation Project and as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English was inspected in full and French was sampled. There were two lessons seen in French.

38. Pupils in Year 9 greet each other in good **French** and sign to support this communication. They use the simple construction “J’aime” with the correct vocabulary to say which school subjects they like best. Higher attaining pupils successfully use the correct form of words to ask for help, such as “Pardon, madame, j’ai perdu mon porte-monnaie à l’hôtel” and write this accurately. Other pupils need varying degrees of help to speak and write in French. In the lessons seen, opportunities for pupils to consolidate what they learnt by memorising instructions and speaking to each other were missed.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently very good and pupils achieve very well.
- The curriculum is excellent, particularly in the opportunities for pupils to take examinations.
- Excellent assessment procedures ensure that all pupils know how to improve their work.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection is the result of excellent leadership and management.
- Language and literacy are promoted very well as a result of a clear, well-embedded policy.

Commentary

39. When pupils enter the school at the start of Year 7 they begin to make rapid progress. This is the result of the support for pupils in the excellent induction process for new pupils. This specially tailored approach to teaching Year 7, based firmly on the National Literacy Strategy, ensures learning is very good. Expectations of work and behaviour are particularly high and pupils rise to the challenge. Rapid development of productive working routines and an emphasis on signing helps pupils to learn. Throughout the school all pupils, whatever their differences, achieve very well. Very good achievement in speaking and listening is because pupils have excellent, well-structured opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue. Also, very good opportunities for paired and small group work develop communication skills. Very good support through specialist speech and language teaching helps pupils who do not speak and they progress as well as others. Pupils achieve very well in reading in response to a patient and consistent teaching approach, which is based on phonics. They read Shakespeare with enjoyment and success. Pupils annotate text and this helps them to marshal facts. Reading as a leisure activity is being actively promoted in the school and is well supported by a rapidly developing library and the services of a skilful librarian. Pupils achieve very well in writing because they are helped by using a variety of supportive writing frames. They readily identify parts of speech and say how they can best be used in the text they write. They have a good understanding of the key differences between a business letter and a personal letter. The excellent curriculum allows them to experience a wide range of writing styles. Diagnostic in depth marking also improves performance. Excellent opportunities to use computers, allied to very high quality software, help pupils to draft their work effectively and present it to a very high standard. By the end of Year 9 a significant proportion of pupils reach standards in their writing, which are broadly comparable to some of those in mainstream schools.

40. In Years 10 and 11 there is a strong expectation that all pupils will achieve a grade in GCSE and/or the Entry Level Certificate. The great emphasis on completing coursework means pupils learn to work conscientiously and achieve very good results. Opportunities for drama in the youth club improve pupils' confidence and give them experience to speak in different social situations. Pupils are skilled in extracting information from a variety of texts and their writing is of a very good quality because teachers insist on high standards in content, spelling and grammar. Good quality computer programs help pupils to present their work in striking and original ways.
41. Teachers plan their lessons to suit individual needs and always pay very close attention to pupils' targets. Exceptionally good assessment procedures allow learning activities to be well pitched to maximise pupils' progress and leaves them in no doubt as to what they must do to improve their work. Excellent resources, particularly in information and communication technology, help in the engagement and motivation of pupils. They are enthusiastic learners and capable of extended periods of concentration. Adults in the classroom work together very well and this is a significant strength of provision.
42. Achievement in all years has improved since the last inspection. The very high standards and consistent approach seen in the recently introduced programme for Year 7, teamwork in all lessons and support for speech and language make a significant contribution. Other highly effective innovations, which have helped to raise standards, include data analysis, routine calculations of value-added, and the very close monitoring of the progress of all pupils. In addition, an effective summer school has been instituted as part of the induction process. Booster classes in Years 9 and 11 supports the curriculum, which is already diverse and highly appropriate to pupils' interests and needs. The minor criticisms contained in the last report were successfully and rapidly addressed after publication.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Signing is routinely taught and there is excellent provision for assisted augmented communication for a small number of pupils. Pupils have very good opportunities for speaking and listening. In science, for example, they explain and discuss their predictions on the outcome of experiments. The technical vocabulary in all subjects is consistently well developed. In the course of teaching, words are emphasised and explained. Pupils have many opportunities to read and care is taken to match the level of reading to pupils' abilities. In textiles, the teacher spent some minutes reminding pupils of the strategies they could use to read instructions, encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible in managing the task. Pupils write extensively for a variety of purposes in all subjects. They plan their writing carefully and redraft their work to a high standard.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The level of challenge in pupils' work is consistently very good.
- Information and communication technology is used very effectively as a tool for learning.
- The leadership and management of mathematics are excellent.

Commentary

44. Every teacher of mathematics sets high expectations for pupils, which results in very good teaching and learning. Pupils achieve very well as a result. Performance data, overall, demonstrates that, compared to similar schools, pupils do better in tests and examinations. In mathematics there has been over several years a steady upward trend in the number of A* - G

passes in GCSE. Nearly all pupils by the end of Year 11 achieve success in the Entry Level Certificate.

45. Teachers' very good mathematical expertise and their thorough planning help lessons get off to a fast start and maintain a sharp focus on learning. Teaching follows clear learning objectives and there is very good understanding of what pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson. One group of Year 8 pupils started by looking at and reciting the four times tables on a number line. Steps above and below certain points were removed in turn from the number line but pupils were taught an effective strategy for completing the missing steps correctly. This resulted in pupils memorising successfully ten steps of four and they consolidated this mathematical knowledge very effectively. The assessment of pupils' progress is excellent, as pupils are kept closely involved in how they are progressing. Assessment provides accurate and detailed information on what pupils know and can do, which ensures the work planned is very closely matched to what each pupil can achieve. This meant that in reading the time, Year 7 pupils, most of who knew quarter past, half past and quarter to the hour, were stretched very well to translate these times correctly into fifteen, thirty and forty-five minutes past the hour. They gained greater understanding of different time measurements and a wider vocabulary for expressing them. The pace of work throughout lessons is brisk and productive. Pupils' response to these demands is outstandingly positive. Much is expected in terms of pupils taking responsibility for their work and progress as well as being helpful, all of which contributes significantly to personal development. All their lessons are lively, engaging and enjoyable.
46. Many pupils are confident users of information and communication technology and are familiar with operating a computer and the classroom interactive whiteboard. Pupils with the greatest confidence and knowledge willingly and spontaneously help others achieve the correct steps in finding and using a program. Teachers make very effective use of the technology to demonstrate points and they provide frequent opportunities for pupils to use it. These not only enliven learning but also make some intricate mathematical concepts such as algebra and angles much more accessible to many pupils. All the complications in measuring and drawing angles accurately were very effectively set out in a clear visual display on the interactive whiteboard. This amounted to a thorough exploration and the Year 9 pupils involved made rapid progress in using a protractor effectively and went on to learn much about the properties of angles.
47. Strong leadership and management provide a very clear direction for the department. This ensures through consistently high expectations and shared sense of purpose that every aspect of mathematics provision is very good. Provision is comprehensively monitored and from this curriculum has been shaped exceedingly well to meets the needs of pupils. Very good track is kept on pupils' progress through the collection and analysis of their performance data. This helps set appropriate targets, plan developments and to focus on areas of the curriculum where pupils' results are less strong. This leads to pupils achieving very well. Improvement since the last inspection has been comprehensive and very good. Standards have risen considerably as a result of stronger teaching and learning. The use of information and communication technology is now a very effective feature and there are good opportunities for pupils to use mathematics to solve problems.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Pupils throughout the school use their command of mathematics very effectively and are competent in most situations to tackle independently problems involving number and measurement. In technology, pupils mark out accurately materials for cutting using a centimetre rule. They also weigh and measure materials in food technology and textiles. This includes setting and monitoring the time it takes food to cook. Pupils use their knowledge of data to create and analyse graphs and charts in a number of subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy science and work very hard in lessons and their achievement is very good as a result.
- Teaching is based on seamless teamwork between all adults in the classroom leading to pupils often experiencing a shared excitement in learning.
- The ethos within the science department is excellent with constant work to develop and improve provision.
- The school makes a significant contribution to science provision in other schools in the local authority.

Commentary

49. Pupils enjoy the very well taught, broad and appropriate programme of science. This is tailored to their individual needs and creatively developed to maximise learning. There has been very good improvement in results in the national test taken in Year 9 and in GCSE and other examinations in Year 11. There have been a significant and increasing number of pupils gaining GCSE passes. In Year 7, pupils know how different rocks are formed and sing 'rock' songs with actions demonstrating their mastery of the complex vocabulary. Year 8 pupils skilfully apply knowledge from lessons in Year 7, about the way that particles move, to the new topic of conduction of heat. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils show that they are familiar with the concept of a 'fair test' and can apply this in designing an experiment about cleaning oil from bird feathers. All pupils write up their experiments and several pupils on their own produce unaided a clear and conventional report. Year 10 pupils independently use a ray box to set up an experiment on splitting white light into a spectrum. They use the technical vocabulary of electromagnetic radiation confidently and most know, for example, that the wavelength of blue light is faster than that of red. They use appropriate spreadsheet software to create graphs of reactions and most can interpret these to show where the reaction was at its most vigorous.
50. The very good teaching of science is based on very good subject knowledge, with non-specialist teachers and teaching assistants supported very effectively to develop their understanding of each topic as it is taught. This means that pupils are engaged with a constant dialogue, which demands the use of the concepts and vocabulary of the current topic. There is a very engaging approach with role-play and action songs that allow pupils to understand and apply concepts very effectively. Information and communication technology is very well used by teachers to explain, reinforce learning and to assist pupils in recording their work. The use of the school's lesson planning format and its procedures for assessing pupils' work gives a secure and shared basis for members of staff and pupils to work from.
51. The curriculum appropriately follows national requirements, but care has been taken to emphasise aspects that pupils may find challenging, such as experimental science. It is also underpinned by teaching of social and personal development, health and safety and responsible citizenship. Literacy and numeracy are very well developed through science activities.
52. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear and shared vision of excellence, with self-evaluation used very effectively to identify, celebrate or address issues quickly. The team of science teachers meets regularly to share skills, ideas, resources and approaches. Two members of the department also have important roles in developing the subject in other local schools. The new science laboratories provide excellent accommodation with careful consideration given to accessibility and pupil independence. Excellent classroom displays are developed with pupils and act as an important learning resource. Resources and equipment,

including books and information technology resources, are excellent. This amounts to very good improvement since the last inspection resulting in pupils achieving higher standards. There are significant gains in the quality of teaching and learning and the assessment of pupils' progress. There has also been a considerable improvement in science accommodation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school are confident and competent users of ICT.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge means pupils see ICT skills very effectively modelled.
- The curriculum is very good, underpinned by excellent staffing and resources.
- The subject is being developed on the basis of helpful data analysis.

Commentary

53. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well within a well taught broad programme of study. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have gained an Entry Level Certificate, but their current ICT work in other areas of the curriculum show that they are now achieving higher standards. Their achievement is very good. Year 8 pupils know what software to use for desktop publishing and use the appropriate technical vocabulary. They confidently move between programs, copying and pasting images and text from the Internet. They help each other, giving and receiving advice gracefully. In Year 9, pupils are using a prepared spreadsheet to schedule events. They understand that there can be disadvantages to using ICT solutions and make good suggestions of when this type of time analysis might be helpful in an industrial context. They justify and explain their ideas in mature ways, building on the comments of others. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to develop their skills and use some very interesting ICT equipment in other areas of the curriculum such as programmable embroidery and cutting machines in the textiles aspect of design and technology. They create and interpret graphs and model solutions, such as comparing different colour schemes for jackets. They conduct in-depth Internet research for their projects and learn about Internet threats and how to protect against these. Pupils value their access to ICT activities and equipment, approaching work with eager anticipation and handling computers with appropriate care.
54. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers and their assistants work particularly effectively together. From excellent explanations and demonstrations, pupils have learnt good keyboard skills and confidently to navigate a fairly complex file structure. They enthusiastically apply skills learned in previous lessons to using PowerPoint, remembering the important basic principles of PowerPoint. Pupils' work is very well monitored and they are quickly prompted and supported so do not get stuck with problems. Because the teacher is newly appointed and is still coming to terms with pupils' learning difficulties, the work set is occasionally too hard for lower attaining pupils and they complete it without really understanding what they are doing. Assessment is generally very well used, but the targets given to pupils to achieve are sometimes written in language that pupils do not understand.
55. The curriculum is very good, fully covering the statutory programme of work. The new school setting and improved resources mean that it is still being trialled and developed. The subject leader has identified the need for a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and has addressed this appropriately. The new ICT facilities are an excellent resource and very good displays support learning very effectively. The ICT manager and technician provide an excellent service, ensuring that the school network runs smoothly and equipment is accessible for all teachers and pupils.

56. There is a clear vision for development of ICT within the school based on very good self-evaluation and analysis of data. The ICT team works very effectively to support and encourage the use of ICT across the school through formal and informal support and training and identification of useful learning resources. There has been very good improvement in ICT since the last inspection.

ICT across the curriculum

57. Very good use is made of laptops, interactive whiteboards and other equipment in many subject areas. A diverse range of activities is demonstrated at appropriate levels. In science, experiments are introduced to the whole class using apparatus clip art on the whiteboard. Internet research is used in many subjects and good work was seen by pupils in Year 10 interpreting tables and interrogating numerical data bases. Good use was made of electronic keyboards in music. The wireless network means that pupils can use laptops to access their own files in any part of the school and print their work on the nearest printer. This is being used very effectively in a range of subject areas to develop literacy as well as consolidating subject knowledge and skills.

HUMANITIES

58. **Geography** and **history** were not a focus for inspection but lessons in each subject were sampled.
59. In geography, Year 7 pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of changes to the landscape. In a lively discussion, questions effectively consolidated their previous learning of factors causing the shape of the land to change. New terminology was well taught and resources well used so that all pupils gained a good understanding of the difference between arable and livestock farming. Year 9 pupils' skills in observation and interpretation were significantly enhanced by the very good use of ICT. Pictures of an Indian village were shown and images manipulated to encourage pupils to make detailed observations about different buildings, including methods of construction. The high quality images brought the village to life and provoked much discussion. A very effective literacy strategy enabled pupils to identify key words from the pictures and use them in a writing activity.
60. In the **history** lessons seen, ICT was very well used with Year 7 pupils to show images of different forms of punishment as part of a study of slavery. This provoked much discussion. Follow-up group work was very effective in developing speaking and listening skills. Picture sources and video were well used with Year 8 pupils to show working conditions for children during the industrial revolution. An effective literacy strategy enabled pupils to identify key words and then use them in sentences. Year 9 pupils recalled previous learning about life in wartime Britain in a lively class discussion. Excellent class management ensured that each pupil contributed in a very supportive atmosphere with higher attaining pupils helping others. Follow-up writing activities were very carefully matched to individual needs.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of an Entry Level Certificate course has significantly enhanced overall provision.
- Resources have been very effectively developed and enhance learning opportunities.
- The curriculum provides a very wide range of learning experiences and pupils respond with very positive attitudes.
- Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for pupils to reflect and respond are too limited in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

61. In 2004, all Year 11 pupils gained an Entry Level Certificate. These results were a significant improvement on the previous year following the introduction of the course in 2001. Predicted results for 2005, taking account of coursework marks, are similar to those of 2004 showing a sustained improvement in both the overall pass rate and the proportion of pupils gaining a higher pass mark.
62. Achievement is good, overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 9 pupils gain knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of major world religions. Higher attaining pupils use technical vocabulary well, for example in describing features of Muslim worship. Lower attaining pupils recorded personal responses on how it might feel to wear traditional religious dress. All pupils display good awareness of respect, for example in discussing appropriate behaviour inside a Gurdwara. By the end of Year 11 all pupils make very good use of ICT, for example to illustrate the Last Supper. They design festival cards with higher attaining pupils making evaluative comments on their own efforts. Pupils develop thinking skills through recording points from discussion about Jesus' life in diagrammatic form. They investigate parables and their meaning and discuss the difference between parables and miracles. They record their impressions of church buildings and give opinions on the importance of going to church.
63. Teaching and learning are good. The most effective teaching has many positive features. Class discussion is very well managed so that all pupils, including lower attaining pupils, are involved in answering challenging questions. High quality resources including ICT are used selectively to bring to life key features of new work and stimulate pupils' interest. Time is very well used to complete activities such as model-making and writing. Planning incorporates many opportunities to reinforce literacy skills. Pupils are very productive because of well organised lessons and they in turn respond with excellent attitudes. In all teaching, technical vocabulary is emphasised well in new learning. In some teaching in Years 8 and 9 methods lack consistency in sustaining a sharp focus on key learning objectives and there are not enough planned opportunities for reflection and response. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is consistently very good and some is excellent. Planning is excellent with an emphasis on pupils achieving quality in their coursework through, for example, combining ICT images with their own writing. ICT is very well used with pupils conducting their own research. Lessons have a very clear structure with learning thoroughly consolidated at each stage. Technical vocabulary is discussed thoroughly, for example to clarify the difference between miracle and parable. Literacy strategies are very effective in equipping pupils for writing activities. Methods very effectively develop thinking skills. There are rigorous assessment procedures in line with whole school systems.
64. Leadership and management are good. Key objectives for the development of the subject have been clearly identified and achieved, including the development of resources, the use of ICT and the introduction of an examination course. The very efficient organisation of the Entry Level Certificate course ensures pupils are very well supported in terms of coursework completion and preparation for the final examination. Improvement from the last inspection is good, with improvements in both teaching and pupils' achievement.

TECHNOLOGY

65. **Design and technology** was sampled and three lessons were observed.
66. The school has specialist college status in arts and technology. The high standards achieved by pupils in design and technology made a significant contribution towards gaining this award. Accredited courses in resistant materials technology, food technology and textiles result in many pupils achieving GCSE and Entry Level Certificates. Design and technology is one of a few subjects in the school where a high number of pupils gain qualifications.
67. In the lessons seen, teaching led to pupils having a high level of responsibility for preparing food and them working with a considerable amount of independence. Substantial expertise in

the subject combined with extensive knowledge of the pupils meant the teacher made the task exceptionally challenging. Pupils were supported extremely well with a rich dialogue including cooking instructions and food related knowledge. Pupils already knew too much salt was bad for the heart and sugar harmed teeth. Pupils worked extremely methodically with thought for hygiene and safety.

68. In the textile lesson the activity was very well structured in taking pupils through clearly defined steps of developing designs and planning making a fabric collage. The teacher carefully questioned pupils on their understanding of what to do. In all three lessons seen there was a very good emphasis on reading and learning the subject vocabulary. In textiles, pupils were given very good scope for independence by having lots of choice and by using equipment on their own such as ironing fabric, cutting material with battery- powered scissors and using a sewing machine. In the resistant materials technology lesson, pupils learnt the links between designing and making products, understanding what constitutes good practice in researching and drawing their ideas. Year 8 pupils explained terms such as CAD/CAM and know how these relate to designing and making. Following a very good demonstration, all pupils measured out their work then cut and shaped a metal coat hook. Pupils worked having their own and others safety in mind, for example, when their metal strip protruded from the vice as they cut it, they made sure nobody walked into it.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

69. **Art and design** and **music** were not a focus for inspection, but some lessons in both subjects were observed.
70. Art and design is one of the two curriculum areas in which the school has gained specialist college status, which is a reflection of the strength of the subject. Pupils' artwork is well represented in the excellent displays of work throughout the school. Professional artists have contributed by leading workshops and making work for the school. Examination results have been good over several years and some pupils, unlike in many of their other examinations, have gained higher-grade passes in GCSE. In the three lessons seen, teaching and learning were good.
71. The department is expanding and its new accommodation, which is high quality, and the appointment of another specialist teacher, places it in a very favourable position to realise ambitions of raising standards further, developing the curriculum and widening partnerships. The extra teacher means there is the opportunity to expand three-dimensional work. The early indications are very positive. The clay work of Year 9 pupils, based on an African Mask theme, is of an exceptionally high standard. In addition, links through the new teacher with information and communication technology have produced a GCSE graphics option and links with textiles in the technology department are being developed.
72. Partnerships with other schools are already well established. The local high school has a course for the gifted and talented in which a number of pupils take part. Six pupils from the high school also join in GCSE lessons at Oakwood High School. The range of facilities and expert teaching mean the department provides effectively in this respect. Groups are far smaller than in the high school and those pupils have much greater attention. Standards and assessment criteria for GCSE are well understood, which ensures expectations are appropriate. The GCSE curriculum is broad and meets coursework requirements.
73. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. Pupils follow a broad music curriculum and experience some good quality music in assemblies and in a variety of lessons. In one keyboard lesson for a Year 9 group, pupils showed that they could follow a simple score and were developing their ability to play single finger chords. Year 7 pupils worked very well in pairs to compose their own music. A permanent and skilled music teacher has recently been appointed. She has good plans for developing individual and ensemble playing, visits to concerts and using existing links with mainstream secondary schools. There are currently

good opportunities for pupils to participate in an after-school samba band, and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

74. **Physical education** was sampled and two lessons were seen.
75. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their throwing, striking skills and ball control. They work as a team and enjoy sport. There are opportunities in lessons to assess performance and they contain a wide variety of well chosen activities. Pace is brisk and this increases pupils' fitness.
76. The school has achieved the Sportsmark Gold Award and pupils have the opportunity for accreditation in physical education. Pupils enjoy a junior sports leadership course, which motivates them and gives them opportunities to take responsibility for others. There are strong links with sports clubs for the disabled and with other sports clubs. The wide range of after-school activities includes rugby, indoor bowls, and swimming.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The whole school approach very effectively unifies a very wide range of learning experiences.
- The organisation of the teaching of citizenship and personal, social and health education provides very consistent learning experiences.
- Pupils' experiences are enhanced by the links between different areas of the curriculum.
- Innovative assessment procedures bring together a very wide range of pupils' learning experiences.

Commentary

77. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship key themes are dealt with thoroughly and re-visited each year in an age appropriate format. Lessons may explicitly focus on either PSHE or citizenship or cover aspects of both. Tutor periods and a weekly citizenship/PSHE lesson ensure pupils have excellent opportunities in both areas of learning. Other subjects explicitly cover PSHE and citizenship themes as well and whole school activities are specifically planned to further reinforce learning.
78. Achievement is consistently very good across the very wide range of learning opportunities. A distinctive feature of pupils' achievement is that it includes both the personal and public dimensions of everyday living. Pupils demonstrate their achievement through discussion, writing and action. Year 7 pupils take part in a mock election and give examples of being a good and a bad citizen. They act out drama sketches and reflect on what it means to be on the receiving end of discrimination. In Year 9, they investigate the problems caused by pollution and what must be done to make things better. By the end of Year 9, pupils gain a very good understanding of their own bodies, changes associated with puberty and of safe and healthy lifestyles. By the end of Year 11 they gain a very good understanding of responsible behaviour. Pupils experience family responsibility by making up baby food. They examine different forms of contraception and discuss responsible behaviour within relationships. Pupils investigate moral issues and examine case studies of victims of crime and global disasters such as the tsunami and reflect on people's feelings.
79. Teaching and learning are very good, overall, but in some lessons they were excellent. A very high degree of consistency in the quality of teaching is achieved because all lessons are taught and supported by the same staff. Exceptionally good relationships develop and pupils

respond with excellent attitudes. Resources are used very well to make learning active and practical. Tutor periods enhance learning in both PSHE and citizenship. Year 7 pupils rehearse discrimination case studies and present them in dramatic form. Year 8 pupils write letters to the prime minister about healthy eating issues and Year 9 pupils brainstorm ideas about personal action planning. Other subjects contribute learning opportunities. Year 11 pupils investigated racial discrimination in an English coursework assignment. Year 10 pupils conducted a survey on food quality, popularity and value for money as part of their hospitality and catering course.

80. Leadership and management are excellent. A very marked degree of coherence has been achieved, underpinned by excellent innovative assessment procedures. A very wide range of evidence is gathered to assess pupils against both PSHE and citizenship learning objectives. Whole school initiatives lend support to PSHE and citizenship learning objectives, for example the Healthy Schools Award and the school's own reward scheme for recognising good citizenship. The very high profile that both PSHE and citizenship have within the school's ethos and aims is further illustrated by the very wide range of opportunities that exist across the curriculum. Improvement from the last inspection is very good. Excellent provision for PSHE has been sustained and citizenship very successfully incorporated into the curriculum.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	1
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	1
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	1
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	1
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	1
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	1
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
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	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	1
The governance of the school	1
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

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

poor (6); very poor (7).

In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not **against** national standards.