

ERRATUM

Modern Foreign Languages

Paragraph 153 should read as follows:-

153. The last inspection report was critical of departmental management, which is still unsatisfactory. The progress of classes, especially in oral and listening work, has been slow. Planned improvements, such as the use of readers and computers, have not materialised. Planned improvement to key documents, notably the scheme of work, has been delayed, with a negative effect on the breadth of students' learning experiences. That standards in attainment and teaching have improved, despite lack of subject direction, is a tribute to the efforts of senior managers and departmental staff, some of whom have produced acceptable development plans, improvements to schemes of work, and have shown a good grasp of what can be achieved with commitment and imagination. Procedures for assessing students' work are good on the whole, although more adequate monitoring of the work of the department would have identified the lack of helpful marking. However, students know where they are up to and how they can improve, largely owing to the school's monitoring programme. Textbooks are in short supply, so that photocopying consumes too much of the subject's budget. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The need to move constantly from room to room makes undue demands on teachers and reduces the quality of students' learning, especially where they are cramped, have their backs to the teacher, or cannot concentrate because of noise from adjacent practical lessons. More positively, students' work is well supported in specialist rooms by the display of key words and phrases; and learning is enriched by opportunities for residential or exchange visits abroad and by the two-week visit of a Spanish teacher-in-residence.

INSPECTION REPORT

KIRKHAM CARR HILL 11-18 HIGH SCHOOL

KIRKHAM

LEA area: LANCASHIRE

Unique reference number: 119744

Headteacher: MR J F DAVIES

Reporting inspector: Dr Barbara Hilton
Rgl's Ofsted No: 3228

Dates of inspection: 2 - 6 October 2000

Inspection number: 223739

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 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Royal Avenue KIRKHAM PRESTON
Postcode:	PR4 2ST
Telephone number:	01772 682008
Fax number:	01772 673048
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Janice Dickson
Date of previous inspection:	4 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Barbara Hilton Ofsted No: 3228	Registered inspector	N/A	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Husain Akhtar Ofsted No: 9561	Lay inspector	N/A	How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Philip Winch Ofsted No: 11720	Team inspector	English	N/A
Margaret Price Ofsted No: 19925	Team inspector	Mathematics	N/A
David Leonard Ofsted No: 1779	Team inspector	Science	N/A
Lynne Kauffman Ofsted No: 15051	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	N/A
		Business studies	
Ann Philp Ofsted No: 4902	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral. social and cultural development
		Vocational courses	

John Richards Ofsted No: 10288	Team inspector	Art	Sixth form
Paul Hartwright Ofsted No: 8501	Team inspector	Design and technology	N/A
Mark Gill Ofsted No: 13003	Team inspector	Geography	Learning resources
		Travel and tourism	
Joyce Sanderson Ofsted No: 1795	Team inspector	History	N/A
		Equal opportunities	
		Special educational needs	
Derek Cronin Ofsted No: 11838	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	N/A
Susan Wilkinson Ofsted No: 15150	Team inspector	Music	N/A
		Drama	
Barry Simmons Ofsted No: 14446	Team inspector	Physical education	N/A
		Personal and social education	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
CAMBRIDGE
CB1 2RS

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kirkham Carr Hill 11-18 High School is a comprehensive community school in Kirkham, Lancashire. The school is bigger than most secondary schools, with a total of 1219 students, including 131 post-16. Students enter from seven main primary schools in Kirkham, Wesham and neighbouring areas. Within Year 7 there are students of all abilities, although slightly fewer than expected of high ability. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at 11.8 per cent, is broadly average. Casual mobility is not a problem, although about 5 per cent of students stay at the school for a planned length of time, because their parents are stationed at the nearby army barracks, and they bring experience with them of several other schools. Nearly all the students are white, reflecting local communities, with small numbers from black heritage backgrounds and also Asian backgrounds, including Japanese and Chinese. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is very low and, of these, just two are starting to learn to speak English. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs, and with statements, at 17.7 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively, are both broadly average. Almost half of the students with special educational needs have dyslexia and the rest mostly have either emotional and behavioural, or moderate learning difficulties. The school is popular and growing. It is almost 10 per cent bigger than at the last inspection and the sixth form has increased by 25 per cent. In other ways, the school community is the same as at the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Kirkham Carr Hill is a good and effective school. Good teaching and pastoral support help students to make the most of themselves. They achieve good results and develop mature and responsible attitudes. Standards are good in the sixth form, which the school funds slightly generously, though its value for money is satisfactory. Leadership is very strong. The school is caring and well managed. Overall, it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well; GCSE results are good and improving faster than nationally.
- Relationships are very good; students' pastoral development is well supported through planned opportunities and the positive ethos.
- Teaching and learning are good; students are stretched, including the more able.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including visits.
- The school enjoys the support and also enriches the life of the local community, especially through art, drama, music and links with businesses.
- Leadership by the headteacher and senior team provides clear direction and is very strong.

What could be improved

- The strength and consistency of leadership in modern foreign languages, design and technology and the use of computers in all subjects.
- The provision of religious education, post-16.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in March 1996. GCSE results are improving faster than nationally. Teaching is rigorously monitored and much improved: it is good. Management arrangements have been changed and heads of learning replaced by heads of department. Teaching in modern foreign languages has improved and standards are better, but there has been discontinuity in management. Staff development is well planned and resourced. The school meets its statutory obligations with regard to collective worship throughout, and religious education up to Year 11, but not post-16. Appraisal arrangements are correctly in place. The school is well placed to improve further because of its very strong leadership and effective arrangements for planning and monitoring developments.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	C	A	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Students' overall results at GCSE in 1999 were above the national average, and well above average relative to similar schools. Students of high ability did particularly well. Results for five subjects, both at the higher grades (A*-C), and across the full range of grades (A*-G), matched national averages. Results for 2000 have improved on the results for 1999. In 2000, nearly all students successfully gained at least one GCSE although, in 1999, this was not the case. Overall, GCSE results are improving faster than nationally. The GCSE results of boys and girls usually exceed those of boys and girls nationally. Results in English and mathematics at GCSE were in line with the national averages in 1999, and better than that relative to similar schools. Results in science are stronger than those for English and mathematics. Generally, results in most other subjects match the national averages, or slightly exceed them. In French, results have improved from levels which were below average in 1999 to reach average levels in 2000. In music, results are low, but the subject is becoming established on a secure basis; standards in lessons are satisfactory. Results are consistently high in drama, general studies and art. By the end of Year 9, results of National Curriculum tests are above the national average overall, and well above average relative to similar schools. Results are better in mathematics and science than in English. Results at A-level in 1999 were well above the national average; boys achieved particularly well. In recent years, A-level results have varied between average and well above average and in some years girls have done best. Standards of literacy are average overall. Listening is good, throughout, but spelling is weak among younger students. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory.

The school tests the attainment of students on entry in Year 7 and their abilities are wide-ranging, with slightly fewer than expected who are high attaining. Support for students with special educational needs and for gifted and talented students is good and enables them to achieve well. Results at GCSE represent good value, relative to students' attainment on entry in Year 7. Progress up to the end of Year 9 is particularly good and from then it is satisfactory, overall, including that of students post-16. The school monitors students' progress carefully and regularly sets appropriate targets throughout their school career and for examinations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: students enjoy school, are loyal and appreciate what is offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, with very occasional pockets of unsocial behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Students develop a good sense of responsibility and are supportive of each other. The school is friendly, orderly and caring.
Attendance	Good; unauthorised absence is about average.

Students' attitudes and behaviour support their learning well. They participate very well in lessons and maintain a good pace in their learning, which helps their progress. Participation is high in extra-curricular activities - for example, music at lunchtimes. Relationships are considerate and friendly. Students have a good sense of personal responsibility and readily take opportunities for helping and representing others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching and learning are good. In 75 per cent of lessons seen teaching was good or better, in 25 per cent it was very good, and in 1.5 per cent it was excellent. In virtually all the rest it was satisfactory. It was unsatisfactory in only one out of 198 lessons. Teaching is good in all subjects, with examples of very good teaching in most, and particularly in English, drama, science, history and religious education. The quality of learning follows a similar pattern. Teachers plan lessons well to develop students' knowledge and understanding. Work is challenging for students of all abilities and they produce high quality work - for example, writing in English, painting and sculpture in art. Rigorous arrangements for monitoring teaching have helped to improve lessons overall. Inconsistencies occur where there has been lack of subject overview and management. The standard of marking varies in modern foreign languages and not enough opportunities are provided to use information and communications technology across the curriculum. Literacy is developing satisfactorily, and listening is good, although spelling is weak among younger students. Numeracy is satisfactory. Very good relationships and good management of students support good standards of behaviour. Students are interested in their work, maintain a good pace and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Good links with higher education help to raise expectations: about three quarters of those staying on post-16 go on to university.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced, with very good extra-curricular activities. Information and communications technology is well taught, but little used in other subjects.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good, both for individuals and for classes needing support.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Satisfactory for those few who are learning to speak English.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school is attentive to the personal development of individuals, which overall is good. Social development is particularly strong and debate on moral issues is encouraged. Assemblies contribute well to the ethos of the school.
How well the school cares for its students	Focus on students' welfare is good. Effective use is made of form time and personal, social and health education is well planned. Progress is well monitored.

The school works well with parents. Links with primary schools are good. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, except that there are not enough opportunities to use information and communications technology in most other subjects. The locally agreed syllabus in religious education is provided up to Year 11, but not post-16. Extra-curricular activities are a strength. Activities in art, music, physical education and drama, particularly, contribute strongly to the ethos of the school and strengthen links with the local community. Collaboration with major companies strengthens work in several subjects, including science and information and communications technology. Visits enhance work in history, geography, science, vocational education and modern foreign languages. Resident specialists have raised expectations and enriched work in Spanish and art. The pastoral system is very well organised. The school is caring of individuals. Information on students is used effectively to help individuals to progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team provide very strong leadership. Subject leadership is capable, overall, with strong management in most subjects, except in design and technology and modern foreign languages.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have high expectations and strongly value the school's community role. Responsibilities are met, except for providing religious education post-16 and ensuring the use of computers in subjects across the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes effective use of targets for improvement. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: improvements have been funded within a tight budget. The school makes very good use of staff and accommodation. More use could be made of computers across the curriculum.

The headteacher generates a strong sense of purpose. The aims and values of the school are well reflected in its work. Planning for improvement is well managed and responsibilities appropriately

delegated. Co-ordination of special educational needs and of the sixth form is effective. Prolonged absence has weakened management in design and technology and modern foreign languages, although, in both cases, intervention by senior managers has maintained impetus for improvement. Increased use of information and communications technology across the curriculum has been delayed, affected by the lack of external support for in-service training and new computers. The school is on the threshold of preparing staff to use technology and strong co-ordination is needed for this to be effective. Senior managers and governors are conscientious in pursuing best value, in, for example, improving accommodation and post-16 facilities. The school has sufficient teachers, and they are committed and hard-working. Space is at a premium because of growth in student numbers. Some computers are old and need replacing, and there are not enough books in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children are making. • Their children like the school. • Expectations, which are high. • Leadership, which is good. • They feel able to approach the school with problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The information they receive on their children's progress.

Overall, parents are very supportive of the school. They think highly of the standards it achieves and its value in the local community. Inspectors endorse parents' positive views. Parents' views on homework were mixed: some felt too much was set and others that amounts were slight. During the inspection, homework was regularly set and amounts were appropriate. Parents receive frequent information on their children's progress. Concern about information stems from their perception that predictions of progress rest too heavily on attainment in Year 7, which is not wholly the case, and could be clarified by the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Overall results

1. The standards achieved by the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. The results of National Curriculum tests in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) in 1999 were above the national averages, overall, and well above average relative to similar schools. The Year 9 results represent good value, relative to students' attainment on entry.
2. GCSE results are consistently good. Overall results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1999 were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Students of high ability did particularly well. Results for five subjects, both at the higher grades (A*-C) and across the full range of grades (A*-G), matched national averages. Results for 2000 have improved on the results for 1999 at the higher grades. In 2000, nearly all students successfully gained at least one GCSE although, in 1999, this was not the case. Above average GCSE results represent good value, from students' attainment on entry, which is a little below average.
3. Results in the General Certificate in Education at Advanced level (A-level) in 1999 were well above the national average. In recent years, A-level results have varied between average and well above this. In 1999, boys achieved particularly well, although there is no consistent pattern and, in some years, girls do best. Post-16 students build soundly on their achievements at GCSE, which are generally good.

Results in the core subjects: English, mathematics and science

4. At the end of Year 9 in 1999, results of National Curriculum tests in mathematics and science were above the national averages, and well above average relative to similar schools. Results in English were average, relative to all schools nationally, and above average relative to similar schools. In 2000, results improved in science, stayed about the same in mathematics but were not quite as good in English; boys did not achieve as well as girls and relatively few of the high levels were reached. When the students who obtained the Year 9 results in 2000 started at Kirkham Carr Hill they were tested, and their scores in literacy were low. Year 9 results in each subject reflect good progress from levels of attainment in Year 7.
5. In 1999, GCSE results in English and mathematics were in line with the overall national averages and better than expected (in the case of English, well above average) for similar schools. Results in science were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Results in 2000 were broadly similar, although they fell back a little in science.
6. Results at A-level in English, mathematics and science subjects fluctuate around the national averages in each subject. In English, in 1999, for example, results for English language and literature were average and they were better than this in 2000. In mathematics, the results in 1999 were well above average and they dropped in 2000 and, while all students achieved a pass grade, overall results were much lower. In science, in 1999 all students entered gained a pass and in chemistry and physics a high proportion gained the highest (A and B) grades. In 2000, biology results were in line with the national average for the preceding year, but in chemistry and physics they were a little below this.
7. Standards in lessons and work seen indicate standards by the end of Year 9 which are average in English, a little higher than this in mathematics and above average in science. Standards in English improve thereafter and stay above average. In mathematics, standards remain a little above average up to Year 11, and in line with expectations for A-level. In science, above average standards are maintained to the end of Year 11 and rise even higher, post-16. Students make good progress overall in the core subjects at Kirkham Carr Hill.

Results of other subjects

8. Standards in lessons and work seen of Year 9 students are broadly in line with national expectations and above expectations in classes with more able students, and in art, drama and history. Standards in music are below expectations because students have not developed instrumental skills. Standards are similar at the end of Year 11, being stronger in art and better in drama, than in other subjects. In geography and history, standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 11. Standards fluctuate across design and technology subjects, though they are satisfactory overall. In modern foreign languages, standards are better throughout in Spanish than in French, and are average, overall. Standards in information and communications technology lessons match national expectations, and are sometimes better than this. Students make limited use of computers, across a narrow range of applications, in other subjects; standards are below expectations. They have access to computer rooms at lunchtimes to do their own work and there is just one computer in the library. The school is on the threshold of having much better facilities (a building programme is starting immediately after the inspection) which should help to increase the use of computers in all subjects.
9. Good teaching and support are helping students with special educational needs to make good progress. Students who are learning to speak English keep up with others in their class; their progress is satisfactory. Gifted and talented students achieve well: they are stretched in lessons and do well in examinations. The school has put right a weakness evident in examination results up to 1999: of the underachievement of a small number of students who did not gain any GCSE certificate. Before that time, middle and lower ability students entered fewer subjects, but now all students enter nine or more, because all have the same subject choices in Years 10 and 11: opportunities are more equitable and lead to greater success.
10. GCSE results in most subjects were in line with or exceeded the national average in 1999, and were broadly similar in 2000. In several subjects - information and communications technology, Spanish and art – results were high in both years. Results have improved in French, from below average in 1999, to about the average for recent years in 2000. Results in music have been low, but music is becoming established in the school and standards are improving. Students do well to obtain average results in religious education: the time allowed for studying the subject for GCSE has been low. And they do very well to gain high results in general studies, with tuition in extra-curricular time. In 1999, virtually all students did at least as well as expected in all subjects: there was virtually no underachievement. Students' results in art, general studies and drama (boys) were better than in their other subjects, although boys did not do as well in English literature as in their other subjects.
11. Standards in lessons with post-16 students match course expectations, and are above expectations in art (students produce some strikingly effective studies) and in history (where students are articulate and marshal ideas well, to support their points of view). Results vary year-by-year between matching and sometimes exceeding national averages. Recently they have been high in art, French and Spanish. Standards in vocational subjects are in line with expectations.

Literacy and numeracy

12. Provision for literacy is good: the school is aware of the need to improve the skills of younger students. Students' standard of literacy is satisfactory overall, although spelling is a weakness among younger students. Listening skills are good. Students listen well to teachers' instructions, and to one another in group work. In modern foreign languages, students are specifically taught listening techniques. Students in most subjects understand what is read. Students speak clearly and confidently, showing an awareness of audience in English and drama, for example. Reading is generally fluent, although lower attaining students are more hesitant. They make good use of written materials and research to find information in history, science and art. In modern foreign languages, there are not enough opportunities for students to practise reading. In English, students write in different styles, and present their work well. Standards of punctuation, sentence structure and grammar are average, but spelling is less consistent, especially in Years 7 to 9. Effective use is made of key words in most subjects, to

help students with their writing, although they are seldom used in mathematics. Writing frames help students to organise their work in geography and information and communications technology, and they write extensively in drama, physical education course-work, music and religious education. In science, investigative writing is good and, in design and technology, there is good emphasis on neat presentation.

13. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. Students' skills in handling numbers are systematically developed in mathematics, where they work with confidence and use calculators appropriately. By the time they reach Year 11 they use numbers in solving algebraic problems and draw graphs to represent equations. Number skills are used effectively in other subjects but there is no co-ordinated approach to their development across the curriculum. Measurement and proportion are well used in both art and design and technology but, in technology, students are sometimes confused when representing fractional parts on pie charts. In science, students make effective use of graphs and calculations, but post-16 students studying physics find mathematical aspects demanding. In information and communications technology, students make satisfactory use of data and formulae in developing spreadsheets, and a software program is used to help draw shapes accurately. Younger students make little use of numbers in geography, but by the time they are ready to take GCSE they have satisfactory skills in handling and interpreting data, which are developed further among those who study for A-level.

General trends

14. GCSE results are improving at a faster rate than nationally. All students do well at GCSE: boys' and girls' results are generally in line with or better than the separate results for boys and girls nationally. In 2000, there has been further improvement on the generally good trend up to 1999. Achievement at GCSE represents good value, relative to students' attainment on entry in Year 7. Students' progress up to the end of Year 9 is particularly good and from then on it is satisfactory, overall, including across the sixth form.
15. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and as they move up the school. Their results at GCSE are improving and in 2000 several obtained certificates for five or more subjects, mostly including English, mathematics and science.
16. Overall, results at GCSE and A-level are better than at the time of the last inspection. In individual subjects satisfactory or good standards have been maintained and results are now higher at GCSE in science, Spanish, geography and physical education and very much better in art. Results at A-level have improved in English and modern foreign languages.
17. Effective use is made of targets to raise achievement, in subjects and across the school as a whole. Targets are appropriate and at the right level. Since introducing targets, GCSE results have improved faster than nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Students' attitudes to school are very good, and help their learning. They enjoy coming to school. Their enthusiasm is evident in the cheerful way in which they mix with each other and staff, and approach work in lessons. Students' response in lessons is good, with examples of very good and sometimes excellent response in many lessons, across the subjects and age groups, and particularly in art, drama, English and science. They are keen to learn. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students' very good attitudes helped them to make good progress in learning about symmetry and shapes. In a Year 8 information and communications technology lesson, students concentrated hard and responded excellently to questions, so they built effectively on their knowledge from earlier lessons. In a Year 9 drama lesson, students' very good attitude and support for each other helped them to take on roles confidently (including that of a pantomime dame) and adapt the story into a modern setting; they learned very well. Post-16 students studying art have very good work habits and observe keenly: they progress well. Students take great pride in talking about and showing their work, such as that done in art and information and communications technology. They do their homework efficiently and thoughtfully. Exercise books are well kept. The attitudes of students with special educational needs are equally positive and their readiness to take an active part in their learning helps them

progress, as observed, for example, in a Year 10 drama lesson and in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, about measuring time. Students' participation in extra-curricular activities is high, particularly in drama productions, and music and sports events.

19. Most students attend the school regularly and promptly. They are punctual in arriving at lessons. Attendance in the school is good, overall. Unauthorised absence among Year 11 students is higher than in the rest of the school; some of this is due to truancy. Over the school as a whole, unauthorised absence is average.
20. Behaviour around the school is good, overall. Post-16, it is very good, with many examples of excellent behaviour. In most lessons up to Year 11 behaviour is good, and it is very good in many lessons. Within the school are a number of students who have behavioural problems or have to cope with difficult circumstances. Pockets of inappropriate behaviour were observed in a few lessons but disruptions were usually well contained and did not affect learning. Students are polite and friendly, holding doors open and moving to one side to allow adults to pass. Students say that there is a little bullying and appreciate that it is dealt with firmly and effectively. No incidents of any oppressive behaviour were seen by inspectors. School property is in good condition. Exclusions and accident records indicate occasional instances of aggressive behaviour. Fixed period exclusions are much lower, and permanent exclusions are lower, than at the time of the last inspection. While the reduction in permanent exclusions is good, and the number of students excluded in the last year (five) is below average for Lancashire, it is above the national average for the size of the school. The reasons for exclusions are carefully considered and mostly appropriate; correct procedures for exclusions have been followed.
21. Throughout the school, students' personal development and relationships are very good. The consistent respect that staff show to students and to their colleagues sets a good example for students. Students readily take part in the life of the school - for example, by helping at parents' meetings and assisting with the arrangements for the induction of Year 7 into the school. They represent the views of others at the school council and behave responsibly in considering issues - for example, homework - to seek desired changes. As students get older they respond with growing maturity to the responsibilities given to them (for example, in researching and doing course work) and help younger students through paired reading, as 'buddies' and through counselling. Students enjoy residential trips and organise themselves well. They work co-operatively, show good consideration for others and a sensitive awareness of each other's needs. They help each other in practical aspects of work, as in art and science, and show good regard for the safety of others. In lessons and discussions, they respect others' views and feelings and listen courteously to the contributions made by their peers and teachers; a good example was seen in a Year 11 religious education lesson where students were discussing racism. In circulation areas and around the school students are orderly, friendly and helpful; the atmosphere is good.
22. Students' overall personal development is stronger now than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Then, behaviour was described as quite good but school policies were not always effective and students were not much praised to encourage good behaviour. Well-established discipline, better relationships and improved teaching have successfully improved attitudes to learning and behaviour, which are now good overall.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. Teaching and learning are good at Kirkham Carr Hill. In 75 per cent of lessons observed teaching was good or better, in 25 per cent teaching was very good, and in 1.5 per cent it was excellent. In virtually all of the rest it was satisfactory. It was unsatisfactory in only one out of 198 lessons. The quality of learning follows a similar pattern. Teaching is good in all subjects with examples of very good teaching in most, and particularly in English, drama, science, history and religious education.
24. Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to raise students' understanding and to help them gain new skills. In history, for example, very good use of questioning by the teacher draws students' attention to significant points, as in a lesson with Year 10 who were learning about improvements in farming. In English, teachers use their knowledge of literature very well

to promote reading among younger students – as with lower ability Year 9 students who enjoyed learning the meaning of words in *The Bogeymen* and, in a different class, they grasped the main features of a story about Vikings in *Voyage from Valhalla*. Post-16, students benefit from the depth of teachers' knowledge, as in mathematics, where historical background illuminated students' understanding in work of Cartesian coordinates and, in general studies, where personal knowledge and experience enlivened a description of the complex arrangements and changes for local government in Lancashire. Visitors to the school bring additional insights; for example, resident artists have inspired work in art which has led to exhibitions of prints, drawings, painting and sculpture. Information and communications technology teachers use their knowledge well; schemes of work and lessons are very well planned. Teachers in other subjects lack confidence and skills in using computers. The use of information and communications technology across the curriculum is too limited.

25. Literacy is well provided in many subjects. Younger students improve the accuracy of their writing and learn specific meanings and the spelling of new words, as in religious education, where Year 7 students learned the difference between signs and symbols, and Year 11 students were distinguishing between discrimination and prejudice. Numeracy is used satisfactorily in lessons in several subjects. The idea of scale is used in mapping exercises in geography, measurement and shape are used in design and technology, and charts and statistics on vocational courses. The teaching and development of numeracy are not co-ordinated across the curriculum, however.
26. Lessons are well planned to move students on in their learning – as observed in physical education, when Year 9 students were introduced to simple attack and defence strategies in basketball, which they put into effect and developed through competition in small groups. Information and communications technology lessons are very well planned, they build on students' skills week by week, and good reference is made to work in other subjects. Teachers use a good range of methods. Students learn well through practical field work in geography, because detailed planning ensures that they understand its relevance and purpose, and they are well managed. At the start of lessons, teachers often make links with students' earlier learning – as observed in a Spanish lesson with Year 9 students, who were learning to give opinions about where they live and the teacher introduced the topic by asking them to state where this is. Similarly, in science, teachers often engage students' interest and help them to build on their understanding by asking questions about their earlier experiences, as in a Year 7 lesson when students learned to classify vertebrates into five main groups, and in a Year 8 lesson about how bacteria and viruses affect health. In music, however, lessons for younger students are not always well planned to build progressively on their understanding and skills – a Year 8 class found it hard to build up layers of sound to reflect the mood of Roald Dahl's *Revoltin' Rhymes*. On the other hand, post-16 students who are competent performers use their instrumental skills well to transpose and improvise compositions.
27. Expectations are high for students of all abilities. In drama, teachers challenge students well through very good questioning, as in a lesson about pantomime with Year 9 students, in which they learned how to open a story, set the scene and introduce characters. Drama teachers build up skills in small steps so that all students participate and contribute at the level which is right for them. Students of all ages are helped to develop confidence and their own styles in art – as observed with Year 7 students, who referred to the work of well-known artists as they were learning to draw portraits, and post-16 students who communicated effectively using a range of media when working on a portrait theme. While expectations are usually high in science – for example, of a Year 11 middle ability class learning about acid rain, who had all planned an experiment, taking into account a fair test – occasionally teachers give too much information so that students do not need to think and solve problems for themselves. Students in low ability classes are challenged well. For example, in a low ability Year 10 class they worked hard to improve their desk-top publishing skills because they were so interested in the topic – designing a newspaper lay-out using colour and appropriate software programs. Support for students with special educational needs is good, well-focused on individual needs.
28. Relationships are very good and students are managed well, on the whole. They enjoy contributing and learning through discussion, as in English, when different classes in Year 11 made very good progress in understanding the use of persuasive language in *Macbeth*, in

understanding characters in *Othello*, and in the preparing for GCSE oral presentations on car advertisements. Only very occasional examples were seen of overly fussy or unsocial behaviour by students, which usually occurred when lessons were not demanding enough or students were not sufficiently involved.

29. Lesson time is well used. Lessons start punctually and they are filled with an interesting sequence of activities. Early morning form time is also well used. Students read, do homework, planners are checked, notices are given. Available resources are well used to support practical activities in science. Instrumental skills are low among younger students in music, although governors appreciate the need to establish music playing and subsidise the cost of instrumental lessons.
30. Teachers have a good understanding of the levels at which students are working. They use questions to build on understanding and work is marked regularly. Comments are brief in several subjects and give little written guidance on how to improve – as in French and mathematics, and in art, although discussion of students' progress is good in art lessons and they usually know what to do to improve. Teachers keep good records of the marks students achieve and make systematic use of assessment to help students to improve. Students are encouraged to assess and evaluate their work, as in drama, mathematics and science, for example. Homework is regularly and appropriately set.
31. Teaching is much improved since the last inspection, when one-fifth of lessons observed had weaknesses. Lessons are hardly ever unsatisfactory now and teaching is good throughout the school. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and in-service training have helped to improve teaching. Wide variation in the quality of teaching is no longer a feature of most subjects, as reported then. Good features noted in the last inspection remain – of planning, relationships and the regular use of homework. Clear weaknesses reported at the last inspection have been tackled. Teachers now plan for the full range of ability and provide challenging work both for the most and least able. Teachers manage students well and encourage good standards of behaviour. Improvement in teaching has been good since the last inspection.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?

32. The curriculum provides good breadth and balance overall, up to Year 11. The subjects offered are in line with National Curriculum requirements. Work in English is supplemented by drama and support for literacy across the curriculum including, for younger students, library lessons, reading in form time and effective emphasis on key words in many subjects. The time provided for modern foreign languages is above average for younger students and those who do well in French in Year 7 learn a second foreign language - Spanish - from Year 8 onwards, which proves popular, since many choose to study Spanish for GCSE. Other, less able, students do not have this choice, however. Students take at least nine subjects at GCSE and their choice has been extended by the introduction of vocational courses (health and social care, and travel and tourism) into Year 10. All students study religious education up to Year 11 and can now take a half GCSE in this; results reflect generally good teaching because the allocation of time is low. Separate lessons are provided in information and communications technology up to Year 11 as well as extra time for students choosing to enter GCSE. Students' computer skills are generally good, although their skills in applying information and communications technology across the curriculum to the benefit of other subjects are not sufficiently developed because they do not have enough practice in this. The design and technology options available in Years 10 and 11 introduce new areas of study – graphics, and systems and control – but work in resistant materials is not continued, which limits progression in this area. The development of numeracy is systematic in mathematics and numeracy is used regularly in other subjects, including art, geography, science, information and communications technology, and design and technology, but it is not co-ordinated across the curriculum.
33. Schemes of work are well planned for students of different levels of attainment. The scheme in history, for example, is very thorough. In most subjects, students are grouped in classes according to their ability, which assists teachers in planning suitably challenging work. Students

of all attainment levels are well challenged, especially those in higher ability classes. Planning is good for students with special educational needs. In a few instances, there is scope for increasing the challenge for middle ability students - for example, in mathematics. Specialist help is used to support the learning of students who are starting to speak English. A 'Raising Achievement' initiative provides good support for students who are capable but find it hard to learn.

34. Personal, social and health education is provided in all years up to Year 11. The programme is well structured, including topics on drugs awareness, health and sex education. Lessons are taught by a team of teachers, and the quality of teaching is good. Visitors contribute specialist knowledge, drawing on experience in St John's Ambulance Brigade, nursing and the police, for example. Guidance and advice on careers and post-16 education is provided in personal, social and health education from Year 7, with extra support provided at times of making choices - for example, the options fair in Year 9 and careers interviews in Year 11. The quality of careers education is good. All students benefit from two weeks' work experience in the summer term of Year 10 and preparation for this is linked to work in English.
35. Links with feeder primary schools are well established and help pupils to transfer and settle into Kirkham Carr Hill. Year 6 pupils spend a day at Kirkham Carr Hill and sample a variety of lessons. Visits are made by staff to help the transition for pupils with special educational needs. Curricular links have involved physical education, drama, poetry and food technology, and a joint Year 6 pupil-and-parent course is planned in information and communications technology. Special funding was obtained through the local education authority for a summer school for gifted and talented students in 2000. Links are not particularly close with other secondary schools or further education colleges, although sixth formers benefit from occasional joint activities - for example, drama with a scientific theme - and make visits to local universities.
36. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided. Local visits enhance work in history, geography and religious studies and students go further afield (Pembrokeshire) in science. Visits abroad have enriched work in history (Belgium and Italy), in physical education (skiing) and in modern foreign languages (France and Spain). Club activities are provided in most subjects, and enhance learning in physical education and music, especially. Students have access to computers at lunchtime, but computer activities are not specifically planned. Students can do their own work in the homework club and many make use of the library at lunchtimes: so many, at times, that space is insufficient. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme offers a variety of practical challenges for older students. Community links and theatre groups strengthen work in drama and personal, social and health education. Resident artists raise awareness and expectations in art, and a teacher from Spain has benefited work in modern foreign languages and other subjects.
37. Significant improvement has been made to the curriculum since the last inspection. At that time, subject opportunities were different (the school described its arrangements as Routes 1 and 2) for students of different abilities in Years 10 and 11, which restricted opportunities for success at GCSE. Except for the opportunity to learn Spanish being limited to the more able linguists, all students now have access to the same curriculum, and all students study religious education up to Year 11. At the last inspection, staff shortages had caused anomalies in the breadth and balance of the curriculum. The curriculum is now well developed and, except for the absence of resistant materials as a GCSE subject, it is without anomalies.

Post-16

38. Good educational opportunities are provided for those staying on post-16. The academic curriculum allows students to continue studying all of the National Curriculum subjects, and introduces new subjects, including psychology and general studies, as well as vocational courses leading to GNVQs in health and social care, and travel and tourism. (Comment on vocational courses is included in the last section of this report.) All students participate in physical education. In addition there is a rich programme of extra-curricular activities which contributes significantly to students' personal and social education. Tutors place strong emphasis on the development of citizenship. They help and encourage students to be confident,

independent learners. Students have very good working relationships with their teachers and peers.

39. As at the time of the last inspection, there are no plans to provide formal religious education for all post-16 students, and in this respect statutory requirements are not being met. However, there are varied opportunities for students to explore and reflect on moral and spiritual issues - for example, during theatre productions, and at the annual religious education conference. Post-16 provision makes a valuable contribution to the school's ethos and school life in general. Students are good role models for the lower school, and community links are strong. Academic standards and student numbers follow an upward trend. The Kirkham Carr Hill post-16 provision is a sound basis for progression into further and higher education.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

40. The school's mission statement and aims reflect a central concern for the personal development of students. A good range of opportunities is provided for students to take responsibility and develop into good citizens, although departments do not have policy documents relating to the area of personal development.
41. Spiritual development is satisfactory, overall. Daily assemblies are of consistently good quality, fully meet statutory requirements and contribute well to the ethos of the school. They are led by a variety of senior staff and students. The weekly assembly, supported by a thought for each day, provides a good experience for sixth formers. All assemblies have time for prayer and reflection and a record of themes is kept. Annually, there is a carol service. The religious education department makes a major contribution to the whole area of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Exercises in appreciating stillness give students an awareness that religion is more than facts and helps them to appreciate the value of silence and reflection. The weakness in the area of spiritual development is the very slow progress towards providing religious education for sixth form students who attend an annual religious studies conference – but this is not enough to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Major contributions to spiritual development are made by the art and drama departments. Art, in particular, provides opportunities for reflection on religious and emotional themes and artists in residence have contributed significantly to these.
42. Moral development is very good. Expectations of students are high and there is a clear attempt in the school to teach students the difference between right and wrong. Teachers are positive role models and the general ethos of the school is friendly, orderly and caring. Students respond and support each other very well; they show respect for each other, for property and the environment. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects. Religious education has moral development at the core of its programme in Years 10 and 11. English provides many opportunities through the study of literature (for example, *Lord of the Flies* and *Othello*) and *The Terrible Fate of Humpty Dumpty* tackles the subject of bullying. Science, design and technology, history, geography and art also contribute much of value.
43. Social development is very good. Students are confident and respond well to the opportunities to work in groups in many subjects. Notable among these are physical education and English. Students are involved in local community initiatives in many ways and show much willingness to work for charities - for example, in raising money for the Kirkham Museum, and for Barnados. At Christmas, they organise a party for the elderly. The school council and sixth form committee give real opportunities for organising and contributing effectively to the life of the school. Post-16 students organise their own social activities and Year 11 prefects benefit from training sponsored by British Nuclear Fuels. Students take part in a 'buddy' system which helps to support students new to the school. The personal, social and health education programme is well organised and taught by a team of specialists. Extra-curricular activities including drama, music and physical education, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, provide further opportunities for students to work together and take responsibility.
44. Cultural experiences for students are varied and good, overall. Artists in residence, visits from drama groups, speakers from the community and trips to theatres are regular. Curricular contributions come mainly from English, religious education, history, music and art. Visits

abroad help students to appreciate the outlook of others, and broaden horizons. The history department makes visits to museums and religious education teachers take students to a synagogue and a Hindu temple. A visit to Manchester involves both a visit to the mosque and also to the Islamic community. Displays in mathematics raise awareness of the many individuals and groups of people who have contributed to our understanding of number, and in art, students learn to appreciate the styles and contributions of people from many cultures including, for example, African culture.

45. Improvement has been made since the last inspection in the provision and the variety of opportunities for students' personal development. Overall, provision is good, and social and moral development are strong. Further improvement in departmental provision could be made through a more systematic approach with the adoption of clear policies and contributions from each subject.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

46. Arrangements for the care of students are good and include a very well organised pastoral system. Staff know students well and understand their educational, social and personal needs. Procedures for the protection of children, for health, safety and risk assessment are good, and identified staff are trained in first aid. The working environment is safe and students are well supervised at work and during breaks. Procedures to promote good behaviour and protect them from harassment and bullying are successful; students appreciate the 'bullying box' and buddy system, for example. The school council meets regularly and students take this opportunity to discuss matters related to their well-being. Older students show good commitment to the care and support of younger students and demonstrate a strong will to discourage any oppressive behaviour. Students are happy at Kirkham Carr Hill.
47. The school has worked hard at improving attendance; initiatives like the lunchtime support group and rewards have been particularly helpful. Attendance is good. This success is based on generating reliable attendance information and using it thoughtfully to monitor and address concerns. Recording and reporting requirements are fully met.
48. Expectations of good behaviour are clear. Adults are good role models and set good standards. Students' good behaviour is well acknowledged, through, for example, commendations at the presentation evenings, which are well attended by parents. Behaviour is well managed by teachers. Behavioural issues are discussed in pastoral meetings and concerns are effectively addressed through setting targets for improvement in students' individual education plans, seeking help from outside agencies, and projects for those who find attendance difficult. Students' behaviour is good.
49. Personal and social education is well organised and students are encouraged to make choices and decisions. All students are well supported and guided on matters related to their health, welfare and futures; careers guidance is particularly good. Students' personal development is well monitored through the pastoral system and student planners, teachers' progress reports, and records of rewards and sanctions. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and have full access to the curriculum.
50. At the time of the last inspection, the school was developing ways to demonstrate progress in students' performance. These are now established and information from the initial tests in Year 7 is well used in grouping students according to their ability, determining individual support, setting targets for improvement and predicting outcomes. Monitoring of students' performance is systematic and regular across subjects and year groups. Procedures for assessment are very good and requirements for assessing and reporting students' progress are met. Assessment is particularly good in art, English, geography and information and communications technology, and helps students to do well in examinations.
51. The use of assessment for planning the next stage of students' learning, through setting targets for improvement has been effective in raising GCSE results. There is scope, however, for improving the way the school describes predictions. Parents expressed concern that the

influence of Year 7 test results affected teachers' views too strongly. This is not the full picture. Teachers record and monitor progress regularly and students set targets for themselves. Teachers and students discuss progress and how it can be improved. The school could allay misunderstanding about predictions by clarifying for parents the use and effectiveness of information on progress: actual results exceed predictions. The school has made imaginative use of opportunities to support specific groups of students - for example, the gifted and talented, those with special educational needs, and those who find difficulty in coming to school. Mentoring is used to support others, often those of middle-ability, who want to raise their grades at GCSE.

52. At the time of the last inspection, it was found that staff were caring and concerned for students' welfare – and they remain so, now. Several initiatives introduced at about that time - the personal, social and health education programme, monitoring of health and safety and responsibilities of heads of year - are all well established now. At the last inspection, overall responsibility for pastoral matters was not defined. This is no longer the case: one of the two deputy headteachers leads strongly on this now. Overall, improvement has been good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents are very pleased with many aspects of the school, particularly teaching, leadership, the school's expectations which are high and the progress their children are making. They feel comfortable about approaching the staff and are pleased with the improvements made in recent years. Parents' positive views are well founded, and the school is popular and over-subscribed. Some parents are not so happy about the amount of homework, the information they receive on their children's progress, and occasional instances of poor behaviour. Inspectors found that the homework is regularly set and the amount is appropriate, and that, while the behaviour in the school is good, there are pockets of inappropriate behaviour in occasional lessons. General information about the school and the curriculum is good. Students' progress reports are frequent and informative but they are brief and give little information about what they or their parents can do to improve standards. At their meeting, several parents expressed concern about the use of Year 7 tests in predicting progress. As mentioned in paragraph 51, the school could helpfully explain to parents how test results and subsequent assessments are used to raise standards and improve GCSE results.
54. Parents of students with special educational needs are closely involved with the school and this helps students to progress. They are invited to attend and contribute well to annual reviews. Individual education plans are discussed and parents effectively participate in reviewing their child's progress and agreeing targets.
55. Links with parents are productive and support the curriculum and students' learning. Parents support drama productions, music and sport events and help with the transport of students who participate in external competitions. Some parents provide placements for work experience. The social events organised by the active friends' association are well supported by parents and raise considerable sums of money which are used to improve the learning resources at the school. Through the Community Association, a governors' initiative which has grown to provide after-school classes for local people, many parents use the school as a community resource. Links with parents were good at the time of the last inspection, and remain so now.
56. The governors fulfil their responsibility and publish an attractive brochure and report to parents, though attendance by parents at the governors' annual meetings is very low. Parents' attendance at other meetings, such as transition evenings, and consultation meetings, is good. The school values parents and their views and has obtained information on their views through a questionnaire. Student planners provide the scope for effective and frequent communication between home and school, and this is developing.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. Leadership of the school is clear and very strong by the headteacher and senior management team, who work together well. The aims and values of the school, summed up in the mission statement, are strongly reflected in its work. Very effective emphasis is placed on raising standards and on developing the partnership between school and local community. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than is nationally the case and the number of students has increased by ten per cent. Students, in turn, develop responsible attitudes and good citizenship through involvement in local activities and fund-raising. Expectations are high and the school has achieved national recognition in several areas and gained, for example, the Sportsmark Award, the Schools' Curriculum Award, Investor in People status and the Lloyds TSB teaching award.
58. The governing body has very good oversight of the school and high expectations. Governors are well informed and work closely with the school to benefit students. On their initiative, a short report-back was arranged for students at the end of inspection week. Fostering links with the local community has been a governors' initiative: they have given a clear lead on this and founded the Community Association, which provides a programme of activities for the local community, based at the school. The hall is used as the Dove theatre and the grounds for local sports events. Governors have also been closely involved with the development of the sex education policy and maintain a keen interest in the repair, maintenance and extension of the buildings. They have a very good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of their own responsibilities. They contribute effectively to planning for improvement and are conscientious about financial and health and safety responsibilities. They fulfil their statutory requirements, except those relating to the provision of religious education in the sixth form and the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum.
59. Management of subject areas is capable, overall, with strong management in most subjects. Generally, standards are rising. In several subjects, heads of department are new, though most are teachers well experienced in the school (and have previously held responsibility as heads of learning). Support for students with special educational needs and post-16 provision are both well co-ordinated. No structure is in place to co-ordinate the development of information and communications technology across the curriculum. Leadership in two departments has been weakened by prolonged absence: in design and technology, where a deputy headteacher has provided effective co-ordination, and in modern foreign languages, where individual teachers have worked on improving the curriculum. Senior managers delegate to heads of department responsibility for raising standards in their area. Information on the progress of students is shared with all staff, and discussed in detail with heads of departments. Effective use is made of target-setting to raise results. The monitoring of teaching is rigorous and well used to improve the quality of education, through discussion, reporting and in-service training. The support given to teachers new to the school is good. Planning for improvement is systematic, with departmental plans reflecting the overall strategic plan for the school. Over the last few years, the curricular organisation for Years 10 and 11 has been altered to provide more opportunities and flexibility for all students. The management structure has been strengthened by bringing together responsibility for resourcing with that of raising standards, in the head of department posts.
60. Commitment to improve and succeed is shared across the school. Good teamwork supports the observation of lessons. The Investor in People scheme is well established in the school. Students are involved in improvements and a sense of pride is generated through, for example, the reward system, presentation evenings and the school council. Students exercise their responsibilities well and question variation in the quality of, for example, homework and school meals.
61. Financial management is very good. The headteacher plans well in advance and over the last few years has turned around a substantial budget deficit to create a healthy balance. The school has been careful to set aside money to maintain the building, which provides a business-like environment in which to work, and to augment resources, such as by purchasing additional books for mathematics and an interactive white board for science. Planning for improvement is costed and priorities are appropriate – as, for example, the increased use of information and communications technology across the curriculum. In this area, however, in spite of a small sum found from the school's own resources, developments have been held back, affected by

delay in receipt of specific monies for computer developments. Resources for special educational needs are well spent: students make good progress and are well integrated in the school. Provision post-16 receives slightly generous resourcing from the school budget, but without causing problems elsewhere. Funds received for projects to improve the basic skills of students who find it difficult to attend regularly, and those who are underachieving, are well used: the students are making good progress. While good use is made of computers in administering the work of the school, subjects across the curriculum make relatively little use of them.

62. Governors have a good sense of what is best value; they challenge decisions and their cost - for example, in the purchase of new computers. They are justifiably well pleased with the arrangements for cleaning the building and with the effectiveness of the post-16 block. When account is taken of the amount of money coming into the school, which is below average, the quality of education provided, which is generally good, and the progress students make, which is also good, the school provides good value for money.
63. Good features of leadership and management have been maintained since the last inspection, notably overall leadership and management, which are very good, and financial planning and management. Several inconsistencies were noted in the last report which have been tackled since that time: the senior management team is no longer imbalanced but works together very well and has a strong presence throughout the school. The monitoring of teaching has been rigorously strengthened and has contributed well to the overall improvement in teaching and learning. Inconsistencies in the effectiveness of heads of learning have been resolved: their role no longer exists because of restructuring which has brought together resourcing and curricular responsibilities into head of department posts. Nonetheless, gaps in leadership persist and are reported as areas for improvement in this report (concerning design and technology, modern foreign languages and the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum). Since the last inspection improvements have been made in meeting statutory requirements. Teacher appraisal is in place. All students attend a daily act of worship through the programme of assemblies, which are consistently good. Religious education has been strengthened so that all students study the subject up to Year 11, but provision post-16 is still inadequate. Not enough use is made of computers in subjects across the curriculum. Considered overall, improvement in leadership and management has been good.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

64. The match of staffing to the needs of the curriculum is good, overall. Newly qualified and newly appointed staff are effectively supported by a well-structured induction programme and they comment very positively on this experience. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are effectively managed and systematically monitored. Opportunities reflect priorities for school improvement and the results of individual teacher appraisal, which is properly in place. The quality of training received is rigorously evaluated and shared, as appropriate. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Subject leaders now have time allowed for support and monitoring teaching and standards. Weaknesses in staffing in several subjects have been resolved. Non-teaching staff contribute well to the ethos of the school. Librarian, administrative, reception, technical and care taking staff are efficient and helpful.
65. Accommodation is under considerable pressure because of growth in student numbers: it is adequate when account is taken of the building programme due to start immediately after the inspection. Accommodation is good for physical education, geography and music, and satisfactory for most other subjects, except for science and modern foreign languages, where shortage of space affects standards because lessons are taught in a variety of rooms, some of which are unsuitable. Inadequate space for art restricts storage of work and opportunities by older students to improve their work in their own time. The need for more space for information and communications technology is being addressed in the new building programme, which will also provide a bigger library and more general classrooms. (At the time of the inspection the library, a pleasant room, was small for the number of students in the school, and only one computer was available). Since the last inspection, satisfactory progress has been made, particularly with improvements in accommodation for music, design and technology and

information and communications technology. Buildings are very well maintained and the site is largely litter free. During a wet inspection week the building was spotless.

66. Resources to support learning are adequate. Computers in the main information and communications technology rooms are modern and well used. In several other areas of the school there are not enough up-to-date computers, notably in art, although in design and technology available facilities are little used. Software for mathematics needs improvement. In most subjects teachers use class sets of books, and this arrangement is satisfactory but in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages books sometimes have to be shared, which limits opportunities for homework. The library and its stock – both small – remain much the same as at the last inspection. In spite of these shortcomings, resources have improved over the last few years. Both the library and the number of modern computers will be improved when the building programme is finished. The need remains for more classroom books, especially for examination groups, and for greater use to be made of available information and communications technology by subject teachers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. *To further raise the standards of work and attainment of students, the governors, headteacher, senior management team and staff should:*
- Improve the leadership and co-ordination of modern foreign languages, design and technology and the use of computers in all subjects, and monitor effectiveness in each area (see paragraphs 59, 117, 145 and 153);
 - Provide religious education for post-16 students, in line with the locally agreed syllabus (see paragraphs 39, 58 and 177).
68. The provision of religious education post-16 and improvement in the departmental management of modern foreign languages were included in key issues of the last report. In addition to the preceding key issues, the following weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan: the perception that Year 7 test results dominate in predicting students' achievements (paragraphs 51 and 53); the marking of spelling, mathematics and modern foreign languages (paragraphs 76, 86 and 152); the need for additional books, especially for examination groups (paragraph 66); the need to replace old computers and software (paragraphs 66 and 145); the need to distribute rooms equitably to subjects and to group them, where possible (paragraph 65). The last two weaknesses will be ameliorated greatly by improvements following the construction of the new block.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	198
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.5	24.8	48.5	24.7	0.5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	1088
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	141	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	162	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	114 (99)	97 (90)	211 (189)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58 (37)	76 (66)	78 (69)
	Girls	71 (73)	67 (70)	67 (59)
	Total	129 (130)	143 (136)	145 (128)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (69)	68 (72)	69 (68)
	National	(63)	(62)	(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (25)	41 (38)	33 (29)
	National	(28)	(38)	(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57 (51)	79 (70)	94 (68)
	Girls	64 (71)	70 (64)	81 (74)
	Total	121 (122)	149 (134)	175 (142)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (65)	71 (71)	83 (75)
	National	(64)	(64)	(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (28)	35 (33)	47 (35)
	National	(31)	(37)	(28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	105 (102)	100 (109)	205 (211)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	53 (37)	101 (92)	103 (95)
	Girls	55 (66)	94 (103)	98 (103)
	Total	108 (103)	195 (195)	201 (198)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (49)	95 (92)	98 (94)
	National	(46.6)	(90.9)	(95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (41)
	National	(38.0)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	29 (32)	36 (39)	65 (71)

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.7 (21.3)	20.4 (18.2)	18.7 (19.8)	2.7 (2.0)	3.2 (2.5)	3.0 (2.3)
National	(17.7)	(18.1)	(17.9)	(2.7)	(2.8)	(2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	1205
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	357

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	22.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,801,891
Total expenditure	2,700,623
Expenditure per pupil	2255
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 4755
Balance carried forward to next year	96,513

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1195
Number of questionnaires returned	235

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	49	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	43	6	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	54	8	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	48	17	3	4
The teaching is good.	38	56	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	51	12	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	34	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	31	5	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	51	10	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	50	42	1	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	48	5	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	42	7	3	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at their meeting were very supportive of the school and praised teaching in several subjects – art and drama, particularly – and also post-16 provision. Parents discussed the termly monitoring letters they receive which include predicted attainment in each subject, which they understand is based on the results of Year 7 tests. Inspectors took their views into account when considering how the school uses information to guide students' progress. Parents' overall view is that the school's reputation has risen considerably in the last 10 years: they feel that it is now good.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

69. Standards in English are good and students achieve well. At the end of Year 9 in 1999, the results of the National Curriculum tests in English were in line with the national average, and above the average for similar schools. Results in English were not as good as those in mathematics and science. Girls did better than boys, as nationally.
70. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades (A*-C) in the GCSE examination in English matched the national average, and were well above the average for schools of similar intake. Results were particularly good for grades A*- B. In GCSE English literature in 1999, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades (A*-C) was in line with the national average. In both English and English literature, over the three years to 1999, results have remained consistently average. In 1999, results in English were similar to those in mathematics, but not as good as those in science. In 2000, GCSE results in English language were similar, though boys did better than in 1999 when their results were well below those of girls. While GCSE results for English literature in 2000 dipped below recent national averages, all students were entered – a much higher proportion than in most schools. The results were affected by a drop in girls' results, although boys' results improved. Results in A-level English language and literature in 1999 were average, and a little better than results for previous years. In 2000, results were better again, with more of the higher grades (A and B) obtained within results which were broadly similar to recent national averages.
71. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 in English were, by national standards, average. Students speak clearly, showing an interest in their audience. While higher attaining students command a wide vocabulary, middle and lower attaining students have a more limited choice of words. Students listen well to their teachers and their friends in group work. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, higher attaining students redrafted a passage to make vocabulary more forceful and listened carefully to their partners' suggestions. Students read aloud fluently and convey direct speech convincingly. Less able students need to concentrate hard on pronouncing the words and so pace is slower. Students write in a range of forms such as business letters, creative and reflective pieces, newspaper reports – for example, of an accident – and poetry. In descriptive writing, students create vivid images. More able students use precise language such as "mahogany brown hair" when portraying people. Standards in grammar, punctuation and sentence structure are average, but spelling is less consistent, even in the work of higher attaining students. Presentation of work is good, and very good in wall displays. Appearance is sometimes enhanced by word-processing, including clip-art.
72. By the age of 16, students achieve above average standards in lessons. They speak with growing confidence and sustain a spirited conversation. They listen carefully and respond appropriately. For example, in a Year 11 Shakespeare lesson, pairs of students listened courteously to each other when discussing how Iago played on Othello's mind, and they benefited from sharing ideas. Students read accurately, understanding what they read. While higher and middle attaining students grasp hidden meaning, lower attaining students take words literally. In writing, students consolidate skills previously learnt and develop a more mature style of writing. They write stories with an unexpected ending, describe people and scenes – making effective use of contrast – and respond sympathetically to literature. For example, they compared two film versions of *Macbeth*, selecting essential detail, and showed understanding, in their writing of, for example, the isolation of Simon and Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*. Middle and lower attaining students lapse into description – for example, by retelling a plot – at the expense of writing critically. Standards in spelling improve. Vocabulary is generally effective and a satisfactory range of punctuation is used. Presentation is good, especially in sustained writing for course work.
73. Standards in A-level English classes are above average. Students discuss tasks enthusiastically and with authority – as in Year 13 lessons on Wilfred Owen's poetry, and Hare's

play *Murmuring Judges*. They listen attentively, building well on others' comments. Students read with an eye for detail. Within the A-level classes, lower attaining students need firm support to appreciate an author's style, while higher attaining students understand how a writer uses language deliberately to achieve an effect – as in Owen's poem, *Dulce et Decorum Est*. Students write well on characters – for example, about Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, and on the horrors of war, as depicted in Owen's war poetry. Writing is, at best, accurate and well structured, with apt quotations to support arguments. Students expected to achieve lower grades need help to organise their work. Ideas are sometimes not well supported by evidence from the text and so lose impact.

74. Students make good progress in English, throughout the school. All, including those with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well by the age of 14, compared with their attainment on entry which is below average in literacy. Achievement by the age of 16 was satisfactory in 1999, and is now good. In the Year 11 group which took GCSE in 1999, higher and lower attaining students achieved well, but there was a measure of underachievement by middle attaining students, especially boys. This is partly explained by staffing difficulties, which interrupted students' learning. In 2000, underachievement was much less marked, particularly in English language. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, there was very little evidence of underachievement. Post-16, students usually achieve well and at least in line with their capabilities. In their time at school, pupils improve their vocabulary and spelling, learn to structure and sustain an essay, using drafting to good effect, and to evaluate characters' behaviour in literature studied – for example, Napoleon and Snowball in *Animal Farm*.
75. Standards since the last inspection have been well maintained. GCSE results in English are similar. In literature, results are lower, but now nearly every student takes the examination whereas, in 1995, literature was an optional subject studied by higher attaining students only. Results at A-level have improved. The range of reading material has increased, and the standard of speaking and listening in lower attaining groups is higher. The quality of learning in Years 7 to 9 is much better. Given the quality of teaching, enhanced by three new teachers who have recently joined the school, the commitment of all staff to raising attainment, and the good attitude of students, the capacity for further improvement is good.
76. Teaching and learning in English are good. In all lessons, they are at least satisfactory. In 80 per cent of lessons observed they are at least good and, in just over 30 per cent of lessons, they are very good – occasionally excellent. Teaching and learning are best in Years 7 and 11. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good; they enable teachers to ask effective questions which assess students' progress and make students think. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on *Talking in Whispers*, the teacher, by careful questioning, extended a lower attaining group, kept students – including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties – interested in the lesson and promoted very rapid learning. Teachers plan well to involve students in their own learning, but occasionally talk for too long. This limits students' opportunities to contribute, and slows down learning. Generally, students are actively involved through group work at the outset, as in a Year 11 lesson on *Macbeth*, where students rewrote in modern style Macbeth's first interview with the murderers. In a Year 10 lesson, students in pairs assessed each other's plans for a descriptive essay. Teachers have high expectations of achievement and behaviour. They manage students very well. Relationships are very good. As a result, students respond readily and develop good attitudes to learning. They concentrate hard, are courteous and co-operative, and want to improve. However, a minority of students in one lesson observed in Year 10 showed little interest in their work and were disrespectful to the teacher. Good use is made of time and resources. Lessons move at a brisk pace and often end with effective consolidation of learning. In a few lessons, however, the conclusion is rushed, with not enough time left to set homework fully. Support staff work well with English teachers to help students with special educational needs to learn. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students improved their literacy skills very quickly and enjoyed their work. Teachers are conscientious in marking work and write constructive comments, though insufficient attention is given to spelling errors in Years 7 to 9. Marking is particularly good in the sixth form. In the most successful lessons, teachers share learning objectives with the class and involve students actively in their learning. They vary activities and allow sufficient time to check on what has been learned and to explain the homework.

77. Schemes of work, including those for A-level classes, are comprehensive and allow for a broad, balanced curriculum, except that information and communications technology is too rarely employed. English teachers have not yet received appropriate training and the access to computers is difficult. The curriculum meets the needs of students of different levels of attainment and is enriched by activities such as public speaking, theatre visits and after-school revision sessions – on *The Crucible*, for instance. Opportunities to read are given at some registrations, and paired reading is arranged for Year 7 pupils. During the inspection, on National Poetry Day, English teachers and the librarian gave students the opportunity to write poems in the lunch hour and some impressive work resulted. Assessment procedures are thorough and information is used effectively to raise standards. For example, data from tests taken in Year 7 help in grouping students. Timetable changes have enabled the more rigorous setting of GCSE students, so that teachers can plan lesson material more effectively, and this has addressed the under-achievement of middle attaining students. The English department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through literature. For example, *The Terrible Fate of Humpty Dumpty* highlights bullying, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* stimulates discussion on racial issues.
78. The department benefits from very strong leadership. The head of English leads by example and, along with her staff, is working hard to raise standards and support the school's ethos. The teachers work very successfully as a team, despite the insufficiency of specialist accommodation, which means that teachers have to share the inconvenience of teaching English lessons in other departmental areas. Wall displays in the five English rooms are impressive, and there is an excellent collection of First World War information and writings in the post-16 block, arranged by A-level students.

Literacy

79. The standard of literacy in the school is average, although spelling is a weakness among younger students. Standards of punctuation, sentence structure and grammar are average, but spelling is less consistent, especially in Years 7 to 9. Good emphasis is placed on literacy in many lessons across the curriculum and effectively helps students to develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students are usually willing to speak, though in mathematics, science and art there are not enough opportunities to answer at length and explain ideas. Listening skills are good in most subjects. Students listen well to teachers' instructions, and to one another in group work. In modern foreign languages, students are specifically taught listening techniques. Students in most subjects understand what is read. In history, students study source materials and, in A-level science, students are good at extracting information. In art homework, students research the life and works of famous artists. However, there are too few opportunities in modern foreign languages for students to practise reading. In writing, key words help students to express themselves, although they are not often referred to in mathematics lessons. Writing frames help students to organise their work in geography and in information and communications technology. Students manage extended writing well in drama and physical education coursework for GCSE, and in music A-level work. In religious education, students write in different formats – for example, letters, diaries and stories. In science, there is good investigative writing in which students explain procedures in correct terminology. Teachers encourage good presentation, as seen in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, where high standards were achieved in preparing a design sheet for a clock mechanism and face. In information and communications technology, students write creatively about themselves below computer-generated pictures. In their marking, teachers usually draw attention to inaccurate expression, but spelling errors are too frequently overlooked.

MATHEMATICS

80. Standards and students' achievements in mathematics are good. They have improved since the last inspection report. At the end of Year 9 in 1999, the results of the National Curriculum tests in mathematics were above the average when compared with all schools nationally and well above the average for similar schools. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and exceeded those in English. In 2000, the test results were similar to those in 1999 with a significant improvement in the proportion of students gaining the highest levels (7 and 8).

81. In GCSE mathematics in 1999, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades (A*-C) was in line with the average for all schools nationally and better than the average for similar schools. Across the full range of grades (A*-G) standards achieved by students were above the average when compared both with all schools nationally and with similar schools. Girls performed better than boys at the highest grades (A* and A). Results were close to those in science and exceeded those in English. In 2000, GCSE results were broadly similar to those in 1999, although students performed less well at the highest grades (A* and A). Boys' results improved - they obtained better results than the girls.
82. Standards achieved at A-level in 1999 were well above the national average, with more than half the students gaining the highest grades (A and B) and all students gaining at least grade D or above. While the proportion of students achieving the highest grades (A and B) in 2000 dipped considerably, most students gained middle grades (C and D) and all passed. The standard across the full range of grades was maintained; all students gained a pass grade (E) or higher.
83. In lessons and in the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 cover a wide range and are broadly in line with national expectations, with higher attaining students achieving above expectations. By this stage, students have a sound understanding of number and use number operations effectively to solve simple equations. Higher attaining students progress to more challenging tasks. They demonstrate a good understanding of algebraic principles, for example, when using graphs to illustrate equations and when applying the rule of Pythagoras to solve problems in two dimensions. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, improve their skills in handling number in different contexts. Middle-ability classes use number when calculating and determining representative values of data - for example, mean, mode and median. Students make good progress across Years 7 to 9.
84. Standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 are above average; students are building on earlier learning. Most students have consolidated knowledge and skills in number operations and apply these to other areas of mathematics. Students in the highest ability classes use appropriate methods to solve a range of equations, although some students are confused when using negative signs. They successfully use trigonometrical ratios to solve everyday problems. Middle attaining students can determine algebraic formulae to find the n-th term of a sequence, and their ability with number operations improves as they learn how to calculate the proportion of increase and decrease using percentages. Students from the lowest attaining classes understand concepts of area and volume and use simple shapes to calculate these. Algebraic principles relating to generalisations - for example, formulae and equations - do not feature highly in their programmes of work.
85. Standards and achievement post-16 are in line with expectations for A-level mathematics. Students have a sound understanding of differential equations and are able to construct them using given information. They persevere to improve their skills in solving them.
86. Teaching and learning in just over half the mathematics lessons seen were good, including one very good lesson; they were never less than satisfactory. Teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection and enables students to learn and behave well. Teachers are understanding of students' needs and encourage good relationships with them. Students respond by taking an interest in the subject and participating well in lessons. The classroom management skills of the teachers are good and this ensures that students work hard. Teachers are well qualified and have good knowledge of the subject. They give competent explanations and devise activities which enthuse the students and help them to improve their skills and understanding. For example, in a Year 11 class, following a lesson using information and communications technology, in which students explored the idea and use of Pythagoras' rule, they competently applied their learning to solve straightforward and then more complex problems. Homework is regularly used to reinforce the work of the lesson. Some weaknesses in teaching remain. A minority of middle attaining students, in both Years 8 and 11, are not being given demanding enough work. For example, in a Year 8 class, students spent too much time repeating work done earlier, and drawing and colouring bar charts, rather than interpreting the data and reaching conclusions. The quality of the marking of students' work is variable. Although

students' learning is regularly assessed through tests, the marking of class-work and the use of constructive comments to help students improve are not consistently good across the department. This was an area identified as a weakness in the last inspection report.

87. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. They are courteous, listen carefully to their teachers and concentrate well. Their written work, including diagrams, is clearly and neatly presented.
88. Members of the department are well qualified and experienced. The new head of department joined the team at the beginning of the term and has already identified areas for improvement; for example, schemes of work are not complete for all years in the school and there are not enough textbooks and software programs. Resources have been improved with the purchase of some texts and software. However, books and calculators are being shared between students and groups. This impedes learning and affects the nature of homework set.
89. The improvements made since the last inspection report, in students' progress and examination results in mathematics, are good. There remains some underachievement among a minority of middle attaining students, and inconsistencies in the marking of students' work. Teaching has improved and making more opportunities to share ideas and best practices will further develop teamwork.

Numeracy

90. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Numeracy skills are being developed in mathematics throughout Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, students handle number operations with confidence and use calculators appropriately. By the time they reach Year 11, students use number in a greater variety of contexts; they use number operations in solving algebraic problems and many draw graphs to represent equations. Students taking mathematics at A-level are well skilled in manipulating number to solve algebraic expressions and equations. Although several other subjects use numeracy effectively in their work there is no systematic approach to improving students' standards of numeracy across the curriculum. Number is systematically planned in information and communications technology. Data and formulae are used in developing spreadsheets and a software program is used to help draw shapes accurately. The handling of number is supported well in art; measurement and proportion are used in the enlargement of shapes and students achieve a good level of competence. In design and technology, younger students use scale and measures but when representing data with pie charts they are confused with fractional parts. There is no systematic development of numerical skills in science; however, skills are developed as the need arises. Students in the earlier years use graphs to show relationships - for example, between time and temperature - and students in Year 11 use number well in calculating acceleration when interpreting data from graphs. Post-16, a significant number of students in physics are finding the subject mathematically demanding and require much support from their teachers. Little use is made of number or graphical applications in Years 7 to 9 in geography. In Year 11, students taking GCSE demonstrate skills in the handling and analysis of data. Students at A-level effectively use more sophisticated statistical techniques to interpret data.

SCIENCE

91. Standards in science are good. In 1999, the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and well above average in comparison with similar schools. The results were higher than those for English and similar to those for mathematics. Students did a little better in 2000, particularly those reaching the higher levels (6 and above). At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining the higher (A*-C) grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 was above the national average and well above average relative to similar schools. Almost all students in the year group achieved a grade in the A*- F range, with higher attaining students doing particularly well. The results were higher than those in English and mathematics. In 2000, the results fell back a little, mainly because girls did less well.

92. A-level results for science subjects fluctuate around the national average. In 1999, for example, they were well above the national average. All those students entered gained a pass, and in chemistry and physics a high proportion gained A or B grades. In 2000, results for biology were in line with the national averages for recent years, but in chemistry and physics they were a little below.
93. When students enter the school in Year 7 their attainment in science is generally what is expected for their age. For example, they make accurate measurements of quantities such as mass, volume and temperature, record their results in tables, and reach simple conclusions from observations, such as the relationship between the length of an elastic band and force applied. Students make good progress across Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, standards in lessons are above average, reflecting the results of National Curriculum tests. Almost all can use the correct scientific terminology, in describing processes such as digestion, and explain differences between solids, liquids and gases in terms of their particle arrangements. Students make good progress because they have good understanding of the meanings of key words, such as *enzyme* and *solute*, enabling them to describe and explain their work clearly.
94. Students continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. At the end of Year 11, standards in written work and lessons are above average, in line with the results of GCSE examinations. They can explain the difference between velocity and acceleration, and higher attaining students calculate values for acceleration from experimental data. Students in a small number of Year 10 lessons do not achieve as highly as they should because work is not demanding enough; for example, a straightforward experiment to compare the heat conducting properties of metals was repeated, without carrying their learning any further forward.
95. Post-16, standards in lessons and the work seen during the inspection were always above expectation for A-level, and usually they are well above. In biology, students carry out extended investigations (for example, into enzyme activity) interpreting their results well and making good suggestions for improving experimental technique. Chemistry students show good understanding when they use spectroscopic data to identify unknown substances. In some physics lessons, standards are a little lower, though still above average, partly because staff absence in the past has held back students' progress. For example, some cope well with mathematical aspects of the subject but others need, and receive, significant support. Students are progressing very well, post-16.
96. Students demonstrate very good skills in handling laboratory apparatus carefully and safely because they frequently carry out practical work and, by the time they reach Year 11, they have good investigative skills. Practical skills are systematically developed through work with students in Years 10 and 11 and there is scope for further improvement by adopting a systematic approach from Year 7. Students, including those in the sixth form, present and organise their written work very well and this contributes significantly to their good progress because it helps them to review key points in their learning. Students cope adequately with the numerical demands of the subject (for example, they make good use of graphs to show numerical relationships) but there is no strategy for systematically developing numerical skills. The use of information and communications technology is increasing, but there are not enough computers located in the department for students to use them effectively as a tool in investigative work. Students with special educational needs make good progress, overall. Their progress is very good when teachers and support assistants work closely together in posing questions to encourage them to think more carefully about their work. A few lessons are less well planned and support assistants spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than helping students.
97. Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school. In the lessons observed it was good or very good in 80 per cent of lessons and very good in just over 30 per cent. In the remaining lessons, teaching is satisfactory; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it very well to explain clearly and present work in a way that challenges students to think clearly. They engage and hold interest by relating the work to students' own experience or by using personal anecdotes. For example, in Year 9 the teacher introduced the idea of diffusion by using a hair spray in a corner of the laboratory and then used a well-constructed worksheet which required students to apply their scientific knowledge in

explaining how the smell spread. Learning was good in this lesson, because students concentrated well and applied effort in working out for themselves the scientific principles that explain diffusion. Students are very well behaved and enjoy their science lessons, allowing teachers to make effective use of time. Lessons usually begin by the teacher making a connection with students' previous learning so that they build on existing knowledge. In a Year 11 lesson, they quickly understood the idea of osmosis because they had first reviewed earlier learning about diffusion. A key feature in students' good examination results is consolidation of their learning; teachers often allow time for them to explain in their own words the main points gained from a lesson. In a small number of lessons, particularly in Year 10, learning is less good. The teacher gives too much information and students quickly 'switch off', perceiving that they need make little effort because the teacher does the work for them. In these lessons they copied diagrams of apparatus, tables for their results or conclusions to their experiments from the board or worksheets. Marking of students' written work is up to date. Teachers' comments are usually sufficiently detailed to show them how to improve, but critical comments are infrequently followed up, so that students' learning from them is limited.

98. The department is very well led. Teachers share ideas to help improve students' learning and work as a team to overcome problems; laboratory technicians provide very good support. The department is active in creating links with local companies and primary schools which make good contributions to students' learning. For example, there are visits to see science in action and funds are raised for the purchase of equipment. The recent 'Chemillennium' drama project, portraying the development of chemistry through the ages, was successful in raising the profile of science at Kirkham Carr Hill in the local community. Not all lessons are taught in laboratories: there is not enough specialist accommodation. When lessons are held in classrooms, practical work is limited and this has an adverse effect on students' progress. For example, in Year 7 students were unable to carry forward their work on melting points of solids because the classroom was not suitably equipped. However, the appearance of the laboratories is greatly enhanced by very good displays of students' work. There are not enough textbooks to allow Year 9 students to keep a book at home to help them prepare for National Curriculum tests.
99. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. Although GCSE results for double award science were above average then (as they are now), the proportion of students entered is now much higher, so more students are successful. In 1999, A level results had improved to reach well above national averages. The unsatisfactory teaching found at the last inspection has been eliminated, and work which is too easy remains in only a small number of Year 10 lessons. Students are now well motivated in almost all their lessons.

ART

100. Standards are high in art. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the level nationally expected. GCSE results are well above the national average, and are among the best in the school. Boys' results are closer to girls' results than they are nationally. Standards at A-level are improving: in 1999, students' success at grades A and B was well above the national average. Trends since the last inspection are towards rising standards, with increasing numbers of students opting for the subject at GCSE, and post-16.
101. In Year 7, students are introduced to the concepts of abstract art. They study Picasso's *Weeping Woman* and make visual links with the treatment of facial features in African masks. They appreciate how distorted images and different colour combinations can be used to express feeling and emotion. Their own portrait work shows the influence of these styles and the ability to use warm and cool colours to striking effect. Year 8 students evaluate the work of artists covering a wide range of approaches - for example, the revolving sculptures of Niel Jeffries. They understand how objects change in appearance when viewed from different angles, and develop ideas for sculpture of their own. Their drawings of interlocking and overlapping objects show spatial awareness, and good use of line, shape, and pattern. This process of research, observation and the development of ideas is carried through into Year 9, where students make detailed drawings of watches and clocks before developing two-dimensional and three-dimensional work in a surrealist style. Students also enjoy and benefit from analysing the art and design work of their teachers, such as a large scale print, which resulted in highly imaginative and well drawn responses on the theme *Strange and Fantastic*. Students of all attainment levels are successfully motivated by the exciting and creative projects, and good progress is made to standards which are above national expectations overall, by the end of Year 9.
102. High standards are achieved in art by the end of Year 11. The sound practice of developing new ideas from other artists' work is carried through into Years 10 and 11 where the styles and, in some cases, the aims and objectives of well-known artists are used in a meaningful and original way. Sketchbooks are rich in colour and content, and tell a visual story of discovery through the exciting use of materials and creative ideas. Some students give very good written accounts of the development of their work, with annotated sketches, but not all, and this important aspect of the art and design process could be further developed. Students have the opportunity to choose the aspects of art and design in which they are most interested and skilled; they choose, for example, general drawing and painting, printmaking, ceramics or sculpture. Very good standards of finish and presentation are achieved in all these areas. Progress across Years 10 and 11 is very good.
103. Post-16, skills are further extended, through deeper research, investigation and experimentation. Students' work is based on accurate direct observation of still life, portraiture, and natural or manmade forms. From these studies finished works are developed in a spontaneous and expressive way, using a wide range of media. These are strikingly effective, often to a large scale, with unusual materials creating rich pattern quality. Standards and progress are good, post-16.
104. Students in all years are eager to learn. They enjoy their work, and benefit greatly from the 'artists in residence' attending the school. Staff and students alike are inspired and motivated by these experiences, which often culminate in exciting exhibitions of work. All ages and abilities work together and lasting relationships are formed. These activities undoubtedly make a major contribution to the high standards and the good quality of learning.
105. The quality of teaching at all stages is predominantly good, never less than satisfactory and there is some very good teaching at sixth form level. Teachers have excellent command of the subject and considerable expertise in specialist areas which they use well in planning lessons, in introducing topics and in giving constructive oral comment to students of all ages and attainment levels. Project and lesson objectives are well documented and clearly presented. Teaching is thorough. In some lessons, there is not enough structured discussion among students to reinforce learning and to give them opportunity to share their own ideas. Teachers' management of students is good, and high standards of behaviour are maintained. Varied

strategies are used in lessons to make learning effective, such as the use of informative visual displays and work sheets. Relationships with students are good, and a calm working atmosphere is engendered, without loss of pace or productivity; the quality of learning is good in all years. Good use is made of the 60-minute lessons, which is relatively short for a practical subject. Homework is well integrated with current projects, and students are encouraged to use their home computers to research the work and lives of artists and to write personal evaluations. Unfortunately, relatively few students are able to do this, and there are no computers in the art rooms. Written assessment is just satisfactory: there are not enough informative comments in sketchbooks to show students how to improve their work. However, a good start has been made in using the new National Curriculum levels; these are being introduced in Years 7, 8 and 9.

106. The department provides many extra-curricular activities which make a major contribution to students' personal development, through links with the local community and opportunities to study the art of different cultures. Unfortunately, not all requirements of the new National Curriculum are being met as the department has no information and communications technology facilities, and staff training is not due to take place until summer 2001. Departmental development plans acknowledge the priority to develop information and communications technology as a matter of urgency. As student numbers increase, further improvements are needed, notably to resourcing and accommodation, especially post-16.
107. Since the last inspection, substantial improvements have been made, with a steady rise in standards. The department is very well led; good teamwork and the monitoring of teaching and progress have helped to address the concerns expressed in the last inspection report. There is now no evidence of underachievement in Key Stage 3. Students are well motivated. They show good understanding of the assignments set for them. The schemes of work have been improved and provide good continuity in learning. The quality of teaching has improved significantly.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

108. Standards in design and technology are just satisfactory overall. Attainment is close to national expectations at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are broadly average. Results fluctuate across aspects of the subject, which is co-ordinated effectively by a deputy headteacher, in the absence of the head of department.
109. Students develop their design skills rapidly during Year 7 and continue to make satisfactory progress so that their attainment is close to what is nationally expected by the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments in design and technology for 1999 produced results which were above the national expectation but they fell to below the national expectation in 2000. However, the number of students, girls particularly, gaining the higher levels has been maintained.
110. Attainment in GCSE examinations has been affected by the problems in continuity of staffing but is near average when all technology subjects are taken into account. Students have been entered for a variety of long and short GCSE courses in the last two years. A few of the highest grades (A* and A) are obtained across the different aspects of technology. Only girls have taken textiles and child development courses in the last two years and only boys have taken resistant materials. Generally, boys have done better than girls in electronics, and graphic products, while girls have done better in food technology. In 1999, results in home economics subjects, including food technology, were above average when compared with other subjects in the school but results in the design and technology subjects were below average, with resistant materials being very low. In 2000, GCSE results were above average in the short textiles course and the long child development course. They were near average in graphic products and systems and control, but below average in food technology.
111. On entry to Year 7, students develop design skills rapidly owing to effective teaching and their own enthusiastic attitudes. Work produced during Year 7 is generally of a high standard, indicating good progress. Attainment is in line with the national expectation by the end of Year 9 – for example, in lessons students draw satisfactory floor plans using the correct symbols and they make alarm devices using moisture sensors - but attainment is no higher than this. The

good progress made in Year 7 is not maintained up to the end of Year 9, partly because staff changes have interrupted the continuity of students' learning. In lessons, there is a tendency for activities to be limited in scope rather than move students on in their learning; there are few opportunities for students to develop their own work. Year 9 students sometimes have difficulty with mathematical skills, such as drawing a pie chart to show survey results.

112. Attainment as judged from lessons observed in Year 11 is near average overall and above average in some child development, food technology and systems and control lessons. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress when the work is clearly related to their interests. As reported at the time of the last inspection, they generally show greater aptitude when involved in practical work rather than in design. Students often write neatly and express ideas clearly. Some students make good use of information and communications technology to produce their project work, using computers at home as well as in school. Overall progress from Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.
113. Students' attitudes to learning design and technology are satisfactory. The great majority of students co-operate with each other and with the teacher so that relationships are good. Students often relate what they are learning to their lives at home. This is particularly true for food technology, textiles and child development. Behaviour is generally good, although there are occasional instances of behaviour which is too casual, as observed in a Year 10 class. Some older students show initiative in their project work, such as when using the digital camera to enhance their course work.
114. Teaching is good, overall. Organisation is a very good feature of some lessons, as observed in a class of Year 7 students who were designing a clock face; the students understood the task, worked systematically and achieved well. Teachers use their knowledge well to teach appropriate skills but few links are made with other aspects of the subject; teachers would benefit from greater awareness of each other's specialist areas and from training in the use of information and communications technology. Lessons, while well planned, could allow greater scope for individual designs and so increase commitment and range of expression – and raise achievement. Occasionally, too much time is spent on straightforward tasks and challenge could be greater. For example, in a food technology lesson, students spent too long drawing textured surfaces, so that limited learning was taking place. Students are generally well managed, although some Year 10 students observed were challenging to teach. Practical resources are well used in most aspects of the subject, but in graphics more specialised equipment could be used and also information and communications technology could be used more widely for design purposes. Basic literacy skills are well emphasised and key words are taught. The moral issues of conservation are discussed. Numerical ideas, such as dimension and scale are used when creating interior designs. Students are sometimes given the choice of using information and communications technology to aid presentation, but not often enough. Modules are regularly assessed and students know the levels at which they are working. In Year 7, levels are indicated on day-to-day assessments and there is scope for extending this good practice to other years. Homework is set on a weekly basis but is not always relevant to the topic being taught.
115. The quality of learning closely reflects the quality of teaching: good overall, and better across Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Learning was effective when lessons were well organised, moved at a fast pace and the teacher evaluated learning, as observed when students were making scones in a food technology lesson. Year 7 students learn information quickly, but some older students find concentration difficult. More able students are given encouragement in both key stages so that they are able to maximise progress and gain the higher attainment grades. Not all students are enthusiastic about their choice of technology subject for GCSE examinations. For example, a few students in a systems and control class showed little interest in completing their design work. Some classes are too large: the number of students adversely affects learning and makes safety more difficult to ensure. The system of assessing modules of work is good; students know the National Curriculum levels at which they are working and the department is considering more frequent use of National Curriculum levels to increase motivation. Regular tests inform students of their progress. Students with special educational needs are supported effectively. Reports to parents give information on attainment,

progress and behaviour as well as a detailed written comment. Many students benefit from the use of computers at home.

116. The lower school curriculum provides a good grounding in the use of various materials and techniques. The design process is emphasised and students have well-kept notebooks which help them to retain knowledge. However, the relatively short time given to each aspect in Years 7 to 9 limits learning, so that progress is constrained. Frequent group work encourages social development. Since the last inspection, a link has been created between textiles and work done in graphic products: for example, students design a model room including a variety of textured materials. Technology options for Years 10 and 11 are limited: study of resistant materials is not provided. Engraving on coloured plastic demonstrates the use of computer-controlled machines but this area of the curriculum needs strengthening. Health and sex education are well addressed in the GCSE child development option, a subject popular among girls. An aircraft modelling club runs during part of the year with the help of experts from British Aerospace.
117. During the prolonged absence of the head of the technology department, a deputy headteacher has been acting as co-ordinator for design and technology subjects. The arrangement works well, owing to the regular departmental meetings held with the subject specialists. Sharing of tasks has resulted in detailed schemes of work which provide continuity and progression for all courses. Teaching methods are regularly discussed and ideas are exchanged. The work of the department is evaluated: Year 9 and GCSE results of both classes and students are analysed, and the teaching is monitored. There has been a considerable change of teaching staff during the last few years causing discontinuity that directly affects learning. The situation is now more stable but there is still no permanent head of department, and this has made planning very difficult. New teachers are provided with a detailed handbook and gain assistance from the nearest member of staff as necessary. Technicians provide valuable support in departmental areas. They are able to assist students directly during some lessons.
118. Accommodation is good in the resistant materials, graphics and electronics area now that improvements have been completed. In a food and textiles room accommodation limits learning because the arrangement of fixed divisions means that only half the class can do practical work. All rooms have very good displays of students' work. Storage space is very well organised and used effectively. Present financing provides for routine resources but some larger items are needed to extend teaching methods. The new information and communications technology facility in a central room provides considerable opportunity for the inclusion of more specific systems and control work. A nearby information and communications technology room provides opportunities for food technology and textiles to extend their use of computers.
119. The situation is very similar to that seen during the last inspection. The management of the department is still unresolved although there is now better co-ordination because of effective oversight by a deputy headteacher. Large class size in Years 10 and 11 still makes individual work more difficult to organise, and this limits achievement. The use of information and communications technology during lessons has not increased as much as it might, given the facilities available. Examination results are much the same as at the last inspection.

DRAMA

120. Drama is a very strong and successful subject in the school: students achieve highly across all years. At the end of Year 9 students' attainment is higher than expected nationally. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 have been consistently good for the past few years and in 2000, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was well above the national average. A greater proportion of students is entered for this subject than in most schools. A small group of students take the subject at A-level and a number of high grades have been achieved. Drama is adding value to the school as a whole, and boys do particularly well.
121. By the end of Year 9, students have developed good self-awareness and physical confidence. They have explored the structures and conventions of drama in a systematic and thorough way and are confidently able to improvise on a variety of themes, reinforcing work done through the school's pastoral programme. Drama makes a good contribution to the English curriculum through its development of speaking and listening. By the end of Year 11, students prepare and present group performances which show very good interpersonal skills. They co-operate well and have poise and maturity in their dramatic presentations. They are able to take into account the audience for whom their work is intended, when, for instance, developing pantomimes to be presented in local primary schools. Overall, standards are good. By the end of the A level course, students have studied their scripts carefully and understand the meaning (often hidden) behind the characters and story. They appreciate the social and historical contexts of different eras in society, which gives depth to their understanding of plays, such as Ibsen's *The Doll's House*. Standards are in line with expectations for A-level. Students with special educational needs and the few who are learning to speak English are not inhibited in performance, and make good progress alongside their peers. Links with local theatre networks are good. During the inspection, a visiting theatre company made a significant impression on sixth formers, both through the quality of the dramatic presentation and through tackling the feelings and aftermath of irresponsible driving and death; they made a significant contribution to students' personal development.
122. Teaching and learning in drama are very good, overall. Teachers are very knowledgeable, committed and have high expectations, both of students' behaviour and of the quality of their response. They help students to learn in small steps: their understanding and skills are developed gradually so that the process of learning from Year 7 to GCSE and beyond is seamless. Students learn well, work co-operatively, show interest and considerable powers of concentration in an environment which is sometimes unsympathetic (the drama hut). The curriculum and its assessment are planned rigorously. Students assess and evaluate their own work and so help to raise standards.
123. The department is very capably managed and high standards prevail. Resources for drama are just adequate but there is no provision for information and communications technology, or any lighting and sound equipment. Accommodation is poor, although there are plans to improve it in the next phase of development in the school. Areas for development include co-operation with the English department to formalise the assessment of students' speaking and listening skills, and improvement in information and theatre technology.
124. References to drama in the last inspection report, while brief, were favourable: work in drama at all ages was generally good and frequently better. Drama remains a successful and popular subject which is well taught. It makes a significant contribution to students' personal, social, moral and cultural development. About seven drama presentations are made each year by different groups of students as they prepare for their examinations. Joint productions and teamwork with music staff, involving large numbers of students for school shows, are maintaining the high profile and quality of drama in the school.

GEOGRAPHY

125. Standards in geography are satisfactory in all years. In 1999, GCSE results overall for geography were close to the average for other subjects in the school because students achieved well at the middle grades; their results at the higher grades (A*-C) were below the national average. GCSE results improved significantly in 2000 and were above the averages of other subjects. Standards post-16 are satisfactory. Results at A-level in 1999 were broadly average, and they improved in 2000; in both years students gained a high proportion of the highest (A and B) grades.
126. Students acquire field study skills quickly; for example, high attaining students in Year 7 display good skills in sketching and labelling features of the local urban landscape. Some basic mapping skills are less secure and high attaining Year 8 students are tentative in transferring information about land use on to large-scale maps. Students of all abilities in Years 7 to 9 display good understanding of physical features and processes - for example, how river systems shape the land - and they understand and can use a good range of geographical terms. In a study of Indian settlements in the Amazonian rain forest, lower attaining students in Year 9 acquired understanding of the nature and purpose of shifting cultivation and more able students used an imaginative range of writing styles. Students in Year 9 achieve satisfactory standards, relative to their attainment on entry in Year 7.
127. High attaining students in Years 10 and 11 have well-developed map skills and skills of enquiry in their course work seen, for example, in a detailed study of how footpaths are affected by heavy usage. Year 10 students study photographic evidence satisfactorily and display their interpretations on neatly labelled sketch maps. In their work on a decision making exercise, Year 11 students of average attainment showed satisfactory understanding of the information needed to solve the problem, and how to organise their answers. Progress in geography across Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Boys and girls grasp concepts and apply knowledge equally well but girls' organisation and presentation of written work are often markedly better than boys'.
128. Students taking the A-level course capably organise, analyse and present data gathered through fieldwork. Year 12 students demonstrate very good recall of earlier learning about weather systems, use many technical terms accurately and make good progress in lessons. Year 13 students, exploring a range of textual sources, demonstrated sound analytical skills, which enabled them to understand why the Basque and Kurdish peoples seek autonomy. The achievement of post-16 students is in line with expectations for A-level.
129. Teaching and the pace and quality of learning are good overall. The teaching in half of lessons observed was good; it was very good in one lesson and in all others it was satisfactory. Planning is good, overall, and the best is excellent. Learning objectives are very clearly communicated in most lessons and a good range of teaching and learning styles is employed, well matched to the abilities of students. Students settle quickly, and sustain their concentration well. These qualities were demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson where students were learning about the life styles of the Kayapo Indians from a video extract. They extracted the required information systematically, assisted by effective emphasis by the teacher of key points; later, well-chosen questions picked up any insecure understanding. Enquiry-based learning is used extensively and through it students have extensive opportunities to manage their learning and to work collaboratively, which the great majority of students do well. Students have good attitudes to geography and the great majority behave very well. Very small numbers of students, mostly boys in Years 8, 9 and 10, do not apply themselves consistently well but teachers' management of those students is satisfactory. Lower attaining students benefit from very good support and improve their literacy and understanding of geographical terms, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Marking is systematic and teachers' comments are clear and often very helpful.
130. The curriculum is good. Fieldwork is a strong feature which makes very good use of the immediate locality. Schemes of work are very detailed and focus clearly on basic skills and the systematic acquisition of knowledge and understanding. The use of information and communications technology is just satisfactory; when planned developments are implemented it will be very good. Assessment arrangements are very good and enable teachers to have a detailed picture of the progress of all students from Year 7 upwards. Development planning is

well structured, although not all objectives have clear measurable targets. Classroom displays vary in quality: the best are very good - stimulating and very helpful to learning.

131. Teaching in geography is well managed and co-ordinated. Since the last inspection good progress has been made. Schemes of work have been refined, as have arrangements for the assessment and recording of students' progress. Standards at GCSE have improved well. A-level results have been consistently close to or above the national average. A greater range of teaching and learning styles is employed, providing more opportunities for students to manage their own learning. The under-achievement and poor behaviour of older boys have been largely eliminated.

HISTORY

132. Students' achievement in history is good, considering their level of attainment on entry in Year 7, which is a little below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, the standard of students' work is above national expectations. Results at GCSE are broadly average and the trend over several years is of slow improvement. In 1999, results at the higher grades (A*-C) were above the national average. In 2000, results were broadly average, affected partly by a decline in girls' results and also by two students who did not sit the examinations, in spite of completing the coursework. In lessons and work seen at the end of Year 11, standards are in line with expectations, and reflect satisfactory progress through the GCSE course. The number of students at A-level is relatively small, so results fluctuate, but are broadly average, and the grades obtained reflect and sometimes surpass the previous achievement of the students.
133. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment has been steadily narrowing according to the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. Both boys and girls contribute well in lessons; boys particularly enjoy challenging evidence and do so effectively. Students understand the importance of evidence and how to evaluate its usefulness. Students of average attainment in Year 9 showed very good understanding of bias in source material about child labour. They appreciate the significance of dates and refer to them with understanding. All students can write at length and some produce very good examples of extended writing which explain the causes and impact of major events. Less able students are encouraged, when necessary, by writing frames which help them to organise their writing. In classes of the lowest attaining students, they grasp the historical points and description, but find difficulty in providing explanations. Overall, progress across Years 7 to 9 is good.
134. By the time they reach Year 11, students undertake local historical research for course work. They reach high standards, showing their ability to consider many sources of evidence, to select what is most relevant and to justify their conclusion. For example, they study the changes in the Fylde caused by the Second World War. Able students link evidence with their own knowledge effectively; most produce relevant answers with some detail; less able students have difficulty in expressing their historical knowledge accurately.
135. Post-16 students studying at A-level are articulate and ready to argue their point of view with some vigour. They understand that opinions must be supported and have the necessary depth of knowledge to back up their ideas in discussion and essays. Standards are good in written work and lessons; students achieve good standards.
136. Since the last inspection, attainment has risen across Years 7 to 9 and been maintained at GCSE and A-level examinations. There is no longer evidence of underachievement of any group. The progress of GCSE students is satisfactory. In lessons, very occasional instances of immature and restless behaviour at the beginning of Year 10 slow learning. Post-16 students show marked determination to achieve well. They are interested and concentrate on their work, enjoy group discussion and exchange ideas effectively. In the best lessons in all years there is an atmosphere of purpose and mutual trust between teacher and students which contributes greatly to good progress overall.
137. In about three-quarters of the lessons observed, teaching was good or better. It is satisfactory in most of the rest. This is good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have very good

subject knowledge, so their skilful questioning makes students think critically. In the best lessons, students' imaginations are engaged so that they gain a real insight into, for example, conditions in nineteenth century England. Expectations are high and realistic, so materials are presented in ways well matched to students' abilities. Thus, in some lessons, historical sources are mainly visual but in others they are contemporary texts. Teachers know that good literacy skills are essential, integrate them effectively into many lessons and teach them very well. Year 7 students, for example, when learning about Romulus and Remus were asked to proof read for punctuation errors at the same time, and in a class of lower attaining students in Year 8, the teacher constantly reinforced the spelling and meaning of key words, which helped the students to understand and to remember. Homework is set regularly and very well marked in all years. Comments are encouraging and suggest ways to improve. Students with special educational needs benefit from the emphasis on literacy and careful matching of the work, so they enjoy the subject and often choose it as a GCSE option. In the occasional lesson in which concentration drifts, it is because the work and activities provided are less well adapted to the class, and do not engage students' interest.

138. The department benefits from its specialised and experienced teachers, who work closely as a team, despite their responsibilities for school affairs outside the department. A programme of visits, both local and farther afield, encourages and widens interest. The excellent classroom displays of students' work, posters and artefacts provided by the Lancashire Museum Service enliven the rooms and stimulate the imagination of the students. At the time of the last inspection, standards were generally at or below national expectations. They are better now, as a result of better teaching: and standards match expectations throughout, and exceed them across Years 7 to 9. Preparations have been made to introduce information and communications technology but have not yet been implemented. The department has developed good learning resources for GCSE coursework but there is still a shortage of textbooks for students in Years 9 to 11.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

139. Standards are good in information and communications technology lessons and examinations up to GCSE, and in line with expectations post-16. By the end of Year 9, students attain standards a little above expectations. GCSE results were above the national average in 1999 and even better in 2000. The number of students entered for A-level examinations is small and results are broadly average.
140. Students entering the school in Year 7 bring with them very varied, sometimes little, experience of using computers. Across Years 7 to 9 students learn how to manipulate text on the screen and to create a sequence of instructions to control events and produce, for example, interesting house designs. Year 9 students attained standards in line with national expectations in a lesson using software to create visual presentations: they transferred information to the computer screen, introduced a variety of backgrounds, changed the style and size of fonts, used animations to move titles and text and showed awareness of the needs of different audiences. Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.
141. Students in Years 10 and 11 use computers for a satisfactory range of applications and develop good understanding of the impact of computers in society, through work in information and communications technology lessons. For example, they develop research skills using the Internet, make use of software for business purposes (*Mail-merge*) and desk-top publishing programs to prepare a newspaper lay-out. Students of all abilities are encouraged to take GCSE examinations, and can prepare both for full and for short course examinations. Regular use is also made of information and communications technology in business studies. Students' above-average results at GCSE reflect good progress across Years 10 and 11.
142. Post-16 students work at the levels expected for A-level. Year 13 students have good understanding of examination requirements and interrogate programs they have written to check for errors and make corrections; they find programming difficult, however. Not all students starting A-level work in Year 12 have followed a full GCSE course and they are

learning quickly - for example, about the functions of computer components. Achievement at A-level represents good progress across Years 12 and 13.

143. Students' attitudes and behaviour in information and communications technology lessons are good. Younger students, especially, find activities fun and challenging and proudly display their work – for example, their “Myself” profile, which includes word-processed information about themselves as well as a picture. Post-16 students have very good attitudes to their work. They concentrate well and try hard to improve. Many students have computers at home and are able to practise the skills they have learned in school. Equipment is well maintained and students have respect for the improved information and communications technology facilities the school has gained recently. Students make use of computer facilities to do individual work at lunchtime. The one computer in the library is well used.
144. Teaching and learning in information and communications technology lessons are consistently good, and occasionally very good. The team of teachers, along with the technician, plans and prepares resources carefully to meet the needs of all students and to raise standards. The previous report commented on insufficient planning to meet the needs of all abilities; planning is now detailed and ensures that lower ability students are supported as well as the high attaining students being stretched. Topics selected for schemes of work are planned to meet National Curriculum requirements, and to provide purposeful activities which interest students and encourage improvement in standards of work. For example, the newspaper project in Year 8 requires students to work as an editorial board, to plan and meet deadlines and create interesting local news items, as well as practising a full range of information and communications technology skills. High expectations of behaviour, homework and standards in lessons have impact on learning as students strive to improve on their previous test results. Recently acquired equipment, such as the digital camera and the interactive whiteboard, is enhancing teaching and learning. End-of-module tests are well used to assess the progress of students from Year 7 to 9. No system is in place, however, to track students' progress across a module and to take account of the use of computers in other subjects and at home.
145. The department of information and communications technology is well led. Most of the weaknesses mentioned in the last report have been tackled. Students of all abilities study the subject up to GCSE and they achieve as well in information and communications technology examinations as in their other subjects. Teamwork is good and there is enthusiasm for the use of computers across the curriculum. Links with British Aerospace are good. Plans are in hand, led by a technician, to provide a short course for Year 6 pupils and their parents. The department has responded well to the revision of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work for information and communications technology show examples drawn from many other subjects. For example, there are planned opportunities to research topics for history within information and communications technology lessons. However, not enough opportunities are provided for the use of computers in other subjects. In art, for example, the creative potential of information and communications technology is not developed. The school is aware of the weakness and plans are in hand for improvement: a building project which will provide more space and facilities is starting as the inspection ends. The weakness does not stem from overall shortage of computers, which are adequate in number (although some machines are old), but from lack of co-ordination and leadership across subjects. For example, there is no map to show how different applications will be learned in subjects, no strategy for assessing students' progress across the curriculum and no steering group to bring together teachers' views and needs. Work in mathematics, for example, is held back by lack of suitable software. The use of information and communications technology across the curriculum is the only weakness mentioned in the previous report which has not been rectified.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

146. All students learn French in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9; high attaining students also take Spanish. In Year 10 these students can choose between French and Spanish, with the majority choosing Spanish; in some years a few take both. Courses are available in both languages in the sixth form, where numbers are low. Standards and achievement in modern foreign languages are

satisfactory throughout the school. They are good in Spanish, especially in Years 10 and 11, and post-16. Standards are improving in French, especially in Year 9.

147. The level of attainment at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Reported teacher assessments show standards in 1999 to be above national expectations, but they have fallen in 2000 owing to a sharp decline in boys' levels, whereas girls have maintained a higher level over the last three years. At the end of Year 11, results in GCSE examinations in 1999 for Spanish were well above the national average for the higher (A*-C) grades for both boys and girls, and this holds true in 2000. In French, results for those taking a full GCSE course were above the national average in 1999, though the overall standard, taking account of the large number taking a short course, was well below average. However, results for both GCSE courses improved in 2000 to be just below the national average for 1999. In both years all students gained a grade, including students with special educational needs. Girls do better at GCSE than boys, as they do at the end of Year 9. Students gain better results in Spanish than in most of their GCSE subjects, though the opposite applies in French. Reading is the best developed skill, while the adoption of coursework for writing is bringing about steady improvement in that area. The small numbers of students taking French and Spanish at A-level have gained very good (A and B) grades in both years.
148. Speaking and listening activities dominate lessons across Years 7 to 9, and students enjoy them. By the age of 14, many students volunteer oral contributions and exchange several pieces of information in role-plays or surveys, as in a Year 8 Spanish lesson on their home town. Pronunciation is sometimes quite weak, and higher attaining students in Year 9 are more diffident in oral work than those who are less able, despite their knowledge being greater. All students increase their knowledge of vocabulary through progression in prescribed topics, so that reading and listening skills develop well. They can identify and note most details in short extracts of written or spoken French or Spanish: they hear a lot of the foreign language from teachers as well as from recordings. Reading skills vary too much because teachers provide different opportunities in different classes. Some students have satisfactory reading skills whereas others are hesitant. More able students acquire a sound early knowledge of how language works and have the ability to write at length in different tenses - for instance, to compile a diary of a week's events. Lower ability students often copy inaccurately and their written work is weak. Students with special educational needs are placed in appropriate teaching groups and make satisfactory progress.
149. Work seen in lessons, books and coursework in Years 10 and 11 is generally satisfactory, although the range of ability is much more evident, and reflects application in lessons. Students following full GCSE courses in French and Spanish make good progress. They converse at greater length and with increasing accuracy, although pronunciation remains weak and intonation flat in too many cases. Written coursework shows a good grasp of both vocabulary and structure in a range of topics, such as famous people, my ideal school, work experience or a weekend job. Reading and listening comprehension skills are at least satisfactory and often good, as students understand most of what they hear and they read more regularly and in longer extracts. Some of those following a short course, especially those who are in lower-attaining classes, show less enthusiasm for the work they are doing, and remain careless in pronunciation and spelling. However, most are able to convey information, for instance in simple descriptions. Their recall of vocabulary is sufficient to give them some idea of the content of spoken and written passages. A small number of students are allowed to stop studying a language because of the nature of their special educational needs. However, most students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards a GCSE grade.
150. Standards are variable post-16. Students taking Spanish have gained enormously from involvement in an exchange visit to Cartagena, so that they speak confidently and with well developed accents. They can read or listen to long and complex passages in the foreign language and understand both the gist and key details. The content of their written work is better than its accuracy. Those taking French lack a secure knowledge of both basic and more advanced principles of grammatical structure. This not only reduces the impact of content, which is often good in written work, but also inhibits them in oral situations, so that teachers have to work hard to elicit a response. Vocabulary is quite well developed, so that standards in reading and listening are better, though the speed of delivery in some listening comprehension

tasks causes them problems. They study challenging topics such as relationships, addictions and the changing face of Spain.

151. Attitudes and behaviour in all years and in both languages are good, overall. Among younger students there is a natural enthusiasm for a new subject, which most sustain. Even where they find the work hard there is little evidence that they do not like the subject. Behaviour is especially pleasing since students often find themselves in inappropriate or cramped classrooms away from the modern languages area. Their positive response reduces the negative impact of this situation. In some lower sets in Years 9 to 11 there is an element of poor behaviour and this impedes progress as it interferes with the concentration of others.
152. The quality of teaching is good overall, sometimes very good or excellent, with strengths in Spanish and in the sixth form. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers use French or Spanish consistently in all lessons, irrespective of the ability of the group. This underpins their high expectations of students, who are expected to reciprocate. As a result, there is a good atmosphere for learning a language and, in most lessons, there are examples of students using the foreign language naturally, or sometimes after a reminder, to ask permission, to request resources or to apologise for lateness. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging work. Very little is easy and students in all classes have to think. This increases the quality of learning. Teachers expect good behaviour and manage occasional unacceptable conduct well. Planning for individual lessons is always good and sometimes meticulous. Careful timing ensures that students learn from a range of tasks covering different skills, so that the one-hour lesson never seems to drag, and students' learning is enhanced by the enjoyment they derive from what they are doing. This was apparent in an excellent Year 10 Spanish lesson on booking in at a hotel, and also in two Year 9 French lessons on arranging a meeting. Teachers make good use of the resources they choose to use, largely overhead projectors, flashcards, cassette players and worksheets, which supplement course books. They offer a great variety of imaginative oral tasks. Some students feel that, especially in French, there is a routine about lessons which become repetitive, and which can pall over time. This could be addressed by making more frequent use of other resources - such as computers, video, reading schemes and listening centres. The weakness in teaching lies in the marking of exercise books. Much marking is perfunctory, and some work is unmarked. There is a complete lack of the sort of comment which might assist students in their future work, or provide a point of reference, and students are not encouraged to do corrections, so that inaccuracies persist. On the other hand, homework is set according to the school timetable and often provides a useful opportunity for the application of classwork, for instance by making a recording.
153. The last inspection report was critical of departmental management, which is still unsatisfactory, largely owing to the frequent lengthy absences of the head of department. This has slowed the progress of classes, especially in oral and listening work. Planned improvements, such as the use of readers and computers, have not materialised. It has also meant that planned improvement to key documents, notably the schemes of work, has been delayed, again with a negative effect on the breadth of students' learning experiences. That standards in attainment and teaching have improved, despite lack of subject direction, is a tribute to the efforts of senior managers and departmental staff, some of whom have produced acceptable development plans, improvements to schemes of work, and have shown a good grasp of what can be achieved with commitment and imagination. Procedures for assessing students' work are good on the whole, although more adequate monitoring of the work of the department would have identified the lack of helpful marking. However, students know where they are up to and how they can improve, largely owing to the school's monitoring programme. Textbooks are in short supply, so that photocopying consumes too much of the subject's budget. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The need to move constantly from room to room makes undue demands on teachers and reduces the quality of students' learning, especially where they are cramped, have their backs to the teacher, or cannot concentrate because of noise from adjacent practical lessons. More positively, students' work is well supported in specialist rooms by the display of key words and phrases; and learning is enriched by opportunities for residential or exchange visits abroad and by the two-week visit of a Spanish teacher-in-residence.
154. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in teaching, especially in the effective use of the foreign language to conduct lessons. Standards of attainment have

improved, especially at A-level and in Spanish. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The current team of teachers, including the head of department, is talented and there is a collective feeling that improvement can be sustained. For this to happen, departmental management must improve. Schemes of work must continue to be developed along current lines but should also include provision for reading, for using new technology, and for tasks which might reverse the recent decline in the standard of boys' work in the lower school. Senior management must consider ways of providing appropriate accommodation for the subject and sufficient funding to improve the number of textbooks.

MUSIC

155. Standards in music are improving as the subject becomes established as a National Curriculum subject. While examination results have been low, in lessons standards are satisfactory.
156. Students' attainment is below national expectations at the end of Year 9; teacher assessments in 2000 were optimistic compared with the national standard. Information and musical technology are little used, and while students make satisfactory progress they do not catch up with the level expected nationally for their age. Results at GCSE in 2000 were below recent national averages across grades A*-G, although some higher grades were achieved. The subject is gaining popularity: larger numbers of students are choosing to study music for GCSE. Many students are still developing the instrumental skills and understanding required in order to help them do well. Small groups of students have entered A-level examinations in the last two years. Their results have reflected their instrumental skills, and in 2000 the two students entered for the examination passed.
157. Most students when they enter the school in Year 7 have gaps in their knowledge: they have not yet covered all the areas expected in the National Curriculum. Skilled teaching begins to bridge their gaps in knowledge. From the evidence of work achieved during the past two years, students in Years 7 and 8 have covered a broader range of musical knowledge since entering the school than students in Year 9. Year 7 students were able to identify the tempo and a number of different instruments as they listened carefully to Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. In Year 8, students working in groups used the text of Roald Dahl's *Revolt in Rhymes* to create sounds which illustrate the poems, but their skills are not yet adequately developed to enable them to refine their ideas. Although literacy is regularly addressed, students do not always have the correct musical vocabulary to describe the sounds they hear. In Year 9, students observed making up and performing simple tunes on keyboards using the 'blues' scale found it difficult to synchronise their playing with their partners because their listening skills were under-developed. More regular questioning about how compositions could be changed or improved would help students to develop these skills and to understand how to use criticism. The self-assessments which students make at the end of each module of work, combined with teachers' comments during practical sessions in each lesson, are helping students to know how they are doing. The increased instrumental tuition and many musical activities introduced over the last two years are helping to raise the standards of students in Years 7 to 9. Overall, progress is satisfactory.
158. The number of students choosing to study music for GCSE is large. Their enthusiasm and response to music is encouraging. At the time of the inspection the work of most Year 10 and 11 students was below expectations because their instrumental and vocal skills are not highly developed. Many are improving their expertise in using their voice or electronic keyboards. Instrumental lessons are helping students to develop confidence in their performing. Most students find composing difficult, but are working hard to advance their skills. When account is taken of the level of attainment of students at the start of their GCSE course, which was generally low, progress to the end of Year 11 is satisfactory.
159. Small groups of students in Years 12 and 13 working towards A-level compose and perform in a range of styles. In Year 13, instrumental ability includes electronic guitar, voice and clarinet. Students are developing their practical musicianship as a sound basis for performance. They are enlarging their understanding of the Baroque period through studying the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell in contrast to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Essay writing and analysis of

different styles of music are improving. Students in Year 13 are likely to achieve average results at A-level. Progress is good.

160. Vocal techniques are improving for all students in Years 7 to 9 and beyond: there is a very good and strong tradition of singing by all, and particularly by boys, as they move through the school. This is linked to the strong connections between drama and music and the many concerts and shows such as *Oliver* and *Joseph* produced by the school, which are providing a good foundation for performance to different audiences both inside and beyond the school community. This is a good improvement since the last report.
161. Students' attitudes to their work, to their teachers and to each other are good, both in the classroom and at the many extra musical activities. Students with special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as others in lessons, both in the practical and listening tasks set for them, and in instrumental tuition. Students with higher instrumental skills are given appropriately demanding work to do. All students have equal opportunity to succeed and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at any stage. In 2000, a few students were unsuccessful in their examinations owing to absence or lack of completion of coursework. In music this made a significant difference to the results overall.
162. The quality of teaching in the school is always satisfactory or better and most of the teaching is good, especially in examination classes and for musical activities, which is a significant improvement since the last report. Good teaching is enabling students to develop their understanding and skills and holds their interest in music. In Years 8 and 9, teaching tends to be satisfactory, rather than good. Planning is thorough, but there is a lack of detailed attention to students' competence and development in the elements of music and not enough emphasis on the appraisal and discussion of group composing skills. In order to deepen students' knowledge, more detailed planning is required, through Years 7 to 9 in particular, to reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum and to develop students' understanding and skills in the elements of music in small steps, as they move from year to year. Formal assessments are made at the end of each module of work in Years 7 to 9 and the new levels for music will help teachers to improve how assessment is targeted to measure musical skills more accurately.
163. Extra-curricular activities are extensive, strong and developing. Students are enthusiastic and reliable, as the activities provided are varied and of wide interest. For instance, students can sing to a combination of classical and popular music, often with backing tracks. Teachers are ensuring that activities reflect students' interests and this is assisting in the higher profile which music now holds in the school. Singing and recorder clubs, shows, flute and clarinet choirs, training and full school bands are provided. Seven visiting instrumental teachers enable a growing number of students to learn instruments as well as singing, supported through parental contributions and the very good financial support of the governing body. Instrumental teaching is good. Different ensembles have taken part in lunchtime concerts, musical and open evenings and presentations in school. They have performed at school shows, parents' evenings for new primary school students, parties for seniors and celebrations for Christmas. They act as ambassadors for the school in the local community, taking part in church carol services, Remembrance Sunday ceremonies, performances at Pear Tree School for students with special educational needs and at the local supermarket. They have joined performances with Catterick Army Band and with Poulton Brass Band. In addition, there are plans to perform in Germany at Bad Bruckenau in summer 2001.
164. Leadership and management of the subject are effective. They are reflected in the interest and take-up of examination courses and the large numbers participating in musical activities. Talented teachers work together effectively as a team, sharing commitment to the improvement of the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning is well established. Musical technology is very limited in the school and this is an area for development. Students in Years 7 to 9 do not have sufficient evidence of their own work recorded on audio-tapes, so their recording techniques are not developing. Shared keyboards are too basic, so that although students can select different sounds they are unable to use them for other skills such as sequencing. Although the school now has three computers linked to dedicated software and suitable keyboards to enable the composing and sequencing of music, they are insufficient for the large

numbers studying towards GCSE and beyond. Other music technology available in the department is underused as teachers await training. Students study and perform music from a variety of cultures including Chinese, African, Caribbean, Indian, Indonesian and jazz and blues. They have begun to study music from the British Isles such as sea shanties, as required by the National Curriculum 2000. As a whole, music education provides a rich base for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in the school. The development of many musical activities and instrumental lessons are contributing strongly to the ethos of the school.

165. Curricular provision for music has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good, with all lessons being satisfactory or better, whereas at the last inspection there was a significant minority of unsatisfactory lessons. The subject is gaining popularity and standards are rising. Good improvement has been made overall since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

166. Standards in physical education are satisfactory, and improving. Results of GCSE examinations in 1999 were in line with the national average, and in 2000 they were higher than that. Results at A-level are average. Many teams take part in many inter-school competitions and gain much success. A number of pupils have been selected to represent district teams and some have gone on to gain Lancashire and national honours.
167. By the end of Year 9, students attain in line with the national expectation, and a significant minority achieves above this, with a few attaining below. Students understand the necessity of warm up exercises and have a very good understanding of the safety aspects of the various activities which they apply appropriately. In gymnastics they perform a good range of movements, using small and large apparatus, with an increasing ability to link them together. In games activities students have a good knowledge of rules and conventions of the various games. They are developing appropriate skills to enable them to compete successfully. In dance, most students arrive at the school with only limited experience, but quickly become involved in the activity, so that by the end of Year 9 they are able to take responsibility for choreographing and developing a story-line. Students are able to make basic evaluations about their own and each other's performance, but these skills could be further developed. Progress up to the end of Year 9 is good.
168. The overall attainment of students at the end of Year 11 is in line with national expectations, with a few students, particularly those taking the public examinations in the subject, achieving a higher standard. Students practise to improve their skills and develop proficiency when they transfer their skills to a games situation. Progress across Years 10 and 11 is good. Students preparing for the Junior Sports Leadership Award plan and take responsibility for others. Students with special educational needs are well integrated. They gain much support and encouragement from both teaching staff and one another, and achieve well, relative to their capabilities.
169. The standard of students studying for A-level examinations is in line with course expectations and they are progressing well. They are confident in the use of technical language in their written work and contribute to lively, informed debate in lessons - for example, on the value and effect of warming-up, for special activities.
170. The quality of teaching is good, overall. Teachers have a good command of their subject and provide clear demonstrations and explanations in their lessons. All lessons begin in an orderly manner, with objectives being clearly stated and understood by the students. Activities are well chosen to sustain students' interest and involvement. Lessons are conducted at a pace which is both vigorous and demanding. The vast majority of the students respond to the enthusiasm of their teachers by working hard, co-operating with each other and behaving well. Teachers have high expectations of all their students and continually strive for better performances. Students are taught to evaluate their own performance in some lessons, and from this they learn how to improve, as observed in gymnastics with Year 8 girls, when they practised and refined individual movements to create a short balance sequence. They worked hard and

progressed well. Not all teachers emphasise the importance of evaluation and there is scope for it to be more widely used.

171. The curriculum, which is meeting statutory requirements, allows students to take part in a wide variety of activities. In Years 10 and 11, students have the opportunity to take a GCSE in the subject, and this is taken up by a large and enthusiastic group of students. They can also take the Junior Sports Leaders' Award. Post-16 students have a timetabled period for recreational physical education and the most able and interested can choose to take an A-level in the subject or the Community Sports Leaders' Award.
172. The high quality facilities, which include extensive and well-maintained sports fields, a sports hall, gymnasium and tennis courts, have a very positive effect on the attainment of students. Resourcing is satisfactory, and there is no shortage of physical education equipment, but there is a need to purchase more text books for the examination groups.
173. Four of the five full-time specialist teachers of physical education have only been at the school since September 2000. In spite of this very short time in post, the two heads of department have made an impressive start in their new roles. Clear leadership and direction, and a positive ethos, characterise the management of the subject. Staff work together well, support each other and show very strong commitment to the students. Results at GCSE have improved since the last inspection. Opportunities to gain examination awards through work in physical education have improved, with the introduction of the A-level course and the Junior Sports Leaders' Award for younger students. Overall improvement has been good. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by enthusiastic groups of students.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

174. Standards in religious education are satisfactory and improving steadily. Recent reorganisation of the department and good schemes of work are assisting improvements across Years 7 to 11. Results of GCSE examinations in 2000 were a little better than in 1999, when they matched the national average.
175. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. They know a range of facts about major world religions and understand that lifestyles are related to beliefs. Progress across Years 7 to 9 is rapid. Effective emphasis on learning basic subject skills enables students to understand the language of symbolism and they know that religion is to be experienced, as well as studied. Carefully planned and sensitively managed meditation and periods of quiet reflection and stillness enhance students' learning.
176. In religious education lessons seen in Year 11, standards were on course to match those of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of the year. Students understand that attitudes to significant events can vary according to religious background. They can explain vocabulary and distinguish between words such as *discrimination* and *prejudice*. Through learning about the teachings of the Bible and the lives of significant people, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, they have good understanding of the danger of prejudice. Overall, progress across Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
177. Provision of religious education for sixth formers is slight: a one-day conference which covers religious topics. This is not enough for their learning to deepen and progress beyond the level achieved by the end of Year 11. Statutory requirements are not met post-16.
178. Teaching is uniformly competent: it is good overall, and very good in almost 40 per cent of lessons. Throughout Years 7 to 11 religious education contributes significantly to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The most successful lessons are marked by good pace, variety of activities, a firm supportive manner, clear progression and well-managed discussions. Activities are well planned so that all students participate and are challenged. Students progress well at their own level. Good use is made of video – a class had recently watched *Schindler's List* - and religious artefacts. The demonstration of how a Hindu worships at the family shrine, and the writing of a diary for a Jewish family over the Sabbath, are good examples of creative activities which involve students and promote good learning. Teachers' knowledge is sound and every lesson has clear objectives. Discipline is kept with a light touch and is seldom an issue. Basic literacy skills are emphasised in every lesson and classroom displays positively enhance learning. In response to this good teaching, students learn well. The variety of opportunities for writing and presenting their work in different ways enables students both to increase their learning skills and also to experience success. More able students contribute to their own learning by independent research and the use of information and communications technology.
179. Students behave well. They are interested and keen to do well. Most contribute well to discussion in lessons, although this is less obvious among some more able students, who are occasionally passive. They are normally punctual to lessons and attendance is good. Relationships among students and between students and teachers are good. Lessons have a positive atmosphere and students feel encouraged to learn.
180. The department is well managed and its handbook is a useful working document. School policies are adhered to and thoughtful help is given to non-specialist teachers, who are all senior managers. Much progress has been made since the last inspection. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is better: all study religious education and the course is well structured, enabling students to examine in some depth a range of moral issues and to relate them to religious belief and social custom. However, there is still no provision for religious education post-16. This is a successful department which would contribute even more if a second specialist room were allocated and appropriate post-16 opportunities provided. Resources recently purchased have been of good quality and contribute to successful learning, but more are needed.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

181. Vocational provision includes General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at advanced level in travel and tourism and health and social care for post-16 students and courses have recently been introduced at intermediate and foundation levels into Year 10. Business studies is provided as a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and at A level, post-16. Overall, students achieve well through the variety of opportunities provided.
182. Groups working towards vocational qualifications are small and in recent years numbers have been further reduced by students leaving early to start work. Individual students who have completed their course have successfully gained awards. The first certificates will be awarded to Year 11 students in 2002. Attainment on vocational courses is broadly in line with course expectations. Students in Year 10, studying health and social care, have basic understanding of the circulatory system and know the positions of pulse points. By the time they are in Year 12 they have satisfactory understanding of common medical conditions affecting the elderly – for example, strokes, diabetes and heart attacks. Students in Year 10 working on the travel and tourism course collate information and plan a trip. By the time they are in Year 12 they have a good grasp of English regional tourist locations and are familiar with the role of voluntary sector organisations, including the National Trust and National Parks Authority.
183. Results for the business studies GCSE course were overall in line with the national average in 1999, and girls did much better than boys. In 2000, results improved significantly and were well above recent national averages. Work seen during the inspection from students in Year 10 was below expectations. Many students were hampered in the task of writing a business letter because of their low literacy levels and they had to share computers to prepare text. Results for business studies at A level are broadly average. Students progress well in lessons and good use of discussion helps them to understand business concepts, such as market segmentation.
184. Students are learning well in lessons, and developing their understanding systematically. Younger students, especially, make effective use of information and communications technology (the Internet) in gathering travel information and draw on their experience in work placements. Students like the style of learning and build up good portfolios of their work, which are well presented. Their attitudes to learning on vocational courses are good.
185. Teaching on the vocational and the business studies courses is good. Strengths include effective emphasis on main points and high expectations of students' performance. Students respond well to the adult-working environment on the business studies GCSE courses. Among students on the business studies GCSE course there is a little truculence and unsocial behaviour, but this is handled well by teachers. In Years 12 and 13, teachers maintain a good pace and make good use of questioning to help students to think and work out solutions for themselves, individually and in small groups: team-work is good. Courses in Years 10 and 11 are popular and classes are fairly large. Relationships are good and there is a good climate for learning.
186. Vocational education is well planned and organised. Development of vocational courses contributes well to the overall breadth and balance of the curriculum. Resources are adequate and the vocational courses benefit from a dedicated classroom. Careers education is well planned as part of personal, social and health education throughout the school, and good support is provided by the local careers service. Liaison with major employers (British Aerospace and British Nuclear Fuels) contributes much to the school through links which include science, design and technology and the pastoral programme. Students can participate in Young Enterprise and benefit from well-organised work experience in Year 10, and Year 12.
187. Vocational courses were not reported on separately at the time of the last inspection. Provision has been strengthened with the introduction of GNVQ in Years 10 and 11, and business studies at A level is gaining popularity, with two groups in Year 12.