

INSPECTION REPORT

SIDDAL MOOR SPORTS COLLEGE

Heywood

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105834

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Freeborn

Lead inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 3 February 2005

Inspection number: 268454

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1049
School address:	Newhouse Road Heywood Lancashire
Postcode:	OL10 2NT
Telephone number:	01706 369436
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Walker
Date of previous inspection:	22 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Siddal Moor Sports College is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. The pupil population is relatively stable and with 1049 pupils on roll, the school is about the same size as most other secondary schools. The school provides for pupils across the ability range. However, attainment on entry is below average overall. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and with formal statements are average. Pupils with the highest levels of need mostly have specific learning difficulties or social and emotional difficulties. Very few of the pupils, three per cent only, have minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these pupils, most are of Pakistani family background. The proportion of pupils with first languages other than English is low and there are no pupils in the early stages of learning English. Pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds but, broadly, these backgrounds are less advantaged. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The school has achieved Investors in People status three times and the Sportsmark gold award twice.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2138	Kenneth Thomas	Lead inspector	
758	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
672	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Religious education
1115	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
2406	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	Mathematics
2508	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
3174	Maxwell Pettitt	Team inspector	History Art and design
3924	Graham Cooper	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Work related learning
15150	Susan Wilkinson	Team inspector	Music
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This effective school provides good value for money. Its success is based on strong leadership, much good teaching and the good attitudes of the majority of pupils. Overall results in National Curriculum tests are average and although GCSE examination results are below average, the achievement of all groups of pupils is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's clarity of purpose, with very good support from other senior managers, ensures that there is a continuous drive to raise standards.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and very good use is made of assessment information to set targets, monitor pupils' progress, evaluate performance and guide planning.
- The standards attained by boys at the end of Year 11 are significantly below those of girls.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of the vast majority of pupils underpin their good academic progress and personal development.
- Standards in art in Years 7 to 9 and in music in Years 7 to 11 are not as high as they should be.
- A number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not receive their full entitlement to music and the school does not comply with the statutory requirement to provide careers education in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils' educational experiences are enhanced by Sports College status, a very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11 and good enrichment opportunities.
- Some aspects of the accommodation for design and technology, and music are unsatisfactory and have an adverse impact on provision. The dining area is too small for the size of the school.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Particularly good progress has been made over the last two years and almost all of the issues identified for action have now been tackled successfully. In particular, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is much improved and is now among the strengths of the school. Because there is more good and better teaching, and much less that is unsatisfactory, standards are rising. However, the rate of improvement is slowed because of ongoing difficulties in teacher recruitment and for this reason, standards in music continue to be well below what they should be.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	D	D	D	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.*

Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and, although standards at the end of Year 11 are below average, when standards on entry are taken into account, **achievement is good**. At the end of Year 9, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are average. In 2004, the GCSE results in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, and physical education were average. Apart from history and music, where results were well below average, results in all other GCSE subjects were below average. Nevertheless, taken overall, the results were above average in comparison with similar schools. The GNVQ Intermediate information and communication technology results were above average.

The attitudes and behaviour of the vast majority of pupils are good. The number of fixed period exclusions is below average for a school of this size. Pupils' personal development, including **their spiritual development is good**. **Social development and moral development are very good**,

and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good.

The quality of the curriculum, including provision to enrich pupils' learning outside lessons, is good. However, provision for music is poor. Pupils are provided with very good support and guidance and considerable account is taken of their views. Good links with parents and very good links with other schools and the community enhance provision. Difficulties in teacher recruitment and long-term absences of key staff through illness are adversely affecting provision in several subjects, as are some aspects of the accommodation.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and, with effective support from other members of the leadership team, provides a strong driving force within the school. The management of the school is good and rapidly strengthening. The school makes effective use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is good. Statutory requirements for the provision of music in Years 7 to 9 and careers education in Years 7 and 8 are not met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are largely satisfied with the school and what it provides for their children. They judge that teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard and do their best. They do not always feel fully informed about how well their children are getting on, a matter not substantiated by inspection evidence. Pupils feel that it is a good school and have very positive views about many aspects.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the attainment of boys.
- Improve provision and raise achievement and standards in art and music.
- Continue to press for improvements to the accommodation for design and technology and music, and for the dining area,

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement to music in Years 7 to 9 and to careers education in Years 7 and 8.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are average and, although GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 are below average, these results represent good achievement when standards on entry to the school are taken into account. Standards, from work seen during the inspection, are consistent with the test and examination results.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Weaknesses in the performance of boys hamper the raising of standards.
- Pupils of all backgrounds and prior attainment achieve equally well.
- Assessment information is used very effectively to raise achievement by identifying where pupils might be falling behind so that action can be taken rapidly.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.2 (32.0)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	35.5 (35.1)	n/a (35.4)
science	33.0 (33.8)	n/a (33.6)

There were 210 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The end of Year 6 National Curriculum test results show that standards on entry to the school have fluctuated from well below average to just below average over the last four years. Taken overall, the attainment on entry of the present Years 9 and 10 was below average, while that of the present Year 8 was well below average. The overall attainment of the present Year 7 was just below average. Although there is some variation in the attainment on entry of boys and girls in mathematics and science, boys' attainment on entry in English is consistently well below that of girls.
2. Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2004 were average overall and the challenging targets for the percentage of pupils to reach the expected Level 5 or above were met in English and mathematics, but marginally missed in science. These results represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. In comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment (these are schools in which pupils attained similar results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6), the 2004 results were average in all three subjects. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, results were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Although there has been some variation in the English results, results in mathematics and science have been average for the last three years. Results overall show a rising trend although below the rate at which results are rising nationally. The achievement of the very few pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds is comparable to that of their peers.
3. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades, although below the national average, rose in comparison with the results obtained in 2003 and matched the school's target for the year group. In comparison with schools whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9 these results and the average total GCSE point score,

which reflects performance over the whole attainment range, were well above average. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances the results were average. These results represent good achievement when standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. Nevertheless, overall performance is adversely affected by the well below average performance of boys and their much larger numbers in the school and particular year groups. Although the numbers of boys and girls in the 2004 cohort were about equal, the difference in performance is seen in the GCSE results. Whereas girls achieved very well, with 54 per cent obtaining five or more A* to C grades, boys' achievement was below expectations with only 33 per cent gaining five or more A* to C grades.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44 (41)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (92)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	256.5	282.8

There were 202 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The school is implementing exceptionally well-structured strategies to raise boys' attainment. The use by the school of assessment information to set targets, track pupils' performance and identify potential underachievement is very sophisticated. This analysis is used particularly effectively to plan individual intervention, involving carefully focused support and guidance, and the active participation of parents. These strategies were first introduced in 2003 and the indications are that there was a beneficial effect on the boys' results in 2004.
5. The 2004 GCSE examination results in English language, mathematics and science were average. They were also average in biology, physics, design and technology, and physical education. Results in chemistry, art, English literature, French, and geography were below average, while results in history, music and religious education were well below average. Pupils following the GNVQ Intermediate course in information and communication technology achieved well and results were above average.
6. In work seen during the inspection standards in Year 9 are consistent with expectations in most subjects. However, pupils are not achieving as well as they should in art and music and standards in these subjects are below and well below average respectively. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 11, although generally below course expectations are rising. Contributing to this improving trend is the way in which the school is now carefully analysing progress against prior attainment and taking steps to tackle any patterns emerging in each year group. There are indications that the strategies being implemented to raise the attainment of boys are having a positive effect in Years 7 to 9, although the benefits are yet to be seen in Years 10 and 11. As boys outnumber girls, the issue of raising boys' achievement remains an ongoing priority.
7. The school provides a number of extension activities for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. They benefit considerably from these activities and achieve well in their academic subjects. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because procedures for identifying and supporting pupils are very effective. They receive good teaching in subjects and good support and guidance in the learning zone.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they behave well during the school day. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to take responsibility and use their initiative.
- Although procedures for promoting attendance are very good, some pupils fail to attend regularly and a small number regularly arrive late.
- Procedures to deal with all forms of harassment, including racism, are very effective.
- Most of the pupils are sensible and polite and they enjoy school life.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are good and these help to create a constructive learning atmosphere.

Commentary

8. Pupils' positive attitudes to school are reflected in the way in which they wear their school uniform with pride. In discussion they say that the school has improved significantly over the last two years. They like the house system and are keen to make the most of the increased range of opportunities to take responsibility and the many additional activities that the house system allows. Pupils like their teachers and are polite to each other and to visitors. Pupils' behaviour is generally good and this is particularly important when they move along the congested staircases and corridors at lesson changeover times or cope with the small dining area at lunchtimes. Most pupils behave well during lessons and show that they are keen to learn and make progress. The school places great emphasis on ensuring that staff consistently remind pupils of what is required of them in terms of their conduct. However, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils, mainly in Years 7 to 9, deteriorates either because of weaknesses in teaching which does not meet their needs or because of a lack of self-discipline. This problem is exacerbated by the long-term absence through illness of a number of key staff and the inconsistency that this introduces into the application of the school's behaviour code. Also, the behaviour of some pupils, especially boys, deteriorates when being taught by temporary teachers.
9. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are in full-time education and the school's procedures for dealing with challenging behaviour are usually very successful. Nevertheless, the challenging behaviour of some pupils inevitably leads to exclusion from school. As a result there were 57 fixed term exclusions and two permanent exclusions in the last school year. These figures are below the national average for a school of this size and the lowest exclusion rate in Rochdale LEA. All exclusions are well documented and the school involves parents as much as possible in order to prevent such behaviour recurring. Pupils are encouraged to be open and to report any instances of bullying. Pupils say that they can easily do this by posting notes into the various 'worry boxes', by telling someone at the Year 11 'drop-in' sessions or by confiding in the learning mentors. The school takes a strong stance against racism of any sort and any such incidents are dealt with very firmly.
10. At the time of the last inspection, attendance was about the same as the national average. Over the intervening six years, the school has worked hard to raise the level of attendance and procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance have been improved. These are now very good. However, the overall attendance rate has remained stubbornly close to the national average. This is because of the impact of family holidays taken during term-time. Term time holiday is strongly discouraged and the headteacher personally vets all requests. The school strives to ensure that pupils are in regular attendance and the impact of the rigorous monitoring procedures is seen in the level of unauthorised absence, which is below the national average. When necessary, governors and the education welfare officer invite

individual pupils and their parents to attend a meeting in order to set attendance targets for the future. Pupils with outstanding attendance may win a cash prize and the house system is used to foster a healthy spirit of friendly competition. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day and a recent drive to improve the punctuality of those who are not has been effective. Pupils who arrive late now have to explain themselves to two senior teachers and this has halved the number of late arrivals. Punctuality to lessons is generally satisfactory. However, some of the older pupils dawdle as they move between lessons and may arrive up to ten minutes late.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	0.4
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1015	56	2
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	22	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

- Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development makes a significant contribution to their all-round personal development. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to contribute to the life of the school. Through the school and house councils, for example, and through older pupils taking on roles as school prefects and mentors, they are able to express their views and develop an understanding of what it means to be responsible members of the school community. In lessons pupils relate well to their peers, work confidently in pairs and groups, and most are keen to contribute to class discussion. The school code of practice is understood and followed by the majority of pupils and most are able to distinguish right from wrong. Through the good role models provided by staff pupils learn to show respect for other people's feelings and opinions.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and much improved from the time of the last inspection. The school has devised a well-planned programme of assemblies and activities to be carried out in tutor groups that meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Although there is some variation in the consistency with which the activities are implemented in tutor groups, the programme makes a good contribution to pupil's spiritual development. The recent introduction of a beliefs, values and citizenship

course has further enhanced this provision. In several subjects, such as English, history and geography, pupils are provided with a number of planned opportunities to reflect on topics that have a spiritual or moral dimension. Pupil's cultural development is satisfactory. Although pupils are provided with opportunities to gain a greater understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions through visits and through subjects such as English and history, not enough advantage is taken of the opportunities that arise in art and music. Also, the religious education curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not provide enough opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in contemporary society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. There is much skilful teaching and this, together with the effective use of assessment, promotes good learning. A good range of enrichment activities enriches pupils' learning experiences. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. Links with parents are good and links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Good use is made of assessment information to help to raise standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving the quality of teaching and learning has a high priority and very good systems are in place to support this.
- In most lessons, positive relationships and teachers' high expectations help pupils of all attainment levels to work hard and make good progress.
- Teaching in a small number of lessons lacks enough challenge to maintain the interest and attention of the pupils.
- In most subjects assessment information is used very effectively to reinforce learning, but in some subjects the marking of pupils' work does not provide enough information on how to progress further.
- Very good use is made of ICT to enhance teaching and support learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection 106 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	27 (25%)	41 (39%)	28 (26%)	6 (6%)	0	1 (1%)

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.

13. There is very little difference in the quality of teaching between different year groups. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now consistently good or better in almost all subjects. At the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching was good or better in about half of all lessons; it is now good or better in about two-thirds of lessons. There is now considerably less unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the weaknesses in teaching relate to difficulties in maintaining consistency in the long-term absence through illness of several key teachers. Nevertheless, pupils and parents value the sense of purpose conveyed by well taught lessons.
14. The school's commitment to promoting teaching strategies that encourage active learning is a policy that is driven by the headteacher and rigorously pursued at all levels. Clear

expectations of classroom practice, rigorous monitoring and the sharing of ideas on how to improve teaching and learning underpin this drive. This evaluative approach to teaching complements teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects and creates a positive atmosphere for learning.

15. Teachers plan their lessons well and explicit learning objectives are prominently displayed so that pupils can see where they are headed. This, together with other approaches originating in the National Key Stage 3 strategy, makes a significant impact on pupils' motivation and does much to promote equality. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers, and are also offered a suitable range of extension activities. As a result all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Most lessons have a clear structure, get off to a brisk start and involve pupils through good quality oral work. In many lessons, resources are used imaginatively. In particular, very good use is made of ICT to make teaching more interesting and to support learning. This is particularly helpful in engaging the interests of boys and supplements the several other strategies being implemented to raise boys' attainment. The most effective teachers exert firm but friendly control of their classes, resulting in a productive working atmosphere. By contrast, teaching in a small number of lessons suffers because the learning activities do not offer enough challenge or teachers do not exert enough control. Time in these lessons is wasted because pupils lose concentration and the teachers have to spend too much time attempting to manage behaviour. Low expectations and undemanding learning activities were common features in much of the teaching in art, and contributed to a loss of classroom control in one very poor lesson in design and technology.
16. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good when taught in their normal lessons and when they are taught in withdrawal groups. They also get good support from the teaching assistants. This ensures that they achieve well in relation to their past results. Pupils' individual education plans contain suitable academic and personal targets. Literacy is strongly reinforced in most lessons and increasingly effective use is being made of ICT to support pupils' learning. As a result pupils with special needs are making good progress.
17. Effective use is made of assessment information to diagnose individual pupils' needs and to guide teaching and learning strategies. In the marking of pupils' work in English, modern foreign languages, mathematics and geography, for example, the strengths and weaknesses are noted and targets for improvement are set. The practice makes a positive contribution to the good progress pupils make. However, although in science, design and technology, and ICT pupils' work is assessed regularly, they are not given enough information on how they can improve. Although pupils' work is marked regularly in art, pupils are not given enough guidance on the standard of their work in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Effective use of is made of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress and achievement.
18. The senior leadership team is making a significant impact on the quality of teaching. Clear guidance supported by increased training and more opportunities for sharing good practice are contributing to the wider range of teaching and learning strategies now seen in the school.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is good, with particular strengths in sport. Resources for learning are good. Because of staffing difficulties, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is presently unsatisfactory. Some aspects of the accommodation are also unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school does its utmost to provide for pupils' individual needs and aspirations.

- Innovative curriculum provision provides a very good range of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and the high quality of provision in sports has been recognised by the Sportsmark Gold award.
- Statutory requirements for music in Years 7 to 9, and for careers education in Years 7 and 8 are not met.
- Difficulties in recruiting teachers and long-term absences of key staff through illness are adversely affecting provision in some areas.
- Shortcomings in the accommodation for design and technology and music are having an adverse impact on standards.

Commentary

19. Good curricular provision is based on thorough evaluation and a strong emphasis on meeting pupils' needs and providing equal opportunities. This has led to an innovative approach to planning for courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the combination of religious education, PSHE and citizenship into one course, entitled beliefs, values and citizenship. Curriculum provision in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, but ongoing difficulties in attracting music teachers have meant that a significant number of pupils do not receive their entitlement in this subject. Also, the school does not meet the new requirement to provide careers education in Years 7 and 8. There is no discrete drama course and no opportunity for pupils to study a second modern foreign language. The National Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented effectively across the curriculum.
20. Curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Planning is based on a systematic evaluation of pupils' needs while taking account of new national requirements. As a result the school offers pupils six distinct pathways that offer various combinations of academic and vocational courses. The indications are that this range of provision is having a positive impact on pupils' motivation and standards, and on attendance in Years 10 and 11, with fewer pupils requesting changes of courses. The beliefs, values and citizenship course is taught throughout Years 7 to 11. One period a week, taught by specialist teachers, is devoted to the subject and a structured programme that is taught by form tutors during the morning tutorial time supports this. The course is in the early stages of implementation and the school intends to evaluate its impact as part of the planning and review cycle. The early indications are that pupils' are motivated and interested by the course and that this is accelerating their progress. However, there is a need to ensure that it is possible to identify the different strands that constitute the course in order that pupils' achievement and standards can be assessed and to ensure consistency when the course is taught in tutor time.
21. The school's commitment to ensuring that there is equality of opportunity is demonstrated in the provision made to ensure that all pupils are able to benefit from what the curriculum offers. Pupils at all stages on the school's list of pupils who have special educational needs are well provided for and the school's procedures comply with the Code of Practice. Teachers and teaching assistants use their knowledge of pupils' achievements in order to plan future targets and the individual education plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that targets reflect the progress made. The 'learning zone' is open before and after school to allow pupils to undertake further study or to take part in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to use this time to extend their normal school work and this helps them to progress faster.
22. Although the school does not, as yet, comply with the requirement to provide careers education in Years 7 and 8, arrangements for careers advice in later years are good and all pupils have the opportunity to have work experience. Because careers guidance is carefully planned and involves local businesses and the Connexions service, pupils receive good advice in Years 9 and 11 on choices for the next stage in their education or for work. The Connexions service provides pupils with careers interviews and guidance on writing job applications. Through local business pupils in Year 10 are provided with mock employment interviews. In partnership with other local schools and colleges of further education, the school provides a Headways course for potentially disaffected pupils in Year 11. This course

has improved pupils' attitudes and attendance, and provides them with a good range of achievement opportunities.

23. The school makes good provision for gifted and talented pupils, in particular for those with aptitudes in sport. As part of the strategy for raising standards the school is keen to ensure that the needs of these pupils are met. Many subjects offer opportunities for pupils to further their interests or boost their learning in lunchtime or after school clubs. These activities are helping to raise standards and in particular, the performance of boys. Many pupils take advantage of the good range of the other enrichment activities that the school provides and high standards are achieved in extra-curricular sporting activities. Participation rates in sporting activities are high, with most pupils being involved in a variety of inter-house competitions. However, pupils have too few opportunities to participate in the arts. In music, activities such as the school choir and band are limited by the split lunchtime and the after school emphasis on sports. In art little provision is made in terms of visits or visiting artists.
24. Some improvements have been made to the accommodation since the last inspection report. At that time subject teaching rooms were distributed across the school. All subjects now occupy adjacent rooms and this is assisting in the development of teamwork and the sharing of good practice. However, there are still significant inadequacies in the accommodation and these have adverse effects on pupils' learning. The music rooms are in a poor condition and do not provide a stimulating learning environment. Although good displays of pupils' work help to brighten the design and technology rooms, they remain dull and unappealing. The dining room is too small for the number of pupils on roll and even though the school has introduced a staggered lunch break to ease congestion, overcrowding at these times can have an adverse effect on standards of behaviour.
25. Resources for learning have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now good. There has been a significant improvement in the computer resources and the school now has four ICT suites and interactive whiteboards are available, and used effectively, in most classrooms. However, because ICT suites are heavily used by the vocational courses, it is sometimes difficult for other subjects to have access to these resources. In order to ensure that all subjects are able to use ICT to support teaching and learning, the school is investing in banks of laptop computers for use in classrooms.
26. At the time of the inspection the school was experiencing significant staffing difficulties. Because of difficulties in recruitment there are vacancies in design and technology, and music. Although the school is taking measures to reduce the impact of these vacancies, there is an adverse effect on overall provision in these subjects. Appointments have now been made and the vacancies are to be filled in September 2005. In addition to the difficulties being experienced in recruiting teachers, several departments, including English and mathematics, are affected by the long-term absences of teachers on maternity leave or through illness. Temporary teachers covering lessons in these subjects are being well supported by their permanent colleagues. Access to the library is also restricted because of the long-term absence, through illness, of the school librarian. A team of very effective teaching assistants and technicians supports teaching and learning. Administrative, caretaking and cleaning staff also make important contributions to the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance and involves pupils very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent induction procedures help incoming Year 7 pupils to settle in quickly.
- Close monitoring of pupils' progress plays a strong part in improving their achievement.
- The 'learning zone' provides very good support for pupils who need extra time or guidance.

- The school is very interested in pupils' views and is keen to involve them when planning for the future.

Commentary

27. Liaison with contributing primary schools is very close and pupils in Year 7 speak highly of the way they were eased into the school's routines and helped to make friends. Links with primary schools are strengthened through the school's status as a Sports College and pupils in Years 5 and 6 make very good use of the school's sports and science facilities. Pupils also undertake bridging modules in English, mathematics, science and PSHE, and this helps to smooth the transition from primary to secondary school. Gifted and talented pupils who are in the last year at their primary schools also visit the school once a month to undertake more challenging activities in English, mathematics and science. Teachers regularly visit their primary colleagues to collaborate on curricular matters and pupils in Years 6 and 7 exchange letters. All Year 6 pupils have one full transfer day during the summer term and pupils with special educational needs visit the school for an additional half-day. At the start of the academic year, Year 7 pupils come into school a day before the older pupils and this helps them to become familiar with their new school before everyone else arrives.
28. The house system is central to school life and helps to ensure that pupils are well looked after during the school day. Working relationships are good and any pupils who are causing concern may be referred to their head of house. During discussion, pupils say they like their teachers and that they would feel able to seek advice or guidance if the need arose. They know how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to improve. Each term, assessment profiles help teachers to spot individual pupils who are underachieving and they may be offered additional support or time with a learning mentor. Pupils are increasingly involved in reviewing their work and personal development and setting targets for improvement. The 'learning zone' also provides excellent support for pupils who have particular problems. For example, pupils returning after an exclusion or other period of absence may spend some time in the zone before returning to their class.
29. The designated teacher for child protection is experienced in the role and ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibilities. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs are good. They are all set individual targets for improvement and progress is carefully monitored. Close liaison with a wide range of external agencies ensures that pupils with particular health, educational or social needs enjoy ready access to appropriate advice and guidance.
30. The school is keen to involve pupils as much as possible in its development and pupils are encouraged to make their views known. Pupils can use the various suggestion boxes that are placed around school or use the more formalised house and school council system. For example, house council representatives recently attended a conference and then helped to revise the school's behaviour and anti-bullying procedures. They also suggested more general ways in which the school could improve and proposed amendments to the school's reward systems.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Constructive links with other schools and the community support the curriculum and pupils' personal development very well.
- Parents receive very good information about the progress their children are making and other aspects of their life at school.

- Parents provide good support for their children's learning.
- The school makes good use of its links with further and higher education.

Commentary

31. The school's status as a Sports College creates many opportunities to engage and interest pupils, parents and the wider community. For example, numerous businesses support the 'Reach Your Goal' initiative; this programme helps to develop the skills and motivation of pupils who are at risk of disaffection. Partner primary schools regularly use the sports and science facilities and this helps incoming pupils to become familiar with the school before they transfer at the start of Year 7. Teachers also regularly visit each other in order to share their expertise and they undertake training on issues such as accelerated learning and the raising of boys' achievement. Year 6 pupils visit for sporting activities and there is a good range of extension activities for pupils who are gifted and talented in various subjects.
32. Links with secondary schools are especially strong at teacher level and some pupils in Years 10 and 11 visit other schools to study law or to use their computer facilities. In collaboration with other secondary schools, Year 11 pupils who are at risk of dropping out of education are taking part in the Headways project. The extended work placements and vocational courses undertaken at Hopwood Hall College broaden the curriculum and provide very well for these pupils' needs.
33. Parents are pleased with the work of the school and are proud of the way it has improved in recent years. Most of the parents come along to their children's consultation evenings and try to avoid booking a family holiday during the term. The school keeps parents closely informed about all matters relating to their children's education and it makes additional efforts if any particular issues crop up. For example, parents of pupils causing concern are invited to attend review meetings where individual targets will be set. In addition, the parents of Year 11 boys who are on the 'Raising Achievement Project' receive a letter each week from the learning mentor. Heads of house also write about any children who are receiving additional support in the 'learning zone'. Parents appreciate this openness of approach and their support is reflected in the recently improved examination results. Parents are fully included in the work of the special educational needs department and attendance at reviews of pupils' individual education plans or statements is good. This provision is enhanced by strong links with a wide range of outside agencies.
34. Close links with several colleges of further education ensure that pupils receive comprehensive information on the many courses available. They are also able to go along to Bury College and Manchester College for taster A-level classes and representatives from Hopwood Hall College attend all parents' evenings. Pupils receive very good information on college placements and can attend master classes in sport and twilight sessions in psychology and nutrition. Pupils have recently visited the Universities of Bangor and Manchester and productive links are arising with Cambridge University as a result of the school's participation in the project on raising boys' achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and that of other key staff is good. The management of the school is good. The school makes good use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is providing firm leadership with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments are helping to raise standards.

- Sports College leadership, with very strong support from the senior leadership team, is outstanding and having a positive impact on provision and standards.
- Leadership and management in art are unsatisfactory.
- Governors provide the school with strong support.

Commentary

35. The headteacher, who has been in post for two years, is providing the school with determined and effective leadership. She is highly visible around the school and this, together with her caring approach to both pupils and staff, makes a significant contribution to the positive ethos within the school. The headteacher's clear vision for the future development of the school is underpinned by considerable knowledge and understanding of strategies to promote learning. In order to secure consistency in classroom practice, all staff are provided with clear guidance on how to promote effective learning in lessons and supported by rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. This is having a positive effect and contributing to the improvements seen in teaching and learning and the rise in standards. Other senior managers share the headteacher's commitment to raising standards in all areas of the school's work. Performance and other management information is analysed systematically and used effectively as part of the procedures for reviewing the work of departments. Because of this the school has a good picture of its strengths and is able to plan to tackle weaknesses.
36. The management of the school is good. Line management roles and responsibilities, from the leadership team to the other levels of management, are well understood and rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are helping to bring about improvement. Performance management is fully implemented. A comprehensive assessment database has now been established and effective use is being made of this information by the senior leadership team and heads of department for target setting and monitoring. This is helping to raise standards and making a major contribution to school improvement. The school is experiencing particular difficulties in teacher recruitment and, in addition, at the time of the inspection a number of key teachers were absent on maternity leave or through long-term illness. Although the management arrangements to cope with these difficulties are effective in most cases, continuing staffing and accommodation problems in music are having a significant adverse impact on provision and standards.
37. The school improvement plan is comprehensive, contains appropriate targets and is closely linked to department plans. Planning for improvement in subject departments is generally good at all levels. Very good leadership in English, mathematics, citizenship and physical education, and good leadership in science, ICT, religious education and history, is having a positive impact on standards. At the time of the inspection temporary leadership arrangements were in place in modern foreign languages. These arrangements were proving effective in promoting improvement in the subject. However, weaknesses in leadership and management in art are having an adverse effect on standards. There have been continuing weaknesses in the co-ordination of special educational needs provision since the last inspection. This weakness is now being tackled and, backed by the expertise of the headteacher, co-ordination at the time of the inspection was good.
38. Governors provide the headteacher with good support and their professional expertise helps them to make a valuable contribution to the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and make a significant contribution to school improvement. There are, however, shortcomings in the career education curriculum in Years 7 and 8 and deficiencies in the accommodation continue to prevent full coverage of the music curriculum in Years 7 to 9. This latter point was raised by the previous inspection and there has been no improvement over the intervening six years. Building work, however, is planned to begin during the forthcoming summer term and the necessary improvements to the fabric of the building will enable the school to meet its legal requirement in full. Governors manage the budget with considerable skill and financial

management is very good. Best value for money is sought both in purchasing goods and services and in educational outcomes. All of the school's income is spent for the intended purposes and in accordance with the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The large balance being carried forward is committed to planned building work. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,682,513	Balance from previous year	167,837
Total expenditure	3,582,073	Balance carried forward to the next	268,277
Expenditure per pupil	3,404		

WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

What is the effectiveness of work related learning?

39. The school's provision for WRL meets statutory requirements and is effective. This judgement is based on discussions with the co-ordinator for WRL and external agencies, and evidence of how WRL is provided through the curriculum. Leadership and management are good. A full audit of current provision has been made, with clear strategies for future extension. The good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 forms the basis of provision. Work experience is offered to all pupils at the end of Year 10. It is an intrinsic part of some courses, for example the health and social care course and the very effective Headways course, which provides extensive work related opportunities for potentially disaffected pupils. Learning about work is at the heart of courses such as travel and tourism, in which pupils learn how travel agents work and simulate arranging holiday itineraries. In Year 11, all pupils follow a short course in preparation for working life, which includes training in making job applications and mock interviews. The quality of this provision is good and has improved both attendance and levels of achievement for those involved. The school plans to extend its provision to include more enterprise and problem-solving activities in subject areas. It also recognises the need to monitor and improve the quality of advice and guidance provided in tutorial time.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Teaching and learning are good. This has led to good achievement and improving results.
- The very positive attitudes displayed by almost all pupils promote good learning and progress.
- Assessment is very good. Marking shows pupils very clearly how to improve their work.
- Pupils do not receive a continuous and consistent experience of drama.

Commentary

40. The results achieved in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average both in comparison with all schools and with schools where pupils had similar prior attainment. They were well above standards in schools in similar socio-economic circumstances and significantly better than standards at the time of the last inspection.
41. In the 2004 GCSE examinations standards were also better than at the last inspection. They were close to the national average and well above those in similar schools. In both tests and examinations girls' performance was better than boys', but in the national tests for Year 9 pupils the difference was much less than in previous years because of the strategies that the department has put in place to improve boys' achievement.
42. These improved standards are reflected in the work seen during the inspection. The whole thrust of teaching is to give pupils the skills to recognise how texts are constructed and how to use this understanding in their own writing. This means that pupils throughout the school are able to talk knowledgeably about the main features of texts and write in a range of appropriate styles. In a Year 7 lesson a group of lower-attaining pupils were able to identify how to write reports and also what they needed to do to improve their own report writing. In a Year 11 lesson higher-attaining pupils were challenged to aim for grades A* and A by deepening their understanding of poems from other cultures. The focus of the lesson was to analyse how poets use language and how pupils could maximise their success by revealing the effects of the linguistic devices used. Pupils' excellent attitudes and the teacher's high expectations, combined with a brisk pace, the sharing of model answers and the demand on pupils to think for themselves, led to a real sense of achievement. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because of the very good support from teaching assistants and the grouping arrangements that put the needs of children first.
43. This good learning is promoted by good teaching. Even though the department is operating under the pressure of long-term staff absences everything possible is being done to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged. Particular strengths are the way that learning is shared with pupils so that they know exactly what they are to learn. Clear planning, good pace and very good use of assessment and target setting engage pupils' interest and co-operation. Good behaviour, positive attitudes and very good relationships lead to harmonious, orderly classrooms with a very good climate for learning. The well-structured lessons, clear instructions and firm classroom management are raising boys' achievement. Only a few

lessons were observed which did not display these qualities. In these cases there were

weaknesses in pace, a loss of focus on the central learning objectives or inappropriate teaching methods.

44. Very good leadership and management have been central to the good improvement made since the last inspection. The head of department provides excellent clarity of vision for the subject and has very high aspirations for pupils and staff. Assessment and management information are used very effectively to track and monitor the work of the department and pupils' progress. Even though the department has suffered from staffing problems every effort has been taken to minimise the effect on pupils. This is evident in the rising standards, the improved behaviour and in the better teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

45. Although pupils enter the school with below average levels of literacy the efforts of the English department to cater for the lowest attaining pupils mean that by the end of Year 7 most pupils are able to cope adequately with the demands of the curriculum. Rising standards of literacy have contributed to the improving test and examination results but the school continues to look for other ways of ensuring further improvement. Good training has been given to all teachers and further professional development is now occurring within the classroom so that teachers in a growing number of subjects can recognise how strategies for raising standards of literacy can become an integral part of all lessons. Appropriately for its status as a Sports College, the school runs regular combined literacy, numeracy and sporting events. Already in subjects such as geography, mathematics, religious education and physical education and through citizenship activities, pupils are taught and enabled to write extensively in different styles and to develop literacy skills such as note-taking.

Modern foreign languages

During the inspection, the focus was on French. Work in **Spanish** was sampled. Spanish is newly available as a GCSE course from Year 10. Pupils in Year 10 are making rapid progress because very good teaching stimulates them, and ensures that they enjoy learning a new language.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were below average but show a steady trend of improvement.
- The majority of pupils achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Good teaching, leadership and management focus effectively on raising standards and encouraging positive attitudes, especially among boys.
- Marking and reports give pupils good advice and guidance on how they can improve.
- There are few opportunities for independent learning, and the breadth of learning experiences in Years 8 and 9 is narrow.

Commentary

46. Teachers' assessments for 2004 show that pupils reached expected standards by the end of Year 9. Girls did better than boys, but by a decreasing margin as boys improved at a faster rate. Fewer pupils reached higher levels than in 2003. GCSE results in 2004 were below average, but rose for the third year running. Girls did better than boys, but by less than the difference observed nationally. Very few pupils gained the highest grades, A* and A. Pupils did better in French than in almost all other subjects.
47. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils meet expectations by the end of Year 9. Most achieve well, when attainment on entry is taken into account. Pupils with special educational

needs make only satisfactory progress, because they are not well targeted in mixed ability groups. Most pupils gain a good understanding of how language works, and produce brief descriptions in speaking and writing. Higher attainers begin to include tenses in short accounts. Standards are in line with course expectations by the end of Year 11, indicating further improvement and sustained good achievement. Pupils do especially well in writing, where the structure of coursework supports good content, but with variable accuracy. They speak more confidently, using frameworks to develop their conversational skills, although pronunciation is weak throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils recall vocabulary and structures well enough to reach average standards in reading and listening. Girls outnumber boys heavily in top sets, but there is strong evidence of overall improvement by boys, indicating successful strategies. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as others.

48. Teaching and learning are good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have implemented the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 to shape lessons and give them information on how well pupils learn. Pace and planning are generally good, but in the many mixed ability groups all pupils tend to do the same work. This hinders the progress of the lowest attainers. Teachers praise and encourage pupils particularly well. Their caring approach fosters good relationships and attitudes, which contribute significantly to learning. This is very evident in the effort teachers put into marking, both to correct errors and to give clear guidance on how to improve. Most activities are teacher led, so that opportunities to experiment with language are confined to role play and some open-ended homework. Homework usually complements classwork effectively. The weakness in teaching is the reluctance to use French more consistently to conduct lessons. This deprives pupils of appropriate models and listening opportunities, and affects the standard of pronunciation. Teachers are beginning to extend the range of resources by integrating the use of electronic whiteboards, providing good visual support for learning. However, problems of access limit pupils' use of ICT to acquire and practise new language and there is little time, especially in Years 8 and 9, for desirable activities such as independent reading.
49. Systems for monitoring work, analysing results and tracking achievement are thorough. Consequently, in the prolonged absence of the head of department, leadership and management remain good, and the school has made effective arrangements to ensure progress in French. Dedicated teachers work very well together to pool ideas and successful practice, leading to improved standards and attitudes, as shown by the healthy take up for courses in Year 10. Taking account of the increased resources, consistently better teaching and rising results, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving throughout the school.
- Girls' achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good.
- Good strategies are in place for improving boys' achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good leadership and management provide clear direction towards continued improvement.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

50. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels below the national average. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, results were average in comparison with all schools but well above average in relation to similar schools. There were no differences between the performance of boys and girls. Results have fluctuated over time owing to many

changes in staffing, but the 2004 results were the best produced by the department since the last inspection.

51. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 2004 GCSE examination was average. This represents good achievement and a significant improvement on results in the last two years. Girls' performance was much better than that of the boys. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to G was also average. The performance of boys and girls in this grade range was similar. From work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are improving.
52. By the end of Year 9, all groups of pupils achieve well and standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils make good progress because their levels of attainment are assessed on entry and work is then well matched to their needs. This is supported by the good quality of teaching and learning and the successful implementation of the National Strategy for mathematics. By the end of Year 11, overall progress is also good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive effective in-class support in order to reach the targets set for them. Gifted and talented pupils also achieve well. Extension work in lessons is proving to be effective in ensuring that this group attains good standards. However, achievement is not consistent across all groups. It is diminished by the underachievement of a minority of pupils, especially boys. This lack of achievement is largely a reflection of some pupils' low aspirations. To tackle this situation, a number of well-considered strategies for raising boys' achievement are being implemented, including providing a learning mentor to give pupils individual support, especially when engaged in coursework.
53. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are very well planned and the Numeracy Strategy for mathematics is effectively implemented in all years. Short starter sessions provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate previous learning. Teaching resources, especially interactive whiteboards, are effectively used to engage pupils' interest and to help sustain concentration. Targeted questioning is used effectively to include all pupils in the lesson. Behaviour is generally good. Pupils have opportunities to work independently and most demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively or in pairs. However, although most pupils respond well to the tasks set for them, the progress of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 is adversely affected because of the lack of interest they show in lessons. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning are firmly embedded in the mathematics curriculum. However, difficulties of access to computers restrict these opportunities. There are plans to provide laptop computers to tackle this issue. Homework is used effectively to support learning. Assessment procedures are very good. The marking of pupils' work is consistently undertaken and offers pupils clear advice on how to improve. Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is monitored through regular testing and assessments in relation to National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11 monitoring is linked closely to pupils' predicted GCSE grades.
54. Subject leadership and management, with very strong support from an advanced skills teacher, are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject with a focus on teaching and learning in order to raise standards. The mathematics team is committed to raising achievement and works collaboratively towards this objective. During a period of difficulties caused by the long-term absence of two teachers, the head of department has kept the team focused on its objective. He monitors teaching regularly. Effective use is made of assessment information well to identify and tackle weaknesses. Accommodation is good and book resources are very good in providing for the needs of the curriculum. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement. Improved assessment procedures have resulted in teachers planning lessons that are more closely linked to pupils' needs. Regular monitoring of teachers' performance has given a better focus on teaching and learning. These measures have resulted in improved performances in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.

Numeracy across the curriculum

55. Consistent practice among teachers in the mathematics department in the development of pupils' numerical skills enables pupils to cope effectively with the demands made in other subjects. The school numeracy strategy is implemented effectively in most subjects and, when given the opportunity, pupils apply and develop the key skills learned in mathematics lessons in other subjects. There is, for example, good practice in science, geography, history, art, ICT and physical education. The application of pupils' numeracy skills in these subjects provides a firm basis for reinforcing these skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan interesting lessons.
- The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is very good.
- Achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
- The use of assessment to track the progress of pupils against targets is very good. There are, however, weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work.
- The number of pupils gaining higher levels or grades in tests and examinations is well below average.

Commentary

56. In 2004, the National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were average. Boys' and girls' results were similar. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average. Teachers accurately assessed the attainment of pupils in Year 9. Achievement relative to attainment on entry to the school was good. Since the last inspection, results have improved.
57. The 2004 GCSE examination results, including single sciences and double award science, were average. The results were also average in comparison with similar schools. Girls' results were significantly better than those of boys. Attainment on entry is skewed towards the middle and lower end of the attainment range and this is reflected in the GCSE examination results with few pupils gaining the higher A* or A grades. Nevertheless, when attainment at the end of Year 9 is taken into account achievement is good. Even though results in 2004 fell slightly, they have improved since the last inspection.
58. As a result of good teaching, pupils currently in the school are making good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Standards, overall, are consistent with national expectations and above expectations for higher-attaining pupils. For example, by the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of how energy is dissipated when energy is transferred and of selective breeding. Lower-attaining pupils are less secure. They do not, for example, understand that when energy is transformed, heat is lost. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 have a very good understanding of the factors that lead to hereditary diseases such as cystic fibrosis. Lower-attaining pupils, however, whilst understanding the importance of DNA, do not understand dominant and recessive genes. Overall, pupils throughout the school, achieve well and make good progress.
59. Teaching is good overall with teaching in some lessons being very good or excellent. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Pupils learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are the use of good subject knowledge by teachers, well-focused lesson planning and a range of methods that maintain interest and engender learning. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and the productive use of lesson time. As a result lessons proceed at a good pace. However, in a few lessons the pace was slow and pupils lacked stimulation. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is very good. Effective use is made of homework to consolidate and extend classroom learning and after school revision

classes support pupils preparing for the GCSE examination. Because pupils have good attitudes, they work well to attain their targets.

60. The use of assessment to track the progress of pupils against their targets and to guide teaching and learning is very good. However, there are weaknesses in the day-to-day marking of pupils' work. Missed or incomplete work, particularly that of boys, is not always followed up and marking frequently fails to indicate how pupils might improve. The identification of appropriate learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. In most lessons pupils work hard and at a good pace. However, in a few lessons some pupils, mainly boys, are not always fully engaged by their teachers and underachieve as a result.
61. Leadership and management in the science department are good. The recently appointed head of science has a clear vision of what is needed to improve. He is supported by an adequate number of teachers and technicians. Educational direction is clear and is focused on improving standards. As a result, there is evidence of new developments, which are likely to lead to further improvements. Development planning, which is in line with school development planning, is effective and manageable. Procedures for assessment and for the monitoring and evaluation of teachers are very good. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, are good. The provision of computers and associated software is very good. The number of laboratories is adequate but several are too small for larger groups of pupils. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The capacity for further improvement is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising because the quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge and course requirements.
- Effective use is made of assessment information to establish pupils' achievement targets.
- Marking does not provide pupils with enough information on how to improve their work.
- Some of the ICT suites are poorly ventilated.

Commentary

62. In 2004, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed standards to be below average. When standards on entry are taken into account standards at the end of Year 9 are satisfactory. Results in the 2004 GNVQ Intermediate ICT examination were above average. These results reflect a rising trend of improvement and represent good achievement.
63. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are making good progress and standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Pupils confidently operate computers and use a variety of software applications. They use word processing, web publishing and presentation software effectively and understand how to create spreadsheets, websites and databases. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with course expectations. Pupils are making good progress and the indications are that they are on target to meet their predicted examination grades. Pupils demonstrate a good level of understanding of the concepts taught in their vocational ICT courses and many produce coursework of a good standard.
64. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and provide well-planned lessons with clear learning objectives. They have a good command of the subject and use teaching strategies that fully engage the pupils. Effective use is made of interactive whiteboards and presentational software to introduce lesson objectives and to illustrate

teaching points. Classroom management is effective and lessons generally proceed without interruption. Assessment procedures and monitoring systems are good and have a positive effect on the quality of coursework and pupils' progress. Good use is made of pupils' self-assessment sheets to engage them in the assessment process. However, although pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers' comments do not provide pupils with enough information on how they can raise the standard of their work to the next level or grade. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and the positive working atmosphere in lessons contributes to the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

65. Leadership and day-to-day management of the subject are good. The department makes good use of pupil performance data to establish attainment targets to monitor pupils' progress. This enables the department to identify pupils who may be underachieving so that additional support can be provided. This is helping to raise standards. The head of department has a clear strategic vision for the development of ICT. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and because department evaluation procedures are thorough, there are clear strategies for continued improvement in the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. Pupils show a satisfactory level of competence in the way in which they use ICT to support their work in other subjects. There has been very good improvement in the provision of ICT resources since the last inspection and increasing use is being made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Particularly good use is being made of the numerous interactive whiteboards installed in classrooms and this is making a positive contribution to raising standards. Interesting examples of the use of ICT were noted in science and physical education. However, not enough use is made of ICT in art, mathematics, English and geography. This comparative weakness is largely because of difficulties in access to the computer suites. Although the school has made a considerable investment in computer resources over the last two years, the more widespread use of ICT across the curriculum has led to a substantial increase in demand. The school plans to meet this demand by increasing the number of laptop computers available in classrooms.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Standards are improving.
- Pupils are well prepared for the GCSE examination.
- Because of difficulties in access to computers, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- There are some weaknesses in classroom management in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

67. Teachers' assessments indicate that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or above at the end of Year 9 is below average. In the previous year assessments were average. Work seen during the inspection shows that overall standards have improved and standards are again consistent with expectations. These standards represent good achievement when the well-below average attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 is taken into account. The 2003 GCSE results were above average. A much smaller group took the examination in 2004 and the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades dropped to below

average. Recruitment into the current Years 10 and 11 is more buoyant and the standard of work seen is above course expectations, representing good achievement.

68. In Year 7 pupils undergo an intensive course in basic geography and number skills and become proficient in these skills. Writing standards improve and pupils develop good note-taking skills. Extended work is supported effectively by writing frames and worksheets. This was seen, for example, in brochures and short investigations on such topics as the Dorset Coastal Walk and rainforest and Arctic environments. Difficulties in accessing ICT resources are having an adverse effect on pupils' learning. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make very effective use of evidence gathered through local fieldwork and this helps to improve the quality of their coursework. They are able to identify key questions and devise a methodology that enables them to gather and analyse information and reach accurate conclusions. This is seen in work on the geographical characteristics of an industrial town.
69. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned and have a clear structure. Lessons are challenging and teachers' expectations are generally high. However, in a few lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers' classroom management skills were not adequate to cope with the challenging behaviour of some pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop good independent learning skills and approach their work with maturity. Teachers use interactive whiteboards very well in their teaching and this adds greatly to pupils' interest and levels of understanding. Because teaching places a strong emphasis on improving pupils' geographical vocabulary and, in Years 10 and 11, ensuring that the examination requirements are fully understood, pupils are well prepared for the GCSE examination. Assessment procedures are good, with the effective use of target setting and constructive feedback through the marking of pupils' work. Lessons provide well for pupils at all levels of attainment and those with special educational needs achieve as well as others. Boys and girls work equally well in class, but girls' work is better presented.
70. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The leadership and management of the subject, judged at that time to be unsatisfactory, are now satisfactory. The department has taken advantage of support from a variety of sources and teaching and learning have improved. The subject improvement plan identifies where further improvement is needed and the potential for further improvement is good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress.
- History is well led and managed.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Pupils have no curriculum enrichment opportunities.

Commentary

71. Although standards in Year 9 are below average, these standards represent good achievement since pupils enter the school with well below average standards in history. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is comparable to their peers. Gifted pupils achieve well. By Year 9 pupils begin to understand cause and effect, as in events leading to the 1914 -18 War, and deduce simple points from a range of evidence. In the 2004 GCSE examination the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was well below average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 11 are in line with course expectations. These standards represent good achievement. The standards of boys improve markedly as they proceed through the school. By Year 11 pupils can discuss history with confidence, as in their work on the League of Nations. They can interpret source material and communicate

their findings in writing. In all years pupils enjoy history. They show good attitudes, behave well and respond to teachers with enthusiasm.

72. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils develop an appreciation of history because teaching is well informed and teachers communicate effectively, often making pertinent references to modern day in order to make topics relevant to pupils. Pupils acquire history skills because lessons are well planned. Well-timed and varied activities provide a progressive learning experience. Well-disciplined, good-humoured and supportive teaching enables pupils to gain confidence in discussing history. Pupils understand how well they are doing and how they might improve further, because teachers assess work accurately. Regular self-assessment helps pupils to take responsibility for their learning. Homework effectively consolidates class work. Teachers provide good opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills. In a minority of lessons teaching provides limited challenge for the most able pupils. Pupils' opportunities to use ICT as a research tool in lessons are limited.
73. The quality of leadership and management is good. The new subject leader has a clear vision for the department centred on raising standards, especially those of boys. Teachers provide good role models to pupils in their conduct and professionalism. There is a secure understanding of how the subject needs to be developed, based on incisive self-evaluation. The work of teachers is well monitored. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to explore moral, social and cultural issues. There are no opportunities to enrich pupils' historical understanding through structured debates, visits to historical sites and use of museum artefacts. Good improvement has been made since the previous report, particularly in the quality of teaching and the achievement of boys.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good with teachers using a wide variety of teaching methods to motivate and challenge pupils.
- Pupils are sensitive to the beliefs, values and traditions of others and are willing to reflect on their own responses in a mature and thoughtful manner.
- Because religious education is combined with other subjects in Years 7 and 8, insufficient time is allocated to it.
- The curriculum does not place enough emphasis on the diversity of faiths that exist in Britain today.

Commentary

74. In 2004, the school entered nearly all of the pupils for the short course GCSE examination. Results were well below the average and below the level reached in other subjects in the school. However, these grades were obtained with limited teaching time. Until last year there had been a steady improvement in the examination results.
75. Pupils enter Year 7 with standards that are well below expectations. They have a limited knowledge of the beliefs and practices of all religions. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, although standards are below expectations. The constraints imposed by the syllabus and restricted time allocation for the subject have an adverse impact on their wider understanding of religion. Pupils demonstrate a satisfactory level of understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and Islam. However, their understanding of the diversity and richness of the other faiths that are found in our society is limited. They have a good understanding of the way in which religion influences people's lifestyle and choices and they are able to make an informed response to questions of meaning and purpose.

76. The introduction of the GCSE syllabus in the middle of Year 9 narrows down the curriculum considerably. Within the constraints imposed by this, pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10, pupils make good progress and demonstrate a secure knowledge of the basic teaching of Christianity and Islam on a number of social and moral issues. They fully appreciate that many elements are shared but that there are significant differences between them. Inspection evidence suggests that standards are in line with course expectations and that pupils are on track to meet the subject GCSE target for year group. Standards in Year 11 are below national expectation because of lower attainment on entry, the limited time allocated to the subject and the narrow syllabus. Their understanding of the wider values, beliefs, ceremonies and festivals of the religions that contribute to the diverse nature of our society is limited. In both Years 10 and 11, pupils demonstrate an awareness of the role that religion can play in helping people make moral choices.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and of the methods needed to ensure that the pupils are involved, interested, challenged and motivated. Lesson planning is good, with clear learning objectives made explicit at the start of lessons. A number of learning strategies are used to actively engage pupils and provide pace and challenge to lessons. A significant emphasis is placed on exercises that encourage pupils to examine their own responses to questions that explore the meaning and purpose of life. Teachers make excellent use of ICT to support teaching and learning. Classroom management is positive and effective. Good use is made of teaching assistants to provide support for pupils with special educational needs. Homework is set and marked regularly.
78. Subject leadership and management are good. A newly appointed subject head has a clear vision for the subject, is well organised and keeping abreast of latest developments. Good assessment procedures are in place and assessment information is used well to monitor pupils' progress. Whilst the curriculum meets legal requirements, there is a need to develop more units that reflect the wide diversity of faiths that are found in our society. The inclusion of religious education in the beliefs, values and citizenship course is innovative and has some strengths. However, because of time constraints, the coverage of more explicitly religious content is restricted. The introduction of the GCSE course in the middle of Year 9 further reduces the coverage of a number of religions. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The subject has good potential for further improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE systems and control course are well above expectations.
- Effective use is made of teacher moderated pupil self-assessment.
- Use of the three-part lesson is having a positive impact on standards in all years.
- Marking does not provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- Poor graphic skills prevent pupils from effectively communicating their design ideas.
- Specialist design and technology rooms are generally in need of redecoration and refurbishment.

Commentary

79. The 2004 teachers' assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 to be well below average. Inspection evidence shows that taken overall, standards in Year 9 are below national expectations rather than well below. When standards on entry are taken into account these standards represent satisfactory achievement. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9 and making and construction skills are well developed.
80. The overall proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 2004 GCSE design and technology examinations was average. These results represent satisfactory achievement. However, there was variation in pupils' performance in the separate design and technology subjects. Pupils achieved particularly well in systems and control and results were well above average. Although results in electronic products were average, results in graphic products were below average and those in food technology were well below average. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 and standards are broadly in line with expectations at this stage of their courses. However, pupils following the double award GCSE engineering course are not making the progress they should and standards are well below course expectations. This is largely because teaching does not engage pupils in learning. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress because of the nature of projects, which allow for success at a range of levels.
81. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to plan lessons that ensure that practical skills, knowledge and understanding are progressively acquired. Most pupils display good attitudes and teachers work hard to ensure that pupils are aware of the need to work safely in the design and technology areas. Behaviour is good because teachers set out clearly what they expect of pupils. However, teaching in one Year 10 applied engineering lesson was very poor. Because teaching strategies were inappropriate and learning resources both inadequate and outdated, pupils became uninterested and behaviour deteriorated. The arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good and improve the quality of coursework. In consequence, pupils make satisfactory progress and enjoy their learning. However, while teachers mark pupils' work regularly, some of the marking does not provide pupils with enough guidance on how their work can be improved.
82. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department effectively leads an experienced team and has a good vision of what needs to be done to raise standards in Years 7 to 9, and in applied engineering. The overall quality of accommodation is satisfactory but the design and workshop areas are in urgent need of refurbishment. These areas do not provide a stimulating learning environment and project a poor image of a modern design and technology department. Resources are generally satisfactory. The department is well supported by three technicians. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory. The department has addressed the health and safety, and technician issues. The department has tackled the weaknesses identified at that time and standards are rising. The department has the potential for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show good attitudes in lessons and behave well.
- Many pupils underachieve because practical skills are weak.
- Weaknesses in teaching restrict pupils' progress in art, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

- Teachers manage pupils well and provide a supportive learning environment.
- Not enough advantage is taken of opportunities to enrich pupils' cultural education.

Commentary

83. In the 2004 GCSE examination the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was below average. Girls' results were average while boys' results were below average.
84. Standards in Year 9 are below average, representing unsatisfactory achievement since the majority of pupils enter the school with below average standards in art. Standards in Year 11 are below average, representing satisfactory achievement. There are no significant differences in the standards and achievement of pupils according to gender, ethnic origin or special educational needs. Talented pupils do not achieve well. Practical art skills are weak, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Drawing is generally small in scale, lacks attention to tone, shade and texture and is more reliant on copying than direct observation. Three-dimensional work for the GNVQ course shows some effective manipulation of materials, but pupils rarely provide sufficient detail of the research processes undertaken. Work in all media lacks imagination and is over derivative. Pupils rarely understand the significance of artists and styles studied. Evaluative skills are very weak. Pupils enjoy lessons and behave well.
85. Pupils underachieve because the overall quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Pupils are highly productive in lessons that are well disciplined and offer good levels of encouragement and support. However, teachers' expectations are pitched too low and work lacks challenge. Teachers do not explain lesson objectives sufficiently to enable pupils to improve their learning. Pupils are unable to develop creatively and imaginatively because work is too teacher led. Teachers do not engage pupils in informed discussion of art, thereby inhibiting pupils' understanding of artists, styles and how to evaluate artwork. Pupils lack appropriate sketchbooks in which to collect images and chart the design processes undertaken towards final pieces. Pupils cannot progress sufficiently where too much time is wasted on single inappropriate tasks. Teachers provide no explicit strategies to extend more able pupils. Homework is well used and its marking is informative. However, few pupils have a secure idea of what the grades they are awarded indicate about their performance.
86. Leadership and management of art are unsatisfactory. Teachers provide good role models to pupils. The current development plan derives appropriately from departmental evaluations. However, the issues identified remain the same as in the last inspection. Pupils have limited opportunities to generate artwork using ICT. The application of pupils' levels is insecure. Art is not used to enhance pupils' understanding of different world cultures. Pupils lack opportunities to enrich their understanding of art through gallery visits or working with visiting artists. Their efforts are not celebrated in visual displays around the school. Not enough progress has been made since the time of the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of pupils underachieve and standards are too low.
- Accommodation for music is poor and has not improved since the last inspection.
- The school does not fully comply with statutory requirements for the provision of music in Years 7 to 9.
- In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were consistently good.
- Not enough progress has been made since the last inspection.

Commentary

87. Teachers' assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 to be well below average. Inspection evidence confirms this. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is poor because of ongoing difficulties the school has experienced in recruiting appropriately qualified music teachers. As a result, the school is not able to ensure that all pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive their full entitlement to music. Most pupils enter the school with a very narrow range of musical experiences and because many do not have regular music lessons in Years 7 to 9, they do not make the progress they should and standards are too low. The impact of this is seen in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations was well below average. Although these results were similar to pupils' target grades, achievement was unsatisfactory because of the weaknesses in Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 10 and 11 are well below course expectations and reflect gaps in pupils' knowledge arising from the earlier years. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to that of their peers.
88. Although ongoing staffing difficulties are having an adverse impact on standards, the quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen during the inspection was consistently good. Teachers have high expectations and strive hard to ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons. Through positive reinforcement and an appropriate level of challenge, teachers encourage the most talented to raise their aspirations. For example, one pupil entered and was successful in the GCSE examination a year early and has now embarked upon an AS level course. Teachers' subject expertise is good and their enthusiasm for the subject gains a similar response from most pupils. Singing and ensemble work are improving, but more needs to be done to develop pupils' listening and analysis skills and there is a need for the more consistent use of key words to reinforce learning. Relationships are good and pupils co-operate well with their teachers and with other pupils.
89. Around six per cent of the school now take instrumental lessons with seven visiting teachers on a variety of instruments. Pupils are encouraged to play their instruments or to sing in lessons and this lifts the quality of composing, performance and understanding available to pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11. Governors are very supportive of instrumental teaching and plan to reduce the costs for pupils. Unfortunately, as a result of the recent change in lunchtime arrangements and the focus on sport after school, enrichment activities such as choir, wind and steel bands are finding it very difficult to rehearse during the school week.
90. In extremely adverse circumstances, leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a clear plan for improvement, but the implementation of the plan is impeded by difficulties in teacher recruitment and the poor accommodation. Because the school has not been able to recruit an additional music teacher it is not possible to provide some classes in Years 7 to 9 with regular music lessons and this is having an adverse impact on standards. The music rooms lack soundproofing and are in a general state of disrepair. Although there are enough full-size keyboards, there are few percussion instruments or instruments from other cultures. Music technology courses cannot be offered because of a lack of up-to-date computers. Not enough progress has been made since the last inspection.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- The very good programme of extra-curricular sport makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved and the quality of subject provision.

- Sports College status enhances pupils' educational experiences.
- Innovative curriculum development is helping to raise boys' achievement.
- The condition of the playing fields restricts learning opportunities in some outdoor games and the college lacks specialist accommodation for teaching dance.

Commentary

91. GCSE examination results in 2004 were lower than in 2003 but still represent good overall achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. Results in the A* to C grade range were below average but in the A* to G range they were above average. Pupils' performance in physical education was better than in their other subjects. Pupils following the newly introduced BTEC First Sport Level 2 course met course expectations and achieved well.
92. Current standards in Year 9 are above national expectations and pupils are achieving well. They have a well-developed understanding of technique, composition and strategy so that they are able to evaluate and improve each other's performance. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of health related fitness are above expectations. Very good procedures for assessing pupils' standards in physical education on entry to the school mean that, from the outset, learning is well matched to their capabilities and so provides a firm basis for future learning. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular sporting talents make very good progress because close learning activities are well matched to their needs.
93. Overall standards in Year 11 are above expectations and again represent good achievement. During the inspection it was not possible to see lessons in the non-examination physical education course in Year 11. Assessment information indicates that overall standards are above expectations, with most pupils making good progress in the wide range of activities provided for them. Standards in theory and practical performance of pupils following the GCSE course are well above course expectations. Most pupils following BTEC First Sport course meet course expectations, which indicates very good achievement in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 10.
94. Throughout the school, a very broad and very well supported programme of extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to the overall standards achieved. Teams and individuals achieve notable success in a wide variety of sports, including volleyball, girls' basketball and gymnastics, at local, regional, national and occasionally international levels. The needs of elite performers are very well provided for through close liaison with their clubs and parents.
95. The overall quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. One of the most significant strengths in teaching is the way that teachers use their specialist expertise to question pupils so that they can evaluate their progress against the lesson's learning objectives and then use this knowledge to set targets for future learning. Very good relationships mean that teachers can stretch pupils physically and intellectually as well as ensuring that pupils appreciate one another's efforts and respect the principles of fair play. Demonstrations are used well and teachers give lots of individual attention to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make equally good progress. Assessment is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to indicate how the quality of their work can be improved. Very effective use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Video is used to analyse and improve performance and pupils in examination classes use laptop computers for research and to present information.
96. Subject leadership is very good. The benefits of the school's Sports College status are now being extended to include other subjects. In addition, the college is making effective contributions to sport-related provision in the local community and the quality of physical education in its partner schools. The subject is very well managed within the college. A commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning is leading to improved standards, although strategies have not been in place long enough to have had a significant effect on the compulsory physical education programme in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Weaknesses then identified have been

largely eradicated, although poor drainage of the playing field continues to restrict some learning opportunities. Pupils continue to achieve well in their examination courses. Assessment procedures have improved and there has been some innovative curriculum development, including the successful introduction of examination courses aimed at improving the achievement of boys. However, the school lacks specialist accommodation for teaching dance and the pupils' changing accommodation is often overcrowded.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

97. Provision for pupils' **personal, social and health education** is primarily through the beliefs, values and citizenship course. This is good and fully reflects the ethos and values of the school. Drugs awareness and sex education are taught in a sensitive and informative manner. Schemes of work and other supporting documentation are relevant and helpful. Teachers and other involved staff deal very well with sensitive issues. Because of this provision, pupils are well informed and knowledgeable about a range of topics, including the dangers of smoking and alcohol abuse. They are able to empathise with people in different situations and most respond confidently and maturely in lessons and in other situations. Provision for careers education is good and effectively prepares pupils for the next stage of their lives.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The house system provides a good range of opportunities for pupils' involvement in active citizenship activities.
- The citizenship curriculum is enhanced by an effective programme of citizenship theme days.
- The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship, provided through the extended tutor period, varies too much.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write about citizenship topics.

Commentary

98. After a thorough evaluation of provision the school has recently changed the way in which citizenship education is provided. The new beliefs, values and citizenship course, introduced in September 2004, better reflects the school's educational philosophy and understanding of pupils' needs. Although it is too soon to fully evaluate the impact of the course the early indications are that it is largely successful. This owes much to the drive of the headteacher who has been responsible for the development of well-written schemes of work and course booklets that support teaching and learning in the subject. The course is taught by specialist teachers for one period a week and by form tutors during tutor periods. In addition there is a very well designed programme of theme days, for example on mock elections, when the normal timetable is suspended.
99. By Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship and their skills of communication and enquiry are close to expectations for their age group. This represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils are able, for example, to explain and discuss discrimination in the workplace. However, their written work is more limited. Achievement in Year 11 is also broadly satisfactory with standards of most pupils close to national expectations.
100. Evidence from pupils' written work, lessons, tutor period observations, discussions with pupils and photographic and documentary evidence from theme days reveals a mixed picture. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but the quality varies. Teachers are largely conscientious in following the scheme of work and topic booklets. However, the pressure of administrative duties in the tutor time sometimes adversely affects the focus on or pace of

learning. Teachers, in the main, ensure that pupils are well informed about the citizenship curriculum but there is some lack of clarity about the extent and quality of written work demanded. In some lessons, a few older pupils, mostly boys, lack the motivation to become fully involved in the learning activities and inhibit the involvement of other pupils. Teaching and learning were more effective in those lessons where teachers displayed an enthusiasm for the topic. When this enthusiasm was communicated to pupils they responded accordingly and teachers were able to capitalise on pupils' interest. Teaching was also more effective and learning more rapid in lessons where stimulating resources were used. For example, where the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to show video clips of the work of local police and support agencies, this captured interest and effectively raised the issue of personal and collective responsibility in combating drug related criminal activity.

101. The recently introduced house system is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils can develop their skills of participation and responsible action within the school and the wider community. These include the opportunity for all pupils to participate in the democratic process through elections for their house representatives. The house system also increases the range of opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility on behalf of others, for example, as council members and house or sports prefects, or through the houses' extensive involvement in charitable activity. These include efforts on behalf of the school's linked schools in Africa and Thailand.
102. The subject is very well led. The headteacher's vision has been translated into action through effective planning. Management is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for reporting pupils' achievements in citizenship are met. Assessment procedures involve the pupils well in evaluating their achievements and the quality of their learning experiences. However, there is a need for more rigorous monitoring of the use of tutor time for citizenship lessons. The potential for further improvement is good.

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

