

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Orrell, Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106537

Headteacher: Miss H Jerstice

Lead inspector: Mrs G Salter-Smith

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 March 2004

Inspection number: 258782

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: 919

School address: Howards Lane
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Wigan
Lancashire
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Telephone number: 01942 747693
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr T Sweeney

Date of previous inspection: 11 May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Peter's Catholic High School is an average sized comprehensive school which is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. The school is situated in the small town of Orrell near Wigan and draws its pupils from a wide area. The full spread of social circumstances is represented but most pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Based on national tests taken in English, mathematics and science, the level of attainment of pupils when they join the school is well above average overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, though the proportion with statements is average. Most pupils identified with special educational needs have specific or moderate learning difficulties. A small number have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech or communication difficulties or have autism. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small and there are very few pupils whose home language is not English. There are no pupils in the early stages of learning English. Few pupils leave or join the school other than when they start in Year 7.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Mathematics
27983	M Sewell	Team inspector	English Special educational needs
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32672	S Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
32147	A Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
32122	J Straw	Team inspector	History Citizenship
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Peter's is a good school with some outstanding features. In response to good teaching pupils achieve well and overall standards are well above the national average. Strong leadership and effective management promote a caring and supportive ethos in which pupils not only do well in their academic work but also develop into mature and responsible young people. With below average levels of funding the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Overall standards and examination results are well above average.
- Standards are highest in art and design, drama and in GCSE physical education.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 and though satisfactory, in citizenship, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11, it is not as good as in other most other subjects.
- High attaining pupils do not do as well as they should in some subjects.
- The school helps pupils to become confident young people who behave very well and are keen to succeed.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by senior and middle managers.
- Checks on work within subjects are not rigorous enough and so best practice, for example, in teaching and learning, is not consistent across the school.
- Though assessment of pupils' progress is regular, marking of pupils' work is inconsistent in its quality and usefulness.

Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. Well above average standards and the good quality of teaching have been maintained. Teaching has improved. Issues arising from the time of the last inspection have been tackled and have resulted in improved provision. For example, all students now follow courses in ICT.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	A	A	A	B

*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 and standards are well above average throughout the school. Results in national tests in Year 9 in English, mathematics and science have consistently been well above the national average. Pupils achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in Year 9 their standards of work are well above average. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average. Achievement is excellent in art and design, very good in English and history and good in all other subjects.

Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and current standards of work in Year 11 are well above average and reflect the results of the 2003 GCSE examinations. Standards in English and science are well above average and in mathematics are above average. Achievement is excellent in art and design and very good in English, history and drama. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, citizenship and ICT. In resistant material pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Around one third of pupils achieve very well in the GCSE physical education course but achievement overall is unsatisfactory in National Curriculum physical education. Achievement is good in all other subjects.

Not all high attaining pupils do as well as they should because some of the teaching does not make enough demands of them. Though girls gained better results than boys in GCSE examinations in 2003, currently there are no significant differences between the work of girls and boys. Pupils' high standards of literacy and the very good support they have from home help them to do well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness is very good. Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and attendance contribute significantly to their overall good achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education and teaching is good overall. Teaching is excellent in art and design. It is very good in history overall and in Years 7 to 9 English and in drama in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics, citizenship, resistant materials and ICT in Years 10 and 11. There is a high proportion of very good lessons in Years 10 and 11, in which teaching is exciting, rigorous and challenging and learning is rapid. In satisfactory lessons, teaching lacks a variety of approaches, pace and sometimes challenge and a very small number of lessons is unsatisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory. Though very good whole school systems enable individual pupil underachievement to be identified quickly, the quality and usefulness of marking of is inconsistent. The curriculum is satisfactory; it provides a broad range of courses and a very good range of enrichment activities, nevertheless there is not enough time for National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 to enable pupils to make the progress expected of them. Staffing is good. The accommodation, though satisfactory overall, is cramped and drab in parts. The learning resource centre is a useful aid in supporting pupils' independent learning but is small for the size of school. Resources are inadequate due to below average funding. There are not enough computers to fully support learning in subjects. All pupils are very well supported in their personal development and academic progress. The school involves parents closely in ensuring their children's good progress and well being. The school works very effectively with other schools, colleges and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher's inspired and steadfast determination for the school's mission to be realised is supported by good leadership of other key staff. The school's self evaluation is accurate. Rigorous checks by senior managers identify good and weak practice, but systems to check on the quality of work within subjects vary in effectiveness. Follow-up support to ensure that weaknesses are eliminated and that best practice is shared, is inconsistent. Finances are well managed and governance is good ensuring that the school is held to account.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and are very supportive of the school's ethos. Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the support they get from their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards and achievement in citizenship, design and technology (resistant materials), and in mathematics, ICT and National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the quality of teaching to maximise the achievement of all pupils by bringing more lessons up to the quality of the very best through developing the best practice systematically and improving the rigour and frequency of checks on work within departments.
- Bring consistency to the quality of marking and setting of personal targets for pupils across all subjects.
- Improve access to and the use of ICT across subjects.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that parents are fully informed of their right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with well above average standards. Pupils achieve well and maintain well above average standards at age 14 and age 16.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall results in national tests taken at age 14 and in GCSE are consistently well above the national averages.
- Pupils' very good levels of literacy help them to achieve well.
- Pupils' achievement in art and design throughout the school and drama in Years 10 and 11 is excellent. Achievement is very good in history throughout the school, English in Years 7 to 9, and GCSE physical education.
- Although pupils taking the GCSE course in physical education achieve very well, achievement in National Curriculum lessons in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory owing to a shortage of curriculum time for the subject.
- Achievement in resistant materials is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' achievement in citizenship, mathematics and ICT in Years 10 and 11, though satisfactory, is not as good as in most other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Commentary

- 1 When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 7, based on national tests in English, mathematics and science, their standards are well above average overall. From this very good beginning pupils continue to make good progress and maintain high standards because the teaching is good in most subjects, they have very positive attitudes toward their work and they are well supported by their parents. The school fosters a strong ethos for learning and pupils want to be successful and achieve well. Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- 2 In 2003, the school exceeded its challenging targets for national test results taken in Year 9 in English but did not quite match them in mathematics and science. The overall trend of improvement across the three core subjects is better than the national trend. For the last five years pupils have consistently gained well above average results in national tests taken at age 14. Though girls did better than boys in English tests, there was no significant difference between boys and girls in mathematics and science. Results in mathematics when compared with those of similar schools were less good than in English and science and showed that some pupils did not achieve as well as they should. This was mainly because of a lack of continuity in the teaching and variations in its quality caused by difficulties in staffing.
- 3 Current standards of work in Year 9 in English, mathematics and science are well above average and match the most recent results in national tests, except that, during the inspection, there was no significant difference between the standards of girls' and boys' work in any of the subjects. Achievement for most pupils in mathematics is currently good and better than the previous year's results suggest because staffing has now improved and new subject leadership is improving teaching and learning. Pupils' achievement in art and design is outstanding because the teaching is exciting, innovative and inspirational. Pupils achieve very well in English and history and well in science, design and technology, ICT, geography, French, music, citizenship, drama and physical education in response to good teaching.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.7 (38.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.8 (38.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	37.2 (37.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 186 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 4 GCSE results have been well above the national average since the time of the last inspection. Though well above average results have been maintained, there were slight dips in performance in 2001 and 2003 so that the overall upward trend of improvement is below the national trend. The school just fell short of its challenging target for five passes at grades A* to C but met its targets for one pass at grades A* to G and for the average points score of all subjects. These results match pupils' overall good achievement, though small numbers of pupils, often the higher attaining pupils, did not achieve as well as they might in some subjects. The school's thorough analysis of its results identifies these pupils as often being in the second and third sets.
- 5 In 2003, GCSE results were well above average in English language, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, drama, English literature, geography, German, history, home economics and physical education and average in French.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	71 (79)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	42.6 (34.7)	43.8 (34.7)

There were 178 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 6 Current standards of work in Year 11 are well above average overall and generally match the results in examinations. Standards are very high in art and design, drama and GCSE physical education and are well above average in English, science, geography, history and French. Though girls gained higher results than boys in the most recent GCSE results, there is no significant difference between the standards of girls and boys in current work.
- 7 Results for the small number of pupils who took non-GCSE courses in English, design and technology and ICT are good. Pupils who took vocational courses at a local college of further education achieved good results matching their current achievement.
- 8 In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement in art and design and drama is outstanding and it is very good in history, and GCSE physical education. This is the result of enthusiastic, sometimes inspirational teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes. In mathematics, citizenship and ICT, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In mathematics this is owing to some uninspiring teaching, sometimes of large groups of higher attaining pupils, and some unsatisfactory teaching of a small group of pupils with special educational needs. In citizenship pupils do not get the chance to achieve well because there is not enough time in the curriculum in which to teach the subject. Pupils' limited experience of ICT when they were in Years 7 to 9 restricts their achievement. Achievement in National Curriculum physical education for around two thirds of pupils who do not take the GCSE course is unsatisfactory because, at 48 minutes per week, the subject is not given enough curriculum time. Pupils' achievement in resistant materials is unsatisfactory because practical work is undemanding and the range of materials used is narrow.

- 9 Though there is no significant underachievement across groups of pupils, there are lessons where higher-attaining pupils are not fully challenged because the teaching does not make enough demands of them, for example, in a small number of lessons in geography and modern foreign languages. In some instances, the large class sizes of higher attaining pupils, for example in English, means that oral work is restricted. In some of the highest Year 11 sets in mathematics, pupils are still further behind than they should be due to lack of continuity in the teaching when they were in Year 10.
- 10 Very good literacy skills are a significant factor in pupils' academic success. Pupils' competence in mathematics is good and in using ICT is satisfactory and pupils carry out numerical and ICT tasks as part of their learning across subjects. However, the opportunity to use ICT skills is inadequate in some subjects such as music, drama and English, because there are not enough computers.
- 11 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. Most pupils with special educational needs begin school with well below national average standards, especially in literacy. By Year 9 they have made good progress and frequently they show a three year increase in their reading age. By Year 11 all pupils gain at least one GCSE. All achieve certificates in vocational subjects and many have already achieved Certificates of Achievement in religious education and English at the end of Year 10. In addition all pupils pass RSA text processing. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully integrated into the school and often achieve standards much higher than those predicted based upon their prior attainment. However, there is a difference in achievement which is largely dependent on the quality of teaching and there is variation between subjects. Achievement is excellent in art and design, and very good in small groups in history, English and physical education. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs in mathematics is just satisfactory because for some groups lessons lack pace, progression and challenge. In ICT, though pupils with special educational needs achieve well, there are some lessons where the work is not well matched to their needs.
- 12 Gifted and talented pupils generally make good progress alongside other pupils because of the schools' commitment to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential. The school does not receive additional funding to support work this area. Some, though not all, subjects have identified pupils and provided additional activities such as booster classes in English after school, visits to galleries for art and design students and the opportunity for pupils to study two modern languages. However, in other subjects, such as geography and mathematics, there is not sufficient challenge in some lessons to allow gifted and talented pupils to produce their best work.
- 13 The very small number of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue achieve well. None of them are at an early stage of learning English. The attainment of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is tracked but numbers are too small to make sensible comparisons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very good. Punctuality is good. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes are mature and positive.
- Attendance is very good.
- Pupils' develop into thoughtful and sensitive young people as a result of very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Behaviour in class and around school is very good.
- Punctuality is good except when buses are delayed by traffic congestion.

Commentary

- 14 The attendance rate in 2002/3 was well above the national median of 91.7 per cent. The school, pupils and parents cooperate very well to maintain this very good level. Pupils' regular attendance is a significant factor in their success. The school has very good procedures to make sure that every absence is authorised and that staff work very well with the education welfare service to support any pupils whose attendance level gives cause for concern.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year of 2002/3 was 94.3%

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

- 15 Pupils are enthusiastic and are eager to succeed at school. Their positive, mature attitudes contribute significantly to their abilities to learn and achieve well. Relationships are very good; pupils collaborate readily with staff and each other, both around school and in lessons. They feel valued, and are happy to express their views, knowing that where possible these will be taken into account. Organisation of teaching in subjects further encourages positive responses in pupils, for example, in music, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for organising their own instrumental groups and presenting concerts. Many take part in activities outside normal school hours. Pupils with special educational needs are valued, every attempt is made to provide a positive learning environment and as a result relationships are very good.
- 16 Pupils' behaviour around school and in crowded areas such as the dining hall, is very good, though occasional instances of inconsideration were noticed. The prefect system is devised to ensure that pupils behave sensibly at all times; for instance, some are designated to supervise the behaviour of the many pupils who travel by bus.
- 17 The school has a good system of rewards and sanctions which is respected by the vast majority of pupils. Exclusion is used as a last resort, and only after extensive negotiation with pupils, staff and parents; excluded pupils are well supported by form tutors and heads of year on their return to lessons. Permanent exclusions are rare and procedures are adhered to meticulously.
- 18 Most pupils are punctual to lessons. Punctuality to school in the morning is affected by the intransigent problems of buses caught up in traffic, as a result, some pupils miss important information and useful discussion in form time and assemblies.

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	896	46	0
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	1	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	1	0

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

Pupils’ personal development including their spiritual moral social and cultural development.

- 19 The school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Provision for pupils’ cultural development has improved since the previous inspection and it is now good. Many lessons, assemblies, tutor time and extra-curricular activities provide positive experiences.
- 20 School assemblies are powerful, spiritual occasions and address moral and social issues through well selected themes that are often vividly presented. Prayers reflect topical issues and they provide pupils with many opportunities for reflection. Art and design, drama, English and history all make a very strong contribution to pupils’ spiritual development.
- 21 Moral education is strongly underpinned by the school’s framework of expectations regarding behaviour. This places a clear emphasis on the consequences of not telling the truth and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own and others’ actions. In drama lessons, pupils have many opportunities to research and discuss issues such as conflict and social dilemmas. Modern foreign language lessons develop pupils’ listening skills through a strong emphasis on courtesy towards one another.
- 22 The school’s rewards system makes a very good contribution to pupils’ social development. Rewards such as faculty and community merits and “postcards” celebrate pupils’ achievements and acknowledge academic successes and acts of kindness or generosity. In physical education there is a strong focus on mutual support and pupils work very well in teams.
- 23 Opportunities for cultural development are many and are excellent in art and design. Opportunities in art and design incorporate a variety of stimuli from cultures all over the world. These inspire pupils to create their own art works based on the different styles, including three dimensional African masks and Asian *patiscreees*. Music provides very good opportunities to explore and play instruments from different countries and also raises pupils’ awareness of relevant social and moral issues to do with the Third World countries. Performance poets from other countries are invited to the school and cross-curricular

projects such as 'Africa week' promote work between subjects which this year culminated in a public performance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Good teaching results in pupils learning at a good rate and achieving well. Though whole school systems of tracking pupils' progress are good, assessment is satisfactory because marking is inconsistent in its quality and usefulness to pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and provides a broad range of courses but there are weaknesses in the provision for physical education in Years 10 and 11. Staffing is good but there is a shortage of computers and text books in some subjects. The care and support provided for pupils are very good and partnerships with other schools and colleges and the community are very well developed.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall and assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent in art and design and very good in history. They are very good in English in Years 7 to 9 and drama in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics, citizenship, resistant materials and ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a high proportion of very good lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Discipline is good and very good relationships between teachers and pupils result in pupils becoming confident learners.
- Most lessons are rigorous, challenging and well structured so that learning is rapid.
- In a small number of lessons, teaching lacks a variety of approaches, pace and sometimes challenge and a very small number of lessons in mathematics and French is unsatisfactory.
- Homework is not always given regularly.
- Marking is inconsistent and is not always helpful to pupils in showing them what to do to improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 106 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	28 (26 %)	48 (45%)	23 (22%)	4 (4%)	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.

- 24 The vast majority of lessons is well planned and structured and includes a good variety of activities that interests pupils, challenges them and helps them to learn. The school has benefited from the work carried out on the national strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 so that most lessons have a clear structure and pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers pay good attention to improving pupils' literacy skills, though pupils' numeracy skills are not systematically developed. Development work on how to improve pupils' depth of thinking and a recognition of the different ways pupils learn has led many subjects to include a wide variety of teaching approaches. For example, in English, drama, history, art and design and geography pupils are encouraged to solve problems, analyse their own and other's work and look at concepts from more than one perspective. As a result pupils are developing confidence in making contributions to discussion in group, pair and classwork tasks. Work with Year 7 pupils during their pastoral programme has raised pupils' understanding of how they learn and, as a result, they are gaining a great deal of confidence in becoming more independent learners.

- 25 A number of subjects, for example, art and design, are particularly successful in providing well structured tasks that take pupils through steps in learning progressively so that they feel a sense of achievement and are motivated to do even better. Boys respond particularly well to these approaches and consequently are achieving well.
- 26 Teachers nurture the positive attitudes that most pupils bring to their work. They have high expectations of pupils' learning and conduct and positive relationships are well established in most lessons. Pupils appreciate the help and support they receive from their teachers. Consequently they are willing to learn and, in most subjects, ready to make that extra effort needed to do well.
- 27 Teachers' good understanding of their subjects enables them to give clear explanations and break down difficult concepts into manageable steps well. A secure knowledge of examination requirements ensure pupils are well prepared. In some subjects, such as art and design, history and drama, enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and pupils share in teacher's delight and excitement in elements of the subject. It is often in these subjects where there is a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 28 The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics and modern foreign languages and was related to lack of structure, low challenge and expectations and weak subject knowledge.
- 29 In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the variety of tasks tends to be narrow, the pace of learning is slow and pupils do not take an active part but, more often, listen passively to the teacher. In some lessons, especially in mathematics, the lessons did not take enough account of weaknesses in prior learning and successful elements of the National Strategy being used in other areas of the school were not evident. In a number of lessons, higher attaining pupils were not challenged enough. In some subjects, though the need to improve the quality of teaching has been recognised, not enough has been done quickly enough to support, develop and improve it.
- 30 Homework is used well in most subjects to consolidate learning, to carry out research and develop independent learning. However, homework is not always planned regularly so that there can be times when there is too much homework to do and other times when there is very little. In subjects where teaching is satisfactory, such as in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, the effectiveness of homework is inconsistent and is often no more than finishing off tasks started in class. A homework timetable is not shared with parents and they would appreciate knowing what homework their children should get each night to help them to check that it is done.
- 31 The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and is very good in art and design and physical education. It is occasionally unsatisfactory with small groups of pupils in mathematics. The teaching is tailored to meet individual needs whether these are emotional, behavioural, pastoral or academic. All teaching is underpinned by careful planning. Well qualified learning support assistants provide additional support for pupils on statements and as a result these pupils learn well.

Assessment

Assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a comprehensive assessment policy which ensures that pupils' progress is followed closely and underachievement recognised quickly by pastoral and subject staff.
- Assessment information is used systematically by teachers to monitor progress and set targets.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent across subjects.

Commentary

- 32 The school has a clear assessment policy and ICT is used effectively to centrally store, analyse and share pupils' test and examination results. The information is used systematically by the school to monitor and review progress, identify trends in school performance, and set challenging targets for individual pupils, class groups, subjects and the whole school. National test results and GCSE results are analysed by gender and minority ethnic groups, enabling the school to be fully aware of differences in achievement between groups and take appropriate action. The use of data by subject teachers to review pupils' performance has helped to raise their own expectations and those of pupils. In most subjects, pupils' progress is tracked well, underachievement is identified and action is taken to help pupils to improve. Most subjects support pupils well with regular assessment, feedback to them, and by setting appropriate targets for improvement. Practice is very good in art and design and English, where regular assessment enables pupils to fully understand their progress and see how to improve; in drama, pupils are involved in self evaluation; and in modern foreign languages, action taken to eliminate weaknesses in learning in Year 11 is raising pupils' achievement. The school's effective review system supports pupils very well in their progress, giving good opportunities for all pupils to regularly discuss and revise targets for improvement with their tutors.
- 33 The quality of marking and grading of pupils' work is satisfactory. Though work is usually marked regularly, short term, manageable targets are not always communicated to pupils so they do not always know what to do to improve. There is detailed, analytical marking in English, history and geography but marking is inconsistent within mathematics, ICT and modern languages. In citizenship, there is no assessment other than for pupils in Years 7 and 8.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements and satisfactorily provides a broad range of courses to meet pupils' individual needs. A very good programme of enrichment enhances the taught curriculum and contributes to pupils' very good personal development. Staffing is good. The provision for accommodation and resources is unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad range of subjects is taught and ICT is now timetabled for all pupils throughout the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to achieve well.
- Many pupils take part in a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Provision of vocational college link courses in Years 10 and 11 is very effective and pupils achieve very well.
- Arrangements for modern languages in Years 10 and 11 provide very well for those who choose the subject.
- The time allocated for National Curriculum physical education is inadequate in Years 10 and 11 and a significant number of pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- A shortage of text books in some subjects and too few computers holds back pupils' learning.

- Accommodation in music is limited.

Commentary

- 34 The curriculum provides a broad range of learning opportunities enabling boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds to make good progress as they move up through the school. In Years 7 to 9, the breadth of the curriculum is good; drama is taught very effectively as a separate subject and nearly half of pupils take both French and German.
- 35 In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a good choice of subjects from three options, which in addition to their compulsory subjects means that they can take up to ten GCSE examinations. Vocational courses at a local college are open to all pupils and provide more practical methods of learning as well as continuity and progression of education in the 14 to 19 age range. The school is planning to expand these experiences alongside the introduction of applied GCSE subjects to add further breadth to the curriculum.
- 36 In modern foreign languages, higher attaining pupils have very good learning opportunities; they can study French and either Spanish or German on one-year express courses. Though the school provides a very effective GCSE course in physical education for around one third of pupils, provision for the two thirds of pupils not following the GCSE course is unsatisfactory because there is not enough time allocated to enable pupils to make the progress that they should.
- 37 A well planned programme of personal, social and health education is taught through form periods and specific lessons shared with citizenship in Years 8 and 9 and through citizenship days in Years 10 and 11. Good careers education is included and suitable attention is paid to sex education, relationships and awareness of drugs, all within the context of a Catholic ethos. Pupils appreciate the lessons and they help pupils to develop mature attitudes.
- 38 The school organises a very good range of cultural events and visits. With support and encouragement pupils devise and improvise their own highly successful productions like 'Dracula in the Vernacula' and also take part in regular talent shows throughout the year. There is an annual water sports holiday in the south of France and the most recent ski trip was to the United States of America. There is a very good range of recreational and competitive sport. Rugby league teams have notable success and the current Year 9 boys are the English Schools Champions. Not to be outdone, Year 8 boys are runners-up in the same competition for their age. Timetabled revision and booster classes contribute effectively to pupils' achievement and consequently the school's results. An extensive programme of events raises money for various charities and supports the school's strong Christian ethos.
- 39 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they have full access to the National Curriculum and other courses. Many enjoy a wide range of extra curricular activities. Particularly effective are the 'Cool Club', helping to improve pupils' co-ordination skills, and the 'Buddy Reading Club', helping to encourage an interest and improvement in reading.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

- 40 The school has sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers available to teach the curriculum. Accommodation, although rather drab and at times cramped, is generally adequate and the interior well maintained. Many excellent displays of pupils' work enhance the learning environment. However, some rooms are too small for the size of group using them, for example in music, and there is little opportunity to develop group work and ensemble skills. The Learning Resources Centre supports pupils' independent learning well but is too small for the number of pupils in the school. The new all weather pitch has greatly improved facilities in physical education. Resources for learning are inadequate due to below

average funding and this adversely affects pupils' learning. For example, there is a lack of textbooks in modern foreign languages and the number of computers in the school is too low. The lack of access to ICT and tuned percussion instruments in music restricts opportunities for pupils to experiment with sound when developing skills in composition.

Care, guidance and support

- 41 The school provides a very good level of care to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils benefit from very good support and guidance based on close monitoring of their academic achievements and personal development. The school has good procedures to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care and support provided by the school's pastoral system for all pupils is very good.
- The school has very good procedures to monitor and support pupils' academic progress.
- The school pays careful attention to health and safety matters in school and on school trips and visits.
- The school has outstanding procedures to help pupils make the transfer from primary school into secondary education.
- Pupils benefit from a very good programme of careers education integrated with personal and social education and they are well prepared for the next phase in their life and education.

Commentary

- 42 The very high standards of care reflect the school's mission to provide the very best possible climate to promote pupils' personal growth and academic achievement. Every day pupils have the support and guidance of their form tutors who stay with them throughout their time in school and know them very well. The heads of year, and the school's senior management provide pastoral care and give additional attention to pupils' specific needs or difficulties. Effective monitoring of academic progress identifies areas where pupils are not achieving their best and the school's mentoring procedures provide help and support. The school works with parents to find ways to help pupils who may be experiencing problems with school. Pupils are confident and secure in the knowledge that they can rely on support from all staff. The governors and staff provide a safe and healthy environment, both in school and on visits. Outside agencies provide very good additional expertise to promote the well-being of all pupils.
- 43 Child protection procedures are in place and all staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Pupils contribute well to the school's pastoral care. Some prefects take responsibility for supporting pupils who are new to the school. The school and year councils discuss a range of issues such as an anti-bullying charter, lunch-time activities, audits of behaviour and attendance, preferred learning styles and careers days.

An example of outstanding practice

The school's procedures for pupils' transfer from primary to secondary education are excellent.

The school places the greatest importance on procedures to provide a smooth and happy transition from primary school. Initial meetings twice a term with staff from the primary schools are attended by the liaison teacher, the head teacher and the senior teacher responsible for pastoral care. The schools have developed activities which link the Year 6 and 7 year groups in six areas of the curriculum, English, mathematics, science, music, history and RE, reviewing them every year for further ideas. Pupils exchange letters about life at St Peter's making good individual links. A daytime visit and an evening visit with parents in the summer term are supplemented by the 'Mini Olympics'. This is a very popular event involving each of the new form tutor classes and providing an excellent chance for pupils to meet their new class-mates and their form tutor. At the start of the new school year the school invites comments from pupils and parents about ways that the liaison provision can be improved even further and incorporates their ideas in the planning for the next year.

- 44 Careers provision is very well integrated into the school's programmes for personal, social and health education. The programme is very well designed and co-ordinated and provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities for self assessment, preparation for future life and employment opportunities. Work experience for all pupils is followed by a series of special careers days. The Connexions service provides very helpful advice on employment and personal development, working closely with the education welfare service and the youth service to provide counselling as well as advice on education, training and employment. Pupils are able to make a well-informed choice of their education and career path after leaving school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Procedures to promote partnership with parents are good with some very good features. The quality of links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school and the large majority of parents work very well together to provide for pupils' academic and personal needs and to discuss concerns.
- The quality and extent of the information contained in the prospectus, the folder for new parents, the pupils' home/school journal and the Connexions pocket guide are very good.
- Members of the Parents and Teachers Association give very generously to the school's fundraising efforts and the extra funds help to supplement the school's resources.
- Procedures to work in partnership with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.
- The school seeks the views of parents, for example after the induction procedure and at parents' evenings, but does not consult parents extensively on ways to bring about improvement.

Commentary

- 45 The large majority of parents is very satisfied with what the school provides. Most parents say that teaching is good and the school has high expectations of pupils' commitment to learning. Reports on pupils' individual progress give parents a clear picture of their children's work, achievements and targets for the future. The school always seeks to improve the quality of reports and the quality of written information for parents is very high, although some parents would like a regular school newsletter in addition to the written information provided. The school regularly reviews the success of parents' evenings and makes changes where necessary though some parents are unhappy that they do not meet subject teachers until the summer term in Year 7.
- 46 The school seeks to overcome the difficulties of meeting parents who come from a wide area and teachers are always concerned to work with parents to meet pupil's specific needs and difficulties. Parents are very well included in procedures to support their children when they transfer from primary to secondary education. The Parent Teacher Association makes a substantial contribution to the school's provision, for example, funding the school's mini-bus.
- 47 Parents' views are well represented on the governing body but the school does not consult parents extensively about ways to bring about improvement. Some parents are concerned about the consistency of homework provision. Though not provided currently, the school has plans to provide a homework timetable in the pupils' home-school journal.
- 48 Very good links with the community and with agencies enrich pupils' personal and social development, their citizenship studies, environmental awareness and their careers education. Representatives from local business and commerce take part in careers days and provide pupils with work experience. Pupils benefit from links with sports clubs and the school, in its turn, provides facilities for local sports clubs. The school medical service, the youth service and the educational welfare service play a valued part in the overall care and

support provided for all pupils. Links with primary schools are excellent and links with other schools and colleges extend the opportunities for alternative vocational courses and for pupils needing different curriculum areas. The school is aiming to strengthen community links and extend the primary links even further as part of its community plan within the specialist school bid.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is very good. It sets out and ensures progress towards a clear vision to make the school even better by ensuring that all pupils maximise their achievement. Management is good but strategies to further improve teaching and learning have yet to have full impact. The leadership of other key staff is good. The work of the governors is good and they are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determination of the headteacher, tempered by realism and humour, inspire staff so that high standards and very good attendance and behaviour are sustained.
- Governors are influential in their role as critical friends, both challenging and supporting the school.
- Rigorous self-evaluation by the senior team, strategic planning, staff development, and performance management link together effectively to support the school's vision.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and learning and follow up support for less good teaching are not always effective.
- The school is managed very well on a day-to-day basis.
- Exceptional leadership in art and design and in drama are strengths of the school.

Commentary

- 49 Learning and serving the community, enriched through friendship is the core of the school's Christian ethos. The headteacher's commitment to the school's mission and her clear and purposeful view of developments ensures that the school meets its aspirations and that high standards are maintained. Her open and collaborative approach involves staff and governors at all levels. Staff are consequently well motivated and there is a shared vision and purpose aimed at improving the quality of education and the school's already high standards. The school development plan is clearly aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning and maintaining high standards.
- 50 A strong feature of leadership is the commitment to knowing how well all pupils are achieving and ensuring that boys and girls of all abilities are enabled to do their best. As a result, the school has developed very good systems to analyse the performance of individual pupils, teaching groups and subjects. Subject teachers and year tutors work closely together and use the information to identify pupils who are in danger of underachieving and the school ensures that pupils receive suitable support. As a result, care and guidance are very good and each pupil is well known.
- 51 Senior managers are very supportive of the headteacher. They provide good role models to pupils and staff and the school's strong Catholic ethos. The pastoral leaders are very effective in promoting a caring and supportive atmosphere in which individual pupils are well known and supported. Subject leadership is outstanding in art and design and drama and very good in English, history and French. In these areas of the school rapid improvements in approaches to learning and teaching are leading to rapidly rising standards and achievement.
- 52 Management is good overall and has a number of strong features. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and corresponds closely with the inspection findings. Inspections of subject departments carried out every three years by the senior management team are

rigorous and fair. They identify areas for improvement that are, on the whole, tackled effectively. Staff training and development are linked to the school's priorities for improvement. There is a focus on improving teaching and learning but even so there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching that needs to be eliminated. Subject leaders' checks on teaching and pupils' learning are not consistent enough across subjects and some teaching not receive the support it needs to improve quickly. Consequently, some pupils do not maximise their achievement. The challenge for leadership and management at all levels is to ensure a more robust and consistent implementation of current procedures to enable all pupils to realise their full potential and thereby drive up standards and results even further. Despite these inconsistencies, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The issues identified for improvement have been tackled effectively and standards and results have been maintained at a well above average level.

- 53 Leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support assistants are carefully deployed to the maximum benefit of pupils. However the day to day monitoring of this work needs further development to ensure a consistent approach and a cohesive overview of the work of particular pupils. Currently there is no overview of attainment and progress on a daily or weekly basis. Although cross-curricular subject meetings are valuable for reviewing and updating pupils' individual educational plans, the effect on learning and standards is limited because the targets set are numerous and not easily measurable. These meetings are also attended by the Careers Advice Service and are a good vehicle for providing feedback to the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- 54 Governors are highly committed to the school and are ambitious to raise standards further and improve the education provided. They have a good over-view of the school's major strengths and areas for further development being well informed by the head teacher of the school's performance. The governing body works very well with the head teacher and senior management. They hold the school robustly to account for major spending and educational decisions.
- 55 Governors provide a good range of expertise and links with the local council have facilitated improvements to the school environment. Governors have a strong interest and commitment to health and safety of pupils, making regular audits of the premises and of risk assessments inside the school and on trips and visits. They have responded to a recent internal audit by the local authority by adopting a charging policy for use of the school facilities and taking responsibility for specific areas of the school improvement plan. Governors are not fully involved in checking that all policies and the curriculum are being implemented fully, for example assessment in the area of citizenship. Almost all statutory requirements are met with the exception that the school prospectus does not include a statement of parents' rights to withdraw pupils from religious education and collective worship.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,859,038	Balance from previous year	227,716
Total expenditure	2,962,690	Balance carried forward to the next	156,675
Expenditure per pupil	3,155		

- 56 Financial management is good. Procedures for day-to-day management are robust, with clear separation of duties. Budget monitoring is carried out monthly by the headteacher and governors. Financial planning is good and includes long-term forecasting by the headteacher, which indicates that income will fall due to changes in pupil numbers and staff costs will rise over the next three years. This is of concern to the school as funding is

already low compared with other schools. Expenditure is linked to school priorities and the balances carried forward over the last two years have enabled the school to purchase a much needed all weather pitch. The school's application of the principles of best value is satisfactory. It rigorously compares its performance with other schools within the local education authority and with similar schools throughout the country. It seeks best value for major purchases and follows the local education authority procedures for competitive tendering. It consulted the local community over the purchase of the all weather pitch and assessed the likely demand for hiring the pitch outside school hours. The school expects to recuperate some of the costs through lettings. Staff have been consulted over a proposed bid for specialist college status, but regular consultation with pupils and parents is underdeveloped. The extent to which the school explores alternatives to find the most effective way of addressing priorities is limited. This is to some extent restricted by the tightness of the budget. The school makes appropriate use of the funding it receives for pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

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

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and results are well above average.
- Leadership and subject management are very good.
- Planning and assessment are strengths.
- Guidance and preparation for examinations are very good.
- Lack of access to ICT limits its use across the subject.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Very good	Good	Very good.
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
National Curriculum tests in Year 9 GCSE in Year 11	Well above average	Well above average	-
Teaching	Very good	Good	Very good
Learning	Very good	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Very good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good – maintained high standards.		

Commentary

- 57 In national tests taken in Year 9, pupils achieve well above national average results maintaining the high standards they have already reached when they join the school. Pupils continue to build upon their high standards throughout Years 10 and 11. Results in both GCSE English and English literature at A* - C grades in 2003 were well above the national average.
- 58 Current standards of work are well above average in Year 9 and Year 11 with many pupils in line to reach the highest grades in both the Year 9 national tests and at GCSE. Written work is lucid and cogent, pupils are not afraid to express opinions in well considered and articulate argument. Responses to literature are frequently sensitive demonstrating not only a close analysis of the text but also an awareness of how the author manipulates language. Media pieces are weaker with a lack of command of media specific vocabulary and too heavy a focus on advertisements. Standards in oral work are above average overall. However, in some classes the groups are too large for oral work to be carried out effectively and in other very small classes of lower attaining pupils, pupils are unable to learn from higher attaining peers.
- 59 Achievement overall by Year 11 is very good. Good achievement in Years 10 and 11 is slower than that made in Years 7 to 9 and it is due to the effect of part-time teachers and some very large groups. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. All of these

pupils obtained a pass in either Certificate of Achievement in English or GCSE language. The achievement of boys has improved over the last three years and is close to that of girls.

- 60 Teachers adhere rigidly to the excellent schemes of work which are regularly revised by the team. Teaching is purposeful, rigorous and challenging. The teachers' love of literature is reflected in very effective marking which provides excellent feedback for pupils. As a result the pupils are able to redraft and improve their own work. Pupils have a good understanding of the examination criteria and are very well prepared for examinations. No opportunity is missed to extend teaching and learning, lunchtime and after school booster sessions allow much more independent learning and time for more extensive discussion.
- 61 Occasionally a few lessons, although well planned, lack pace and pupils have little opportunity to make contributions. Relationships, attitudes and pupils' commitment to learning are all very good.
- 62 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the work of the department. The head of department has put structure and systems into place which ensure coherent delivery of the curriculum. This, combined with a focus on strategies to raise the boys' attainment, has ensured that the new GCSE curriculum is well taught. Access to ICT resources is limited, they are not used regularly and skills are not well developed in the subject. Limited time to carry out checks on all lessons means that a small number of lessons are satisfactory and not as good as most in the subject. The improvement since the last inspection is good; the department continues to maintain the high standards and the quality of the teaching reported in the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 63 Standards of literacy in the school are high. Development of reading, writing, speaking and listening is good. The work done by the English department is enhanced by work across the curriculum. There is a focus on key words in most subjects which improves spelling of technical vocabulary. Explicit teaching of writing is given, and this enhances the quality of the writing of GCSE assignments.

German and Spanish

French was the focus language for the inspection and Spanish and German were sampled. One German lesson and two Spanish lessons were visited and, in addition, pupils' written work was examined. In 2003, GCSE results in German and Spanish were above average. In the lessons seen, standards in German were well above average and in the one year beginners' course in Spanish, standards were above average. In all the German and Spanish lessons visited, teaching was very good; the teachers' consistent use of the foreign language resulted in pupils' very good learning. Overall leadership and management of German and Spanish are good.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 9 and 11 higher attaining pupils achieve very well and the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A* and A grades is above average.
- Standards in reading and writing are high.
- Not all teachers use French consistently in lessons, which limits pupils' development in speaking.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average	Above average
GCSE in Year 11	-	Average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

- 64 GCSE results have been above average for the last four years but in 2003 they fell to average; however, the good proportion of above average A* and A grades was maintained. In 2003, pupils performed less well in French than in their other subjects mainly because of inadequate performance of average attaining pupils. However, the current Year 11 shows a significant improvement in response to the new leadership's increased emphasis on identifying and remedying weaknesses in learning, especially of the average attaining pupils in the current mixed ability sets in Year 11.
- 65 Higher attaining pupils generally achieve very well due to the teachers' very good planning and high expectations. Lower attaining pupils make good progress because of teachers' effective use of imaginative learning resources. However, some higher attaining pupils in middle sets are not fully challenged; textbook shortages also limit these pupils' opportunities for independent home study. Against national trends for French, boys achieve as well as girls, responding well to the carefully structured lessons. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because of good learning opportunities suited to their needs. The very good attitudes most pupils have contribute effectively to their learning. Pupils attain high standards in writing, because of the teachers' clear emphasis on accuracy of spelling and grammar, and on extended writing. This contributes substantially to pupils' achievement in literacy. Pupils can understand challenging reading texts and recordings. In speaking, pupils lack confidence, mainly because teachers do not always use French consistently in lessons as a model for pupils to copy. Teachers' marking is thorough but pupils do not always know what they have to do to get to the next level. More than half of the lessons seen were good or better; one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, in which, exceptionally, able pupils were not sufficiently challenged.
- 66 Very good new leadership provides clear vision, good planning, and high aspirations and standards consequently are rising. Assessment information is now very well used to identify and remedy weaknesses in learning and so raise standards. However, checks on the quality and development of teaching do not sufficiently identify and spread best practice. Since the last inspection overall improvement is good. Standards in all years, and the achievement of boys have improved. Standards in speaking have declined, but standards in all GCSE courses reflect current improvements.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and pupils are very well motivated.
- Teachers are committed to raising achievement and provide very good revision classes in Years 11 and 9.
- Assessments in class and end of unit tests are used well to inform teaching and to help pupils improve; however the quality of marking is variable.
- The national strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 (The Key Stage 3 Strategy) is not yet implemented effectively.
- Achievement is not as good in mathematics as in most other subjects including English and science; there are pockets of underachievement, among some higher attaining pupils in Year 11 and small groups of pupils with special educational needs in Year 9 and 11.
- The setting of homework is patchy and homework tasks are often too easy.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Above average	Above average
National Curriculum tests in Year 9 GCSE in Year 11	Well above average	Well above average	-
Teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

- 67 In 2003, results in National Curriculum tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9 were well above average compared with the country as a whole, but well below average when compared with similar schools. These results were affected by difficulties in staffing. Results over the past four years have improved at a rate above the national trend. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are also well above average, with both girls and boys achieving well. By Year 9 all pupils have a good knowledge of geometry and algebra; higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge of area and circumference of a circle to problems involving area of sectors and length of arcs. Standards of numeracy are well above average overall and pupils only use calculators when appropriate.
- 68 GCSE results in 2003 in mathematics were well above average when compared with all schools nationally but below average compared with similar schools. Almost a quarter of pupils achieved grade A or A*, showing that higher attaining pupils did well. However, too many pupils achieved very low grades or no grade at all. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Results in mathematics are not yet as good as many other subjects including science and English.
- 69 Standards in the current Years 10 and 11 are above average. Year 10 pupils use indices competently and express numbers in standard form; they have extended their knowledge of geometry to circle theorems. Higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills to real life problems. By Year 11 pupils have consolidated their knowledge and understanding of number, algebra and geometry, and apply trigonometry and Pythagoras' theorem in right-angled triangles. Higher attaining pupils apply their mathematics to more complex problems

of solid geometry, which require algebraic as well as numerical solutions. Coursework is very well presented and completed to a high standard. However, weaknesses in prior learning, particularly with some higher attaining pupils, limit progress. Achievement of both boys and girls in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, although there are pockets of underachievement among some higher attaining pupils in Year 11 because they have not caught up after experiencing some lack of continuity in teaching when they were in Year 10.

- 70 The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good overall in Years 7, 8 and 9, and satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. However, there is some underachievement with a small number of pupils in Years 9 and 11 associated with weak teaching, which consists of too many repetitive tasks, lacks structure and progression and does not promote understanding.
- 71 Lessons are usually well planned, building on prior learning. Expectations are usually high; however sometimes the work at the start of a topic is too easy and lacks challenge. Most teachers use questioning skilfully to develop understanding and pupils are given opportunities to discuss their methods and explore alternatives; however, this is insufficiently developed in some lessons. The interactive white boards are used effectively to prepare lessons in advance and hence ensure good use of time in the lessons. The National Strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 (The Key Stage 3 Strategy) is not well understood by the department and is not yet implemented effectively; this affects pupils' progress. Many lessons begin with a short starter activity, but these activities are not well developed and they do not support the lessons' main learning objectives. Teachers usually define the objectives of the main part of their lessons on their planning sheets but these are rarely shared with their pupils. Plenary sessions are not yet used effectively. Homework is sometimes limited to "finishing off" or "colouring in", so opportunities to consolidate and extend learning are missed. However, pupils use the department's website where they can obtain model answers and revision materials. Assessment is used well in class to motivate and to inform teaching. Regular end of unit tests inform pupils of how well they are doing and pupils' progress is tracked effectively using the school's assessment management software. Marking is of variable quality; overall it is satisfactory, but sometimes it consists only of ticks and crosses with no indication of how pupils can improve, and some work is unmarked. Teachers set and maintain high standards of behaviour and relationships are very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and are very well motivated. They take a pride in their work and set it out neatly and accurately.
- 72 The department's development plan focuses appropriately on raising achievement, and a number of strategies have been introduced to raise achievement in Year 11. The mathematics website, together with revision and booster classes for pupils in Years 11 and 9, and the trip to air traffic control for higher attaining pupils in Year 10, are very good features of the department's work and a testament to their commitment to raising achievement. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through lesson observations and checking teachers' lesson plans and pupils' exercise books; but there is not enough follow-up and support to ensure improvement. The department uses information on pupils' prior attainment to set individual pupil targets and to track pupil progress; underachieving pupils are identified and action taken.
- 73 Since the last inspection, well above average standards have been maintained and weaknesses identified in the last report have been addressed. However, teaching, learning and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are still only satisfactory, with some pockets of underachievement in Year 11.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 74 Standards of mathematics across the curriculum are above average. All teachers received training on the use and teaching of mathematics across the curriculum. However, there has been little follow-up and there are currently no formal checks of the teaching of mathematics

across the curriculum. There is very good use of mathematics in science where pupils construct graphs and manipulate formulae competently; it also used very well in ICT in Years 10 and 11. Other subjects make a contribution to pupils' mathematics skills, when the need to use mathematics arises, but this is not planned systematically.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are consistently well above average.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this contributes significantly to their good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well in science and underpin pupils' achievement.
- Marking does not always show pupils how they can improve.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
National Curriculum tests in Year 9 GCSE in Year 11	Well above average	Well above average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

- 75 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2003, though well above average compared with all schools, were only average compared with similar schools. In 2003, pupils' results in GCSE science were well above average for grades A* to C and A* to G. In particular, a significant proportion of pupils gained higher A* and A grades in their examinations. Results over the previous three years have been consistently well above average, although the overall pass rate fell somewhat in 2003 compared with other years because all pupils were entered for a course that did not particularly suit lower attaining pupils. This year, lower attaining pupils are following a course more suited to their needs and they are on course to achieve good results.
- 76 Pupils join the school with attainment that is well above average. By the time they are in Year 9, standards are still well above average. However this represents good achievement by this group of pupils because they continue to improve their knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics and maintain high standards. Science enquiry skills are also well above average because experimental and investigative work is a key feature of the science curriculum. Standards of work in Year 11 are also well above average and also represent good achievement. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of important theories and concepts in science such as photosynthesis and respiration. They have increased their knowledge, understanding and practical skills at a good rate maintaining high standards because they are well taught. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well due to the good support they receive from teachers and support assistants in smaller classes. They do relatively well in their GCSE examinations with most achieving at least a

G grade and most do better. Literacy skills are improved by a good focus on key words in all lessons. Pupils read text fluently and this improves their learning. Mathematical skills are well taught with an emphasis on formula and graphical skills and, as a result, standards of mathematics in Year 11 Science Enquiry coursework are of a higher standard. ICT is well used to consolidate and extend pupils' understanding of science by, for example, using data logging is used to improve their science enquiry skills.

- 77 Teaching and learning are good overall and this is confirmed by a scrutiny of pupils' written work as well as observation of lessons. Several instances of very good teaching were observed during the inspection. Lessons are well planned with an emphasis on what pupils are to learn giving teaching a sharper focus. Teachers have a secure command of their subject areas and their clear explanations of scientific theories contribute well to good achievement. There is a very good insistence on high standards of behaviour in all lessons. Pupils display very good attitudes to their work and work co-operate well with their teachers. This results in better learning. Marking of pupils' test results and other work is thorough but National Curriculum levels are seldom used so that pupils do not gain a good idea of the standard of their work or how to improve to a higher level.
- 78 Effective leadership provides a good vision for the future. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning have led to improvements in teaching and raising standards. Teachers and support staff work well together as a team. Current high standards more accurately match examination results from 2002 when a proportion of pupils were entered for modular science examination. The department has reverted to this practice and pupils are on course to reach well above average results in 2004. Since the previous inspection the department has succeeded in maintaining high standards across all age ranges and the good quality of teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good but are only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Resources are insufficient but teachers make good use of what they have.
- Pupils undertake project work which supports other subjects well.
- Pupils do not get enough help on how to organise and present their work to a high standard.
- The co-ordination of ICT across subjects is limited.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Above average	Average	Average
Teacher assessments in Year 9 Short course GCSE in Year 11	Above average	Well below average	-
Teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

- 79 Good quality, challenging teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 helps pupils make good progress. Teachers use the time available well to complete a number of projects well and pupils develop knowledge and skills at a good rate.
- 80 Results in 2003 in the GCSE short course were well below average. Several factors account for this poor performance, such as insufficient preparation of course work among some pupils. Teachers have recognised these factors and preparation for the examination has improved. As a result, current standards have risen. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not benefited from ICT lessons in previous years and their current achievement is only satisfactory, given the lack of structure and coherence in their previous learning.
- 81 In Years 7 to 9, good planning ensures the progressive development of skills in desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets through projects during the three years. Pupils of all abilities use their skills to produce projects of high quality which can be seen in wall displays. Some projects enhance pupils' learning in citizenship and personal, social and health education through the production of pamphlets on subjects such as healthy eating, product sales and web page design for political institutions. Whilst pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported by teaching assistants, there are occasions when tasks are not well matched to their capabilities and their progress is slower than it should be. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils listen well and respond positively to challenging work. Pupils' work is enhanced by their good literacy skills.
- 82 In Years 10 and 11, teachers are now more familiar with the GCSE short course than they were in 2003 when results were poor. They use the very limited curriculum time available to them in Years 10 and 11 well to ensure that examination requirements are met. Lessons are well paced and teachers are attentive to the needs of individual pupils. The tasks set for pupils are related to everyday situations. For example, pupils use spreadsheets to improve their understanding of wages and taxation and they make good progress in their use of e-mail and mail-merging in developing their knowledge about the use of ICT in businesses. Pupils' motivation has improved and they are keen to do well in their coursework. They carry out research well and understand the role of technology in society. The presentation and storage of pupils' work in all years require attention in order to help pupils consolidate their learning and so that the work can be assessed more effectively.
- 83 There is a good understanding of the departments' strengths and weaknesses and a determination to set high standards and improve results. Resources and curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 are insufficient but are used very well. Non specialist staff receives good support within the department and are effective. Since the previous inspection more time has been allocated to the subject and, as a result, standards and teaching have improved. All pupils now take an accredited course in Years 10 and 11. Resources and staffing have improved but still remain areas for improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 84 The use of ICT across the curriculum since the last inspection has improved. Teachers are more confident in using ICT to improve teaching and learning and the school is increasing the number of interactive whiteboards and computers in departments. Provision is good in most subjects. Control technology is used well in design and technology and in science. Geography use computer suites very effectively for research and the writing up of fieldwork, as do history for Years 10 and 11 coursework. The modern foreign language department make increasing use of the interactive whiteboard. Use of ICT in mathematics, art and design and physical education is currently satisfactory but its use is more limited in music and drama due to a shortage of computers. The use of ICT suites is audited and although pupils' progress is tracked within subjects, there is no overview of their progress across all subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results and standards in Years 9 and 11 are well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve well because lessons are carefully structured and the subject is explained clearly.
- Pupils are productive because working relationships between pupils and teachers are good and teachers manage classes well.
- Some higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always challenged sufficiently to produce their best work.
- Assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not used fully to set targets for pupils so that they know how to improve their work.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
GCSE in Year 11	-	Well above average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

Commentary

- 85 For the last four years pupils have attained well above average results in GCSE examinations. These results represent good achievement. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 pupils standards were also well above average.
- 86 In work seen, pupils in all year groups, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils in Year 7 have good map skills and locate places accurately on local, national and world maps. Geographical fieldwork is not used sufficiently to stimulate pupils' interest in the subject or to develop their enquiry skills. Most boys and girls in Year 9 describe and explain geographical patterns and processes confidently and use specialist terminology well. However, a small number of higher attaining pupils, who are taught in mixed ability groups in Years 7 to 9, are not yet being challenged with sufficiently difficult tasks to produce their best work. In Year 11, where teaching is carefully tailored to exam requirements, pupils produce very good quality coursework in response to geographical questions about, for example, the impact of tourism in the Yorkshire Dales. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good which gives pupils the confidence to answer questions and voice their opinions in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- 87 Teaching is good because lessons are well structured and teachers explain the subject clearly using a variety of methods and resources. Teachers manage their classes well so pupils concentrate on their work and are productive. New assessments in place for pupils in Years 7 to 9 enabling teachers to use the results of these to set targets for pupils and plan their future learning.

- 88 After a period of staff changes, the new leadership and management of the department are good. Appropriate priorities have been identified for development, a new syllabus and schemes of work are in place, and there are regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- 89 Since the previous inspection high standards have been maintained and information and communications technology is now used more effectively to support learning. The department has both the commitment and the capacity to improve further.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of pupils' work are well above average throughout Years 7 to 11 and match recent results in GCSE examinations.
- Challenging and rigorous teaching leads to very good learning and achievement.
- Pupils' very good attitudes also contribute to their high standards and achievement.
- Assessment is used effectively to promote and measure learning.
- Lower achieving pupils find some lessons too difficult.

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Very good	Very good	Very good
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
GCSE in Year 11	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
Teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good
Learning	Very good	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Very good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Good		

- 90 GCSE results for both boys and girls have been consistently well above average for the last three years. Pupils tend to achieve better results in history than in their other subjects. The cumulative effect of very good teaching, pupils' hard work and positive attitudes leads to very good achievement throughout Years 7 to 11.
- 91 From an early stage pupils are given starter activities in all lessons which instantly engage them. In one lesson seen in Year 7, pupils were establishing and testing a hypothesis about Islamic architecture, reading challenging text books about architectural style in order to support their views and reaching measured conclusions. Occasionally, however, if there is no support teacher or differentiated materials, lower attaining pupils find it difficult to keep up with the pace of lessons. Some of the work done by pupils as part of their regular assessments was outstanding for the wide range of research undertaken, the depth of knowledge achieved and the quality of writing, for example 'Diaries of a soldier in the trenches in World War 1'. Lower attaining pupils succeed very well when more time is allowed and their researches are well supported.
- 92 In Years 10 and 11 many pupils are working towards the A*, A and B grades. Pupils research, organise and evaluate complex issues and produce impressive coursework on topics such as 'Stalin-man or monster'. Most pupils use ICT very effectively as part of their work in history.
- 93 Very good teaching and learning are at the heart of pupils' very good progress over time. The teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. They plan lessons teeming

with different activities and ensure that pupils quickly develop the higher skills needed for success in history at GCSE. The enthusiasm of the teachers and their expert subject knowledge motivates the pupils to go further in their work and achieve very well. Good marking and very thorough tracking of pupils' progress ensures that pupils can measure their achievement and understand what is needed to reach the next grade. The work pupils do in history develops their literacy skills and makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as citizenship.

- 94 Leadership and management are very good. The self-evaluation and monitoring of the department has resulted in an accurate assessment of strengths and weaknesses and a highly appropriate development plan which identifies the need to focus on literacy as a means of raising the standard of lower achieving pupils. The department has introduced strategies to identify underachievement in some pupils at an early stage in Year 10 and has thus increased the proportion of pupils achieving in the A*-C range at GCSE to 84 per cent in 2003. Teaching and learning and standards achieved by the pupils have improved since the time of the last inspection because of very effective monitoring by the head of department and the sharing of good practice.

TECHNOLOGY

One lesson of the GCSE course in child development was observed. Very good teaching and learning were characterised by high achievement and challenge, a variety of activities and good planning and organisation. Pupils enjoyed working together in a variety of groupings and made confident contributions in class. GCSE results over the last three years have been well above the national average.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are very good in graphics, textiles and food technology.
- Achievement in resistant materials is unsatisfactory.
- Computer aided designing and manufacture is fully integrated into learning in all design and technology subjects and enhances pupils' learning and achievement.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average	Above average
GCSE in Year 10 and 11	-	Above average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

- 95 GCSE results in 2003 were well above average overall and in textiles, food and graphics but results were below average in resistant materials. Results were broadly similar in 2002. These results match current standards of work.

- 96 Current standards in Year 9 and 11 are well above average in graphics, textiles and food technology, average in systems and control but below average in resistant materials. In graphics, textiles and food technology, very good teaching is imaginatively linked to clear objectives in the GCSE and National Curriculum programmes of study and pupils achieve very well. However, in resistant materials pupils do not achieve well enough overall because inappropriate choice of practical work lacks challenge and the range of constructional materials used is narrow. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their own ideas and personal approaches to design problems and their drawing and presentation skills are weak. Years 10 and 11 pupils design and construct products in wood well and used computer aided manufacture skills to produce interesting stool-top designs and products. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and helped to make good progress on an individual basis across the department. They make similar progress to other pupils.
- 97 Teaching and learning in graphics, textiles and food technology are very good, and satisfactory in resistant materials. In most lessons, teachers organise a wide range of very well planned activities that fully engage all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Oral work is good with pupils able to argue, read out loud and make suggestions in a supportive atmosphere. Many teachers have developed methods of rearranging groups of pupils within classes to maximise collaboration and learning. In graphics, textiles and food technology, good pace and high levels of challenge are common features. For example, groups of Year 9 pupils were independently using a computer-aided designing and manufacturing cutter-plotter to create vinyl logos for packaging designs. Pupils found this work exciting and challenging and they achieved very well. Computer-aided designing and manufacture is fully integrated into all areas and has a positive effect on standards and learning. The department's ICT suite is also a facility that broadens the work of many pupils. In resistant materials the target dates for submitting GSCE folder work and finishing the major project are not clear to pupils. The majority of project work does not show higher-level skills and the development of ideas needed for the higher grades.
- 98 The subject is well organised with good assessment systems in place and sound organisation of staff, materials and resources. Weaknesses in the achievement of pupils in resistant materials are recognised and support is being given to develop more appropriate schemes of work. Since the last inspection all the issues have been addressed and high standards have been maintained, except in resistant materials.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are consistently very high.
- Teaching and learning are excellent and, as a result, pupils' achievement is excellent.
- The department provides an excellent, stimulating learning environment.
- The range of material used and the outcomes produced by pupils is vast.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Standards of work seen	Very high	Very high	Very high
GCSE in Year 10 and 11	-	Very high	-
Teaching	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Learning	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent		
Management	Excellent		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Very good		

Commentary

- 99 GCSE results were very high in 2003 and have been consistently very high in recent years. Current standards are very high throughout the school and achievement in relation to their broadly average standards when they begin in Year 7 is excellent. These very high standards are achieved because the teaching is excellent and ensures the constant promotion of very high standards. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and show that standards are very high. In Year 7 to 9, pupils create lively images in card, wood, straw, hessian and paper, demonstrating high levels of competence in working with line, shape, colour and tone. Pupils' sketchbooks show a rapidly growing confidence in the use of colour and texture, with bold, bright studies. They gain great skill with pencil, producing intense studies of work by artists such as O'Keefe and Gaudi. In Year 11, pupils continue to gain knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject at an excellent rate. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress on an individual basis throughout the school. Talented pupils are identified and extension and enrichment opportunities provided. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils took part in a special project at the Liverpool Tate gallery.
- 100 Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. A vast range of materials, including wet and dry media, are used throughout the teaching and enables pupils to explore, from the very start, ways of working within the subject that best suit them and maximises success. Teachers maintain excellent pace and challenge by very focused individual advice, encouraging pupils to think further and discover ideas for themselves. A major strength is the positive, articulate and mature attitude of the pupils; as a result pupils listen and try very hard in lessons. Boys are helped to achieve highly through involvement in short-term tasks linked to clear targets and the motivation to produce a range of high quality finished products. Collage work is highly developed at a standard rarely seen in schools.
- 101 Visiting artists are used regularly and work is stimulated by the work of artists from Europe, Africa, Australia and India; this work makes a significant impact and contribution to pupils' cultural development. Work on the walls of the department and around the school is a testament to this. In addition, recent work looking at the work of female Indian artists has further broadened the range of stimulus and has led to the raising of issues about other cultures and discussion about identity in society. The shared ambition, direction and energy of the staff in establishing the subject as a major influence in the school are very positive features of the department. The head of department provides visionary leadership with an innovative curriculum. A highly professional dialogue exists about improvements to teaching and learning within the team of teachers. Since the last inspection standards, teaching and learning have improved.

Example of outstanding practice

The learning environment in the three art rooms is outstanding. These rooms are filled with layer upon layer of pupils' and artists' work. The display of hundreds of objects and collection of natural materials, such as pebbles, sand, seed heads, coloured jars, pictures and pupils' own work, all mixed together, provide not only great stimulus but provide great opportunity for connections to be demonstrated by teachers and pupils. Original Aboriginal art is placed among pupils' responses, for example, full sized turtles, oversized fish, giant lizards and collections of 'didgeridoo' models. A large collection of African masks merge seamlessly into pupils' work constructed from re-cycled card and paper in an amazing array of colour. Almost every available wall space is used to act as a carefully thought out visual aid and celebration of pupils' work. This outstanding environment for learning enables pupils and staff to be constantly within the world of art and make connections with images and the environment, provide stimulus and a wonderful resource for teaching and learning.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of well planned teaching despite limited accommodation.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and purposeful.
- The department's well developed links with primary schools provide good continuity of learning.
- There are not enough computers or tuned percussion instruments.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average	Above average
GCSE in Year 10 and 11	-	Above average	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory		
Management	Satisfactory		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Satisfactory		

Commentary

- 102 Pupils' attainment in music is average when they enter the school. Current standards in both Year 9 and Year 11 are above the national average. Results in GCSE in 2003 were very good, but numbers entered were relatively low. Groups sizes vary from year to year and this year are considerably larger.
- 103 Pupils in Year 7 make rapid progress partly because they have two lessons per week and partly because they have had good contact with the music department while still in primary school and pupils build well on their prior learning. In Year 9, almost pupils all play a keyboard with reasonable fluency, co-ordinating hands, using fully fingered chords, and reading simple scores. Most pupils compose simple pieces, and many exercise musical judgement to refine their work. Because the department encourages pupils to develop their individual interests, in Years 10 and 11 their achievement in both performing and composing is good. Boys are particularly successful at developing their skills as rock guitarists and kit players, and perform in public with confidence. Although the experience of many is built on an aural tradition, most work hard to develop their understanding knowledge of other musical conventions. Restricted accommodation means that pupils are rarely able to work in groups and this limits their ensemble skills. The shortage of computers and tuned percussion restricts opportunities to experiment with sounds. Boys and girls achieve equally well, as do those

with special educational needs, for whom tasks are appropriately adapted; pupils who are gifted and talented achieve well because they are given extra challenges.

- 104 Teachers' expertise is good. They know pupils' capabilities well, and their expectations are appropriately high. Clear learning objectives ensure pupils continue to develop skills and understanding in a systematic manner: pupils learning about 'Ragtime' understood its chord structure and rhythmic characteristics and were able to relate these to features of African folk music; similarly, pupils who had composed a pavan were able to reflect on the universal nature of folk music and instruments as they looked at and played an example of Egyptian music. Pupils' work is well marked, and targets are set and reviewed regularly.
- 105 Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and gain good results. However, there are some inconsistencies, particularly in marking pupils' work. Due to the organisation of the teaching within the subject, pupils benefit from just one of two very different, but complementary teaching approaches. This practice in Years 10 and 11 means that activities are at times dominated by a rock culture and at times by a more traditional approach. Currently, there is no scheme of work for the GCSE course, nor a subject handbook to support consistency of approach across the subject.
- 106 The take-up of instrumental lessons is low, and extra-curricular activities are at present restricted to a choir but groups of pupils entertain in local primary schools and homes for the elderly, and give concerts regularly. There is a great deal of spontaneous music-making: the department is busy every lunch-time with enthusiastic rock guitarists and drummers. Standards are higher than at the previous inspection and teaching is of similar quality.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in GCSE is excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership is excellent.
- Drama makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Resources for lighting and ICT are insufficient.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Excellent	Very good
Standards of work seen	Above average	Very high	Well above average
GCSE in Year 10 and 11	-	Very high	-
Teaching	Good	Very good	Very good
Learning	Good	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Excellent		
Management	Very good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Very good		

Commentary

- 107 In the GCSE examination in 2003, almost 100 per cent of pupils entered gained A* to C grades of which over 50 per cent were A* and A. Seven times as many pupils as is found nationally were awarded A* grades; the trend has risen steadily over the past 3 years.

- 108 Achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is good, and in Years 10 & 11, where around one third of all pupils choose drama, achievement is outstanding. At all stages pupils are taught to develop an analytical approach and to empathise with characters and their predicaments. At the same time there is a very clear emphasis on pupils developing dramatic skills and learning about important influences in contemporary theatre. In Year 9, pupils work at a challenging level comparing the differences between stylised theatre and the approaches of Brechtian and Stanislavskian. They are familiar with a range of standard theatrical devices and know the importance of body language, facial expression, dynamic variety and grouping. They use technical language to discuss their work, and evaluate their own and others' work constructively. Pupils in Year 11 present highly refined work; more able pupils have created powerful pieces of devised drama derived from careful research of different human predicaments. These demonstrated very good control of pace, timing, and interplay of characters, and the impact was heightened by well-judged sardonic humour. Pupils are not afraid to take risks, either with subject matter or with the way it is presented.
- 109 Pupils learn very well because teaching is very good. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm in a charismatic manner. Their knowledge and expertise are good. Learning objectives are clear and pupils' skills are systematically developed. Lessons are well planned with inventive strategies which engage and maintain pupils' interest, and relationships are excellent. Pupils' work is well marked, advice for improvement is extensive, and, on a regular basis, pupils set and review their own targets.
- 110 Visionary leadership has increased the awareness and abilities of all staff in dealing with current educational issues. Concern over the achievement of boys has been countered by successful events such as a script writing competition and a break dancing club. Participation in Africa Awareness Week, and visits from musicians from non-European cultures effectively prepare pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. There is an extensive programme of visits to professional theatres. "Taster Days" provide continuity of experience for pupils from primary schools, and there is good contact with performing arts courses in local colleges. Very good management means that the department's team of five teachers are well supported and prepared to meet the requirements of the scheme of work through regular discussions and rigorous monitoring. The scheme of work is carefully planned to ensure that pupils develop skills and perception progressively and systematically.
- 111 Accommodation is good, but there are no computers, and the lighting system is out-of-date. Large numbers of pupils are involved in drama clubs and the large-scale productions which are becoming a regular feature of the department. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in the GCSE course is very good and results are consistently very high.
- The quality of leadership and management is good.
- Pupils work very well together and support one another in raising their levels of achievement.
- The very good programme of extra-curricular activities is well supported.
- The time allocated to core physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate and a significant proportion of pupils underachieve.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement in National Curriculum physical education	Good	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Standards of work in National Curriculum physical education lessons	Average	Below average	Below average
GCSE in Year 10 and 11	-	Very high	-
Teaching	Good	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good	Good
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		
Changes in effectiveness since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory		

Commentary

- 112 Pupils join the school with below average standards. In response to good teaching, by Year 9 pupils achieve well, developing new skills and techniques and analysing and assessing their own and others' work. They combine striking and jumping to perform the 'smash' in volleyball and assess each others' work using National Curriculum level descriptors. The inadequate amount of time allocated to core physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11 results in underachievement. For example, in basketball, unless boys in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE course or attend the basketball club, they do not build significantly on their earlier performance in Years 7 to 9 and for many pupils, standards remain as they were at the end of Year 9. The GCSE results have been very high for the last two years and boys and girls do equally well. Pupils apply theory to practice knowledgeably, showing very good understanding of course concepts.
- 113 In Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE groups, lessons are consistently well planned and teachers closely match challenge and pace to pupils' different abilities. In their first football lesson, Year 7 pupils quickly learned the new skills for ball control techniques. Before the end of the lesson they could select their preferred technique and make suggestions for improvement. Tasks were constructed progressively and the teacher's expectations were high. Pupils are keen to work hard and they co-operate very well in teams and small groups. In the GCSE groups, the quality of teaching is very good. In an excellent Year 11 GCSE practical lesson, all pupils exceeded their previous levels of performance in their fitness programmes. Pupils inspired one another with very high levels of encouragement. As a consequence, they all pushed themselves to their limits and showed improvements, in many cases beyond their expectations. Their analysis of their performances showed very good levels of understanding of muscular endurance and cardio-vascular fitness and the teacher probed pupils' knowledge through very effective questioning. This stimulated them to develop their ideas further and apply these at higher levels of analysis.
- 114 The time allocated to National Curriculum lessons in Years 10 and 11, at 48 minutes per week before time is allowed for changing, is very limited. Consequently, the range of activities offered is restricted and, although pupils are well taught and make some progress in lessons, their standards are below average and their overall achievement is unsatisfactory.
- 115 Extra-curricular activities are very well attended, especially in Years 7 to 9. There is a wide range of teams and lunchtime clubs are popular. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to participate and their levels of performance benefit from opportunities to play competitively. Rugby teams consistently achieve success at the highest levels in the national tournaments.
- 116 There is a clear focus on raising standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE groups and this is evident in the teaching of these groups. Very good teamwork is reflected in

the ongoing exchange of good practice and the curriculum is managed flexibly with the aim of maximising learning. These priorities now need to be addressed for the provision of core physical education in Years 10 and 11. Self-evaluation is continuous and responsive to changing patterns in pupils' achievements. Performance management is supportive of staff in their professional development and there is very good support for student teachers.

- 117 Results in GCSE have improved significantly; assessment has improved; teaching remains a strength and pupils in Years 7 to 9 continue to make good progress. Standards and achievement for a significant proportion of pupils not taking GCSE or taking part in extra-curricular activities in Years 10 and 11 are not as good as they were.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

- 118 No vocational courses were inspected in depth.
- 119 In this curriculum area the school offers vocational studies as a double option in Years 10 and 11. They are open to all pupils and provide more practical methods of learning as well as continuity and progression on courses spanning school and college. Provision is very well planned. The school works in close co-operation with a local college and the organisation and management of these arrangements are very effective so that pupils do not miss lessons in other subjects. Joinery, hairdressing, motor vehicle engineering and text processing are currently on offer. Pupils select one of these and over two years gain Level 1 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or similar vocational accreditation. Pupils and parents are fully involved in a detailed induction process and high expectations of standards of work, attendance and behaviour are made clear.
- 120 During the inspection sessions were seen in hairdressing, where pupils were practicing French Roll styling; joinery, where they were making haunched mortise and tenon joints and in motor vehicle engineering, where they were learning about brakes and suspension systems. Teaching and learning were very good in all areas because of teachers' expertise, planning and the use of first-rate resources and accommodation.
- 121 Monitoring of attendance is good and the college provides termly progress reports of high quality that are communicated to pupils and parents. Pupils are treated as young adults, respond accordingly and make very good progress in learning new skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

- 122 Personal, social and health education is taught through citizenship lessons, form time, religious education lessons and, in Years 10 and 11, through six whole-day experiences at times throughout the two years. The programme is well planned and includes good attention to drugs education and relationships. Many outside speakers and agencies are invited into the school and their worthwhile contributions to the programme are appreciated by pupils. Personal, social and health education was observed in two lessons seen in Year 8. In these lessons relating to careers education, pupils discussed their personal aims and ambitions well and develop realistic expectations of their futures. In a citizenship lesson in Year 8 on crime and punishment, a good level of discussion reflected pupils' developing understanding of social issues and crime and they had opportunity to develop their own points of view on right and wrong. In a lunchtime meeting with health service officials, confidence in contributing to a discussion was apparent when pupils from the school gave their views on how to improve experiences for young patients in local hospitals.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for active participation in citizenship are extensive.
- Teaching and learning are good in citizenship lessons.
- Where citizenship is taught through other subjects it is not always made clear to pupils that the focus is citizenship.
- Assessment procedures are good in Years 7 to 9 but are not yet sufficiently developed in Years 10 and 11.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11	Overall
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Standards of work seen	Above average	Average	Average
Teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good		
Management	Good		

Commentary

- 123 Standards of work are above average where citizenship is taught as a separate subject in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 citizenship is taught through tutor periods and other subjects of the curriculum and standards are average. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding of local community issues as well as global issues and produce extended pieces of research on a variety of topics. For example, an exercise in which they planned ideas and presentations for a public meeting on the use of genetically modified crops involved good internet research and balanced judgements. Their work on the services provided by the local council, including the costs, was equally well prepared and presented. All pupils, girls and boys, those identified as gifted and talented and those with special educational needs achieve well overall.
- 124 In Years 10 and 11, citizenship is taught through a range of special 'citizenship days' where pupils are taken off the normal timetable and a variety of speakers are invited into school to give talks and organise discussions and activities. Pupils participate in decision-making strategies and develop their knowledge and understanding on a wide range of topics which include problems related to drug-abuse, the role of the law, issues for disabled people in society, the role of local and national government and commercial enterprise.
- 125 None of the 'citizenship days' took place during the inspection but the pupils discussed their participation with inspectors and the large number of feedback forms showed that their reactions were overwhelmingly positive. Pupils found the days stimulating and enjoyable, knew that they had broadened their horizons, and felt that they gave good preparation for the wider world. However, not all of the days are specifically citizenship orientated, and in Year 11 are much more closely related to careers and personal, social and health education.
- 126 There are many opportunities in the life of the school for pupils to be taught to become active citizens. For example, during the inspection a group of 10 pupil volunteers from all year groups in the school gave up their lunchtime to assist in a research project by the local health service about the design of new wards and out patients' facilities for children. The pupils involved were courteous and positive. Older pupils were supporting an amnesty international campaign by writing to world leaders about violence against women. School and year councils provide an opportunity for pupils to engage in democratic debate and action.

- 127 Teachers who are involved in specific citizenship lessons are enthusiastic and committed to this new subject. Creative and effective strategies are used to engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Independent learning is positively encouraged through many research projects. However, some aspects of citizenship are taught through other subjects in the curriculum and here reference to citizenship is incidental so that pupils are not fully aware that citizenship is a focus for their learning. Nor are enough opportunities taken to assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and so contribute to their overall assessment of progress in citizenship. Homework is set and marked in Years 8 and 9 with positive comments but overall assessment is still at an early stage in development and pupils do not know how well they are doing in the subject.
- 128 The subject is well managed and fully integrated into the whole school programme for pupils' personal and social development.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
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	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
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).