

INSPECTION REPORT

ALDER COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Hyde, Tameside

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 134283

Headteacher: Bob Wakefield

Lead inspector: John Rowley

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th November 2004

Inspection number: 268332

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 students: 11 – 16
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 708

School address: Mottram Old Road
Gee Cross
Hyde
Tameside
Postcode: SK14 5NJ

Telephone number: 0161 368 5132
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Councillor John Sullivan

Date of previous inspection: This is the first inspection of the school

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Alder Community High School opened as a new 11-16 mixed comprehensive school in September 2001. It was housed on the site of a former secondary school in Hattersley until April 2003 when it moved to a completely new building at Gee Cross, over a mile away. The new accommodation was funded through the Government's PFI scheme and includes advanced new technology and sports facilities, the latter being shared with the community. Currently there are 708 students on roll (355 boys, 353 girls). All available spaces are filled in Years 7 and 8. There are only 70 students in Year 11; most of these started their secondary education at the former school in Hattersley. The area served by the school is diverse, but largely disadvantaged socially and economically. There are pockets of very severe deprivation. A high proportion of students (31 per cent) is entitled to free school meals compared to the national average. The overall percentage with identified special educational needs is in line with the national average. The proportion on School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs is above average, mostly involving dyslexia, Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Educational Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). There are a significant number of students who provide challenges through their complex behaviours. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds (1 per cent) is well below average, but is similar to other local schools. Three students in the school have English as an additional language, which is very low compared to most schools. The languages spoken by the three students are Russian and Bengali. Of the three students, two are at the early or intermediate stages of learning English. These students joined the school quite recently.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18648	J. Rowley	Lead inspector	Citizenship
19374	W. Sheehan	Lay inspector	
13154	D. Morton	Team inspector	English
24887	Y. Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
23031	I. Knight	Team inspector	Mathematics
27984	A. Whitehall	Team inspector	Science
18032	I. Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30749	H. Boyle	Team inspector	History
17207	S. Rogers	Team inspector	Geography
4293	C. Warn	Team inspector	Religious education
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2628	J. Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

In the short time that it has been in existence, Alder Community High School has become **an effective school** which has gained the confidence and support of the community it serves. It is already providing a good quality of education with some very good features. This is a substantial achievement from where it started. Long-standing weaknesses are being overcome and achievement is now good. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, an effective and highly committed team of governors, teachers and support staff have created a distinctive identity in which the needs of all students are at the heart of everything. **The school provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Nearly all students make good progress and achieve well, often from low starting points.
- There are very good relationships between all sections of the school community based on mutual respect and a shared desire for every student to succeed.
- Students learn well because the teaching is good and they are very well cared for in a safe and stimulating environment.
- The modern resources of this new school plus staff enthusiasm and expertise have helped students to become capable users of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Test and examination results are not yet in line with national averages, partly because too many students have inadequate reading, spelling and writing skills.
- Most students attend and behave well, but a small minority have yet to adopt the attitudes and conduct that the school expects and their behaviour is not good enough.
- Insufficient time and attention is given to citizenship education.
- The achievement of boys in physical education is unsatisfactory as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.

This is the first time that the school has been inspected.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. Whilst standards are below average overall, the great majority of students are achieving well given their low starting points, particularly in literacy. Pupils do well in all subjects, except physical education, where boys' achievement is unsatisfactory. For example, the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade passes at GCSE has been well below the national average since the school opened, but significantly higher than might have been expected. The proportion of students who have left the school with one or more GCSEs or equivalent has been close to the national average. This is a very impressive achievement given the circumstances in which the school has worked. It is also a reflection of the good progress made by students with special educational needs and

those in public care. In GCSE examinations, there has been no consistent difference in the achievement of boys and girls or students of different ethnic backgrounds. Current standards in Year 11 are higher than those of previous years and this improving pattern continues further down the school with standards in the current Year 7 being in line with the national average. Test results for Year 9 pupils are still below the national average, but the rate of improvement is greater than in most schools.

Students' personal qualities are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The way in which the school works and the principles that it adheres to provide a strong foundation for personal development. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good, except for a small minority whose conduct is unsatisfactory. There are very good procedures in place to address this. There has been a substantial improvement in the attendance rate, which is now average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good, as is the quality of teaching. A high proportion of teaching and learning is good or very good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in science and ICT and good in all other subjects except for physical education where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in science, modern foreign languages, business and communication, ICT and art and good in all other subject areas, except physical education where it is unsatisfactory. Within physical education, there is a marked difference between the very good teaching in girls' physical education and the unsatisfactory teaching in much of boys' physical education. Students with special educational needs and those in public care are taught well. There are very few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. Lessons are carefully planned with a rich variety of teaching approaches, including the use of ICT, that successfully meet the learning needs of different students. In many subjects students' work is assessed very well and the information gained is used to set precise individual targets for improvement. There is insufficient specialist language support for the very few students whose home language is not English. In some cases, good teaching is not fully reflected in students' standards. The most common reasons for this are weaknesses in literacy, and to a lesser extent numeracy, which limit the standards that student can reach. In a few cases, students' achievement is limited by unsatisfactory attitudes to learning or unsatisfactory behaviour. The curriculum is satisfactory. The provision for students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented is good. Students benefit from a very wide range of out-of-hours learning opportunities. The current curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides flexibility to meet different students' needs, including work-related learning. The school has established good partnerships with other local secondary schools and Tameside College which are opening up new opportunities for 14-19 education and training. Whilst National Curriculum requirements in citizenship are met, insufficient time and weight are allocated to the subject to provide the proper depth of coverage, and arrangements for assessing and reporting on students' work in citizenship are not fully in place. Students are very well cared for and their guidance and support are good. The school's partnership with parents, other schools and colleges and the community is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher has provided excellent leadership in shaping the new school from its inception to its present status. He has been fully supported by able and committed senior and middle leaders. They have been highly successful in establishing the ethos, winning the support of parents, students and the wider community and raising achievement. **The school is well governed.** Governors are capable

and well informed and are passionate to see this new school succeed. They strike a good balance between being champions of the school, representatives of the community and critical friends. The school has been well supported by the local education authority. A wide range of specific school improvement grants and initiatives have been used very well to improve students' learning opportunities and also the quality of leadership at all levels.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The responses from questionnaires, a meeting and other discussions with inspectors show that there is a very high level of parental satisfaction with all aspects of the school. This is echoed by similar responses from students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 so that it continues to meet its published targets for improvement.
- Give even greater attention to improving reading, spelling and writing across the school so as to remove this barrier to learning.
- Improve citizenship education.
- Raise the achievement of boys in physical education by improving the teaching.

and meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

(NB As a new school, Alder Community High School's test and examination results are not yet included in the national pupil performance tables. The test and examination results in the commentary that follow have been carefully checked by the Ofsted inspectors and agreed with the school. They have been included so that the reader has the fullest picture of the standards achieved, but are provisional and not from national tables. The test results for Year 9 in 2004 are the first test results for students who started at the school. The GCSE/GNVQ results, and the test results before 2004, are for students who started their secondary education at other schools, but joined Alder Community High School when it opened or at a later date. The numbers of students in these year groups were much smaller than in most schools, meaning that small changes in the numbers passing a test or examination had substantial impact on percentage figures.)

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE results have been well below average, but current standards in examination classes, particularly in Year 10, are higher. **Students' achievement is good** in all years. In the past, students have started their secondary education at Alder Community High School or elsewhere with standards that have generally been well below those found in other schools. Current standards, including those in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, are still below average across the school as a whole, except in ICT where teaching and resources are resulting in above average standards by the end of Year 11. Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average by Year 9, but remain well below average by Year 11. Students have progressed at a greater rate from their starting points than might be expected and so achieve well by the time that they leave the school. There is no consistent difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The achievement of students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- On most measures, test and examination results have been well below the national averages since the school opened, but have been improving at a faster rate than nationally.
- The proportion of students who have left without a qualification has been close to the national average which represents a very good achievement from where they started.
- The 'value added' (the progress that students have made from their different starting points) has been at least satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good by the end of Year 11.
- Students' literacy skills, particularly in writing, remain weak and are limiting their attainment in many subjects. Students' numeracy skills are also below average. These weaknesses are more pronounced amongst older pupils.
- Boys are underachieving in physical education.
- Students are capable users of ICT and standards by the end of Year 11 are above average.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.
- Gifted and talented students achieve well across the school.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.3 (28.7)	Not available (33.3)
Mathematics	33.0 (31.1)	Not available (35.3)
Science	31.6 (29.2)	Not available (33.7)

There were 140 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year, when there were 70 students in the year group.

1. The results of the students who took the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average when they started in Year 7, with particular weaknesses in English. Full national comparative information about the 2004 test results has not yet been published. However, the information that is available indicates that these same pupils' results will still be below the national average. The test results present a complicated picture with variations from year to year and between subjects, but indicate at least satisfactory progress overall. This is supported by other school and external assessments which show good progress across Years 7 to 9. Since the school opened, test results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally, particularly in the proportion of students who have been gaining passes at Level 6 or above, where achievement is greater than that in similar schools.
2. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection reflect the changing nature of the school. The gap between the standards at the school and those found elsewhere is closing and in Year 7 standards are at least in line with those found nationally in all subjects. Standards are close to the national average in English, ICT, history, geography, religious education, music and art and design, reflecting the relatively higher standards on entry to the school and the teaching in these subjects. They are below average in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, and design and technology where students have started from a low base and have not yet reached the national average despite good teaching. Overall standards in physical education are too low as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.
3. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in all subjects except for music where it is satisfactory and physical education where it is unsatisfactory. The great majority of students are doing well given their low starting points and their weakness in literacy. Within physical education, achievement in girls' physical education is good, but achievement in boys' physical education is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about achievement in citizenship. Weaknesses in literacy, particularly writing, have restricted student attainment, particularly in the national tests, but good teaching has helped students to start to overcome these barriers. Standards are rising at a faster rate than found in other schools and are broadly average for the youngest students.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	24 (29)	53 (53)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (83)	86 (86)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (94)	96 (95)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	28 (28)	(34.7)

There were 63 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Whilst the average GCSE points score and the percentage gaining five or more higher grade passes have been well below the national average since the school opened, these examination results have represented good value added. Typically, students have been making more progress than might have been expected given their starting points, and exceeding their individual targets. The percentage of students who have gained at least five GCSEs at any level, or who have left with at least one qualification, has been close to the national average since the school opened. This has been an impressive achievement from where these students started, reflecting the school's commitment to social inclusion. It has been important to the new school to demonstrate that examination results are improving and a range of innovative schemes has been very effective.
5. The small numbers taking most GCSE subjects, the lack of published data and the short history of the school mean that it is difficult to make detailed statements about GCSE performance in different subjects. However, the most recent GCSE results show that students have exceeded their predicted performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science where the school has targeted resources to raise achievement. The most recent examination results have also been well above the school average in business and communication, GNVQ ICT, art and drama. Students have responded very positively to the good teaching in the vocational and creative subjects and to the alternative styles of learning that they offer. The most recent GCSE results were below the predicted performance in history, religious education and French. In all of these subjects, students' learning in the past had been disrupted by staff changes and the standards being achieved by students now are significantly higher.
6. There was a significant difference between the standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 11 and Year 10, reflecting the changing nature of the school. Standards in Year 11 are below or well below average in all subjects seen apart from art, ICT and business and communication. Year 10 students are the first year that started at the new school; their standards are still below average, but the gap is narrowing and the school is expecting a significant jump in performance when these students take their examinations in 2006. Current standards in literacy and numeracy are well below average in Year 11 and below average in Year 10 and these standards are limiting students' attainment across most subjects.

7. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good in science, ICT, business and communication, and art and design. It is good in all other subjects except for religious education where it is satisfactory and physical education where it is unsatisfactory. As for Years 7 to 9, within physical education, achievement in girls' physical education is good, but achievement in boys' physical education is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about achievement in citizenship.
8. Across the school, but particularly in Years 10 and 11, weaknesses in reading, and particularly in writing, are limiting the attainment of students in many subjects. For example, written evaluations in art and design and design and technology are not at the same level as products being made, and in science students are not able to demonstrate the good understanding that they have shown in their practical work. In English a significant number of students lack the basic skills in writing to communicate their literary appreciation accurately.
9. Across the school as a whole, the achievement of students with special educational needs is good. This is because teachers employ a range of teaching strategies that match students' different learning styles. For example, in English, Year 7 students receive a good mix of structured group work and independent learning supported by additional adults helping students make progress towards meeting the learning objectives. Teachers provide valuable opportunities to develop learning experiences through practical activities to deepen understanding and knowledge. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 mathematics lesson where the interactive use of the electronic whiteboard stimulated student interest and engagement in the learning activity. A Year 10 vocational studies lesson used a 'virtual workplace environment' activity to promote student interest by providing realistic experiences that were very relevant to them.
10. Gifted and talented students' achievement is good. They are identified and provided with additional support and activities that challenge them and so enable them to move forward.
11. In the past the school had some difficulty in setting targets for GCSE and test performance. Students had started their secondary education at other schools and accurate data on their past performance was not always available. This has now been rectified and the school is in a position to complete a detailed analysis and set targets based on this analysis. Ambitious but realistic targets have been set for future years which are aimed at bringing the school in line with national averages and achieving test and examination results that are significantly higher than those gained by students in schools in similar circumstances or with similar starting points.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Relationships between staff and students are very strong. Students' personal development is **satisfactory**. Provision for students' moral and social development is **good** and provision for students' spiritual and cultural development is **satisfactory**. Students display good attitudes and behaviour, but this is a weakness for some. Attendance has improved considerably and is now in line with the national average. Punctuality at the start of the day is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and students are very good and help students to achieve well.
- The great majority of students display good attitudes and behaviour, resulting in a friendly learning atmosphere.
- The monitoring of attendance is very good and has led to continued improvement.
- Bullying is taken seriously and very good procedures are in place to minimise it.
- Most students develop their social and moral values well.
- A small minority of students do not have positive attitudes to learning, can display immature actions and interrupt the learning of others.

Commentary

12. Relationships between staff and students are very good. The headteacher and senior managers have a high profile around the school, know all students very well and are respected by them. Most form tutors, through registration time and lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE), develop good working relationships with their students. At lunch and break times teachers readily take the time to chat to students. These strong relationships ensure students have positive attitudes to school and have someone to listen to them should they have any concerns. This is an important element in boosting their achievement.
13. The great majority of students have good attitudes. Most students listen well and display a willingness to work. They settle down to work quickly and co-operate and contribute well in lessons. During assemblies, students listen very well. In the large number of questionnaires returned, the vast majority of parents confirmed that their child likes being at school.
14. The great majority of students behave well. Behaviour observed in lessons was usually good and frequently very good. Staff are currently undergoing a training programme on positive behaviour management to promote greater consistency between classes. At lunchtimes, behaviour is good and a friendly social climate exists. The learning support centre sets high expectations of behaviour and carefully tracks specific students through an identified programme of monitoring and rewards. This helps to encourage students to reflect and improve their behaviour. A particularly innovative feature is the internal computer database of information to support teachers. It contains clear guidance in the form of a simple script on how to manage identified students. Students identified as being at the early stage of disaffection with school are transferred onto a newly developed 'Freshstart' programme. This project is partly funded through the Behaviour Improvement Programme in order to re-engage them in learning.
15. A small minority of students, mainly boys, do not behave well and have negative attitudes to learning. They can display immature actions and interrupt the learning of others. These students are often unpunctual to lessons and during lessons are unwilling to co-operate. They sometimes call out and chatter instead of listening. This is especially noticeable in lessons where teachers have insufficient behaviour management strategies or where lessons lack appropriate challenge or focus. This can disrupt the learning of others and slow the pace of some lessons.
16. In their questionnaire returns, students reported that some students behave poorly and that there is bullying at the school. Incidents of bullying do occur. However, the

school has good procedures to try to prevent bullying and deals appropriately with any reported instances. For example through collective worship and PSHE lessons students discuss the issues relating to bullying and strategies to use should they or a friend be bullied. A peer mentoring scheme gives students scope to talk to other students about any worries. The high profile of staff monitoring corridors and outside areas between lessons, at break times and lunchtimes reduces the opportunities for bullying to occur. Additionally, staff travel regularly on the school buses to ensure students are safe. In discussions, students say that incidents of bad behaviour are dealt with promptly and effectively. Through assemblies and tutorial periods students learn about the impact of bullying on others and given strategies to help them cope with any instances.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	684	47	3
White – any other White background	11	-	-
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	1	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	1	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	-	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	-	-

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

17. The school is very keen to minimise exclusions. Exclusions are used appropriately and only as a last resort when dealing with such difficulties as repeated anti-social behaviour. There is a learning support unit which provides effective support for students who may be at risk of exclusion.

18. Students have good opportunities for moral and social development. Most display a good sense of understanding right from wrong. Students respect the building, litter and vandalism is minimal. Opportunities for positions of responsibility, including school councillors, prefects and peer mentors, enable students to work alongside staff in developing a civilised learning community. Students who have joined at other times than at the start of the school year have been well integrated and in discussion say that they make friends quickly. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and the school works hard to raise students' self-esteem through praise and reward. A feature of this is the various letters and postcards that are sent home to allow parents to join in their child's successes. Students are encouraged to develop and explore feelings and beliefs. For example a Year 8 music lesson encouraged students to explore the spiritual and emotional effect of Indian music. Students are provided with sufficient opportunities to extend their cultural experiences and awareness through a range of learning activities in subjects such as art and design, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. Cultural visits to theatres extend students' opportunities.

19. Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning and good working relationships with teachers and support staff who they trust to respond to requests for help. Their views are listened to and taken into account. The Breakfast Club is a good example of rewarding students with something that is meaningful to them. They have their progress towards meeting individual targets monitored on a regular basis and are rewarded for success, though sanctions are also imposed when progress is not made. Teaching and support staff in the learning support centre provide positive role models for students presenting challenges and any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with sensitively but firmly.

20. Students learning English as an additional language have good attitudes to learning and are well integrated into the school community.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.8	School data	0.4
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

21. Attendance rates continue to improve and have reached national averages. Currently, attendance is just exceeding national averages due to the very good procedures adopted to reward good attendance and follow up any absences. The attendance officer makes diligent use of a speedy system of first-day contact to alert parents immediately to any non-attendance. Punctuality in the morning is very good and the majority of students are present for tutor time and collective worship. However, a small number of students dawdle unnecessarily between lessons and prevent maximum use of the learning time available.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are **good**. The way in which the students' progress is monitored is **satisfactory** with very good practice in some subject areas. The curriculum is **satisfactory**. **Good** procedures are in place to seek and respond to students' views. The school's partnerships with parents and other schools and colleges, and links with the community are **good**. The way in which the school provides for the care, welfare, health and safety of students is **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good** in all years and the assessment of students' progress is **satisfactory**. During the inspection, the highest proportion of good and very good teaching was seen in examination classes in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and this very positive attitude is infectious with many examples of students really enjoying their learning.
- Lessons are well planned, usually with very clear objectives, a variety of tasks and explicit intended outcomes.
- Support staff and resources, particularly the high quality ICT provision, are used very well to support teaching and learning and therefore boost achievement.
- Constructive and detailed marking in science, art and design, design and technology, ICT and religious education means that students are clear about the standards that they have achieved and what they need to do to go further.
- In a few lessons, work is not always properly matched to the students' starting points.
- There is insufficient whole-school awareness of the specific learning needs of the very small number of students who have English as an additional language.
- Teaching in boys' physical education is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 102 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (2.0 %)	31 (30.4 %)	40 (39.2%)	26 (25.5%)	3 (2.9%)	0	0

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

22. The quality of teaching is good overall reflecting the generally good levels of achievement, attitudes and behaviour. The highest proportion of good teaching is in examination classes. There are examples of high quality teaching across the school with examples of good or very good teaching in all subject areas. In some cases good teaching is not fully reflected in students' standards. The most common reasons for this are weaknesses in literacy, and to a lesser extent numeracy, which limit the standards that student can reach. In a few cases, student achievement is limited by unsatisfactory attitudes to learning or unsatisfactory behaviour.
23. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in science and ICT and good in all other subjects, except for music where it is satisfactory and physical education where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in science, modern foreign languages, ICT, business and communication and art and design, and good in all other subject areas, except for physical education where it is unsatisfactory. The difference between judgements about the teaching of music in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is explained by the greater attention given to the needs of students of different abilities in GCSE classes. Within physical education, there is a marked difference between the very good teaching in girls' physical education and the unsatisfactory teaching in boys' physical education.
24. All staff have been appointed to the new school in the last three years and this has meant that there is a very good match between teachers' specialisms and the demands of the curriculum. This has been further enhanced by an extensive programme of professional development and a shared understanding across the school about the features of an effective lesson. Nearly all lessons are taught by subject specialists whose knowledge about, and enthusiasm for, their subject are very evident. For example, teachers provide an impressive range of enrichment activities, including clubs, visits and special projects. Teaching areas provide a stimulating learning environment with very good use of display. Teachers are aware of current developments in teaching and learning in general, and the particular developments in their subjects, and use this knowledge to enhance learning. For example, many teachers make extensive use of the new electronic whiteboard technology and guide students towards the most recent on-line materials.
25. Students respond very positively to their teachers' subject commitment and knowledge. They also respond well to the very good way in which they are supported and encouraged in the classroom by their teachers, support staff and each other. With very few exceptions, relationships are very good and there are few examples of student disaffection. In most cases, the poor behaviour of a small minority of students is handled very well with firm, but tactful approaches.

26. In the few instances where lessons are less satisfactory, there is less clarity about the students' starting points and so work is either too demanding or too easy. Sometimes this is for the whole group, but more usually it is where work is not adjusted to meet different needs. In a few instances, students respond to this inappropriate work with poor behaviour.
27. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good. Good teaching, including contributions from learning support assistants, helps students to make good progress in reading and spelling skills through specific learning programmes. In subjects across the curriculum progress is good. Good information about the nature of the students' learning and behavioural difficulties is available for teachers on the school's intranet and, where this is accessed, is used effectively to inform planning. Teachers also have access to learning support staff for guidance on meeting individual needs to ensure that students make good progress in meeting their individual targets. There are good examples in science of a student with physical disabilities accessing practical activities and across the curriculum where aids are used to enlarge print to allow a student with visual impairment to complete tasks independently.
28. There is insufficient whole-school awareness of the specific learning needs of the very small number of students who have English as an additional language, including those at the intermediate and advanced stages of English; subject teachers do not generally have sufficient information and guidance on how they can best support these students.

Assessment

29. Assessment is at least satisfactory in all subject areas, except for citizenship and some aspects of physical education where it is unsatisfactory. In science, art and design, design and technology, ICT and religious education there is very good practice in assessment. Detailed marking gives students and teachers a clear understanding of the point that they have reached. Good use is made of National Curriculum and GCSE criteria and electronic mark books allow records to be constantly updated and compared to predictions. This understanding of student progress leads to well-planned lessons with very clear objectives that are shared with the class and a good variety of tasks with a clear purpose. Lessons and units of work have explicit intended outcomes, targets are set and monitored and there is precise guidance about what students need to do to go further.
30. Assessment of English as an additional language is satisfactory overall; however, the progress of students learning English is not fully recorded. Additionally, the individual education plans give teachers the mistaken impression that students who have English as an additional language have learning difficulties, as opposed to specific English language learning needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is **satisfactory**. Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities, is very good. Accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broadly based, interesting and imaginative curriculum is available to all students in all year groups, including those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs.
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 offers a wide range of options, including vocational courses and work-related learning.
- There are very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom and the school day.
- Insufficient time and weight is allocated to citizenship education.
- The curriculum is greatly enriched by the generally very good accommodation and resources, especially the extensive ICT facilities. However, accommodation and resources in the library and for drama are not at the same standard as for the rest of the school.

Commentary

31. The curriculum is inclusive and is thoroughly planned. Learning activities are well matched to students' interests and needs. This enables nearly all students, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, to make good progress. The provision for students in Years 10 and 11 is especially innovative, with many opportunities for work-related learning. There is a strong emphasis on the use of new technology, which has enabled students to become capable users of ICT. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except for the lack of a daily act of collective worship. The time allocated for PSHE is too short for all key elements of the programme of study to be covered in depth.
32. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 benefits from recent improvements that enable the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to be applied in a methodical way. As students enter the school with relatively weak literacy and numeracy skills it is essential that these skills are developed across all subjects in a co-ordinated way. This is happening to some degree in all subjects, but can be strengthened. Teachers and support staff know a great deal about students' personal and social needs when they enter the school in Year 7, but less about the curriculum that they have followed in Year 6 and how it was taught. In geography, students do not have sufficient opportunity to undertake fieldwork activities.
33. Students are provided with clear guidance about the options that they can follow in Years 10 and 11 and are offered detailed personal advice about the choices that they could make. They may select to study between seven and ten GCSE subjects. Those who choose to take seven are offered additional work-related units, some of which contribute to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). These innovative and successful courses have been created as a result of collaborative working between local schools, Tameside College, training providers and local businesses using school improvement funding. More able students can do an accelerated course that leads to an additional GCSE. These arrangements go a long way towards achieving a personalised learning programme for each student.
34. The arrangements for PSHE (including sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drug misuse) are satisfactory. All requisite elements are taught, but the limited time made available for this work inevitably means that some aspects are not given prominence. At present some elements of the National Curriculum for citizenship education are covered within the PSHE programme, with the remainder in some other subjects such as religious education and history. This coverage is inadequate as it does not permit all parts of the three defined strands of citizenship education to be taught in sufficient depth.
35. Very good opportunities are provided for students to continue their learning outside the school day through visits, clubs, study support arrangements and access to first class sporting and new technology facilities. This is of immense importance as the many students come from very disadvantaged home circumstances. As a consequence, many have gained in confidence and are enjoying their school experience greatly. They have the chance to expand their horizons, become responsible and develop leadership skills.

36. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good. Structured reading programmes help students to make good progress. The introduction of modified timetables and personalised learning programmes in Years 10 and 11 provide a range of opportunities for students to stay engaged in their learning through experiencing success and this prepares them well for life beyond school. There is good use made of ICT to promote curriculum access for students with special educational needs.
37. The accommodation and resources of the new school are very good, and in almost all cases enrich the curriculum provision considerably and hence students' learning opportunities. This is especially the case with the availability of electronic whiteboards in every classroom, lapTop computers that can be delivered to any lesson and a generous allocation of personal computers. Practical areas for art and design, science, design and technology, physical education and music are superb and greatly enhance learning. Display and storage facilities are also very good – another element that supports learning well. The learning support centre offers a very suitable environment for mentoring and small group tuition. Again, this enables students to succeed. There are two areas where the accommodation and resources are less effective. The library has an inadequate stock of reading books, especially for more able readers, and is an unstimulating environment. This is a significant disadvantage given the low level of many students' reading skills. The drama suite does not provide the type of quality working area to support the teaching of the subject seen elsewhere and the stage is not well suited for dramatic performance.
38. The school has a full complement of suitably qualified teachers and support staff who are well trained to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The support staff are very well used to complement and extend the work of teachers in line with current national developments in workforce remodelling. At the time of the inspection, there were no support staff specialising in English as an additional language in place to meet the needs of the two newly arrived students.
39. Curriculum provision for students learning English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. Although students at the early stages of English make good progress when supported in class and helped individually with assignments, they make insufficient progress in lessons when not supported, for example in science. Students at the intermediate stages appear confident communicators orally but do not receive help with spoken accuracy and with understanding and responding in writing to the complex language of GCSE papers.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of students' care, welfare and health and safety is **very good**. The provision of support and guidance, based on monitoring, is good. Students are well involved in the life and development of their school. Induction arrangements are good. Careers guidance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for child protection and health and safety are very good.
- Good procedures help students in all years to settle in well.
- Very good relationships with staff support all students in improving their learning.

- Students have good opportunities for their views to be heard.
- The careers programme prepares students for work or further study adequately, but resources to support the researching of career options are too limited.

Commentary

40. Very good procedures for health and safety are in place. The governing body, senior managers and school staff all carry out their duties diligently and monitor health and safety issues carefully. Procedures to keep students safe have a high profile and visits out of school are carefully assessed. Procedures for child protection and the care of looked after children are very good. Staff are fully aware of their duties and are constantly alert to concerns or changes in students' attitudes. This helps students feel safe in their learning environment.
41. Good procedures for induction ensure that students settle quickly into Year 7. Students experience a 'taster day' and information about their pastoral needs is carefully evaluated before they begin. The needs of students joining in others years are carefully evaluated through assessments in the learning support unit prior to joining their year group.
42. Information from assessment data and marking is generally used well to help students to know what they need to do to improve their work further. An excellent example can be seen in ICT lessons where precise use of performance information is helping students to identify particular elements of their courses that need attention and showing them exactly what work will allow them to reach higher levels.
43. Students know that their views matter. The school council plays a useful part in enabling students' voices to be heard. They appreciate having a budget to spend and reflect sensibly on how to use it wisely. Various lunchtime clubs are given funding to resource their activities, such as the 'Warhammer' club. Students are particularly pleased with the large white screen the council purchased to display the music channel in the hall at lunchtimes. The school also carries out student questionnaires to poll their views to improve the school.
44. The careers programme provided by the school is satisfactory. The need for further improvement has been identified in the school development plan. Careers advice starts in Year 7 through planned opportunities in the PSHE curriculum timetable. Form tutors teach these lessons with minimal support and the monitoring of the provision is informal. Well-planned opportunities for work experience are in place in Year 11, which most but not all students complete. There is a small display of resources in the library although some students admit to having never looked at them. There are currently no careers pathways on the school's website to support students' independent research into job opportunities. Some departments have attractive informative displays with suggestions of careers relating to their subjects to inspire students to higher aspirations.
45. All members of staff are committed to ensure the care of students with special educational needs is good. There is regular and effective contact with outside care agencies. Supportive procedures such as special arrangements for examinations are effectively established. The learning support centre provides a welcoming, nurturing environment where students feel secure.

46. Students who have English as an additional language receive good personal and cultural support from the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents, other schools and colleges and the community is **good**. Parents have very positive views of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and the school has a strong commitment to working in close partnership with parents.
- Good relationships with the local community support learning.
- Parents are well informed about school events, the curriculum and their child's progress.
- Strong links exist with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

47. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. The school reported that over the last few years, parental attendance at progress meetings has increased considerably. This reflects a commitment to working in partnership. The school is particularly prompt at sharing successes with parents through letters of praise, celebration postcards or telephone calls. Equally the school endeavours to involve parents where there are concerns. Annual questionnaires are distributed to discover parental views and any concerns are addressed or integrated into the school development plan. Planners provide an effective two-way communication and are monitored regularly by the majority of form tutors. However, too many parents condone the taking of holidays during term time without considering the impact it may have on their child's learning.
48. Following initial resistance to the building of the new school by some members of the immediate community, the school has worked tirelessly to promote a positive partnership with the community. As a result good links now exist with the surrounding community. Community use of the facilities, particularly for sports, is good. Through music the school has been actively involved with community events. Other groups of the community are welcomed into school; for example, a Bangladeshi group uses the ICT suite.
49. The quality of documentation that the school provides for parents is good. Students' annual reports include appropriately detailed information about their progress and areas for improvement. The consistency in the quality of reports between departments is very good. However, the reports do not meet all reporting requirements, as students' progress in citizenship is not reported. Interim reports provide a useful snapshot of students' progress and help parents to understand if their child is making sufficient progress. The well-written prospectus and governor's annual report provide the necessary information about the school routines and expectations. The system of form tutors remaining with the same group from Year 7 leads to the development of very good relationships with parents. The learning support centre has very strong links with identified students and keeps parents well informed, often on a daily basis. The

school's website is still in its early stages of supporting the learning links between school and home, but ambitious work is underway to develop this.

50. Through the Tameside Leadership Incentive Grant Scheme, the school has developed very strong links with other secondary schools and Tameside College. For example, this has supported departments working together, sharing good practice between schools and helping middle management to gain leadership skills. The partnership with Tameside College has enabled the school to develop alternative curriculum arrangements, when appropriate, to help identified students improve their learning and attendance.
51. Pastoral links with feeder schools are good and help students settle quickly. Curriculum links with primary schools are still developing and although various initiatives are underway a coherent formalised plan to meet the needs of students has yet to be fully developed. As a consequence curricular links with primary schools are more advanced in some subject areas such as physical education and science, but are satisfactory overall.
52. Students with special educational needs and their parents/carers are suitably involved in decisions about their learning. Students are encouraged to be proactive and are able to refer themselves for additional support. This is agreed through negotiation between teachers and students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and the leadership of other key staff is very good. The school is very well managed and well governed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership; this has been a major factor in the successful start of this new school.
- Leadership at all levels is characterised by clarity of vision, a very strong sense of purpose and high aspirations.
- Governors are keen champions of the school, yet are also sharp at identifying areas of weakness and insisting that they are dealt with promptly.
- Arrangements for the training and support of all members of staff are very good.
- The school is very well managed and organised.
- The principles of best value are rigorously followed; the school provides good value for money.

Commentary

53. The school is well governed. Governors are capable and well informed and are passionate to see this new school succeed. They strike a good balance between being champions of the school, representatives of the community and critical friends. Many governors have been in post since the new school was founded and have played a very important part in shaping its vision and direction. They showed considerable courage and foresight through a difficult period when the new building was delayed. The governors, working in close partnership with the headteacher, have a sharp understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of this rapidly developing school. They also have a clear understanding of examination performance

data, including indicators of student progress. This expertise has been used well to generate ambitious, but realistic, targets for future student achievement. The governors are well aware of what needs to be done in order to realise these targets. They have worked hard during the short time that the school has been in existence to ensure that the statutory duties of the school are fulfilled, overseeing the successful realisation of policies on special educational needs, race equality, health and safety, disability and sex education. The only major omissions are a lack of compliance with statutory requirements for the provision of collective worship and the teaching, assessment and reporting of students' progress in citizenship education.

54. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has an intimate knowledge of the many initiatives that the school is involved with and how they can be used to promote his vision of a fully inclusive school where all students reach ambitious personal goals. He also knows individual students well and speaks to them personally throughout each school day. Equally, he knows each member of staff very well and offers them abundant encouragement and support. He is also a top quality teacher, able to lead by example. His leadership has generated a great deal of loyalty and teamwork. Students and parents are extremely enthusiastic about the cheerful 'family' atmosphere of the school. This has encouraged very good relationships amongst all members of the school community, thus creating confidence. These good relationships are underpinned by a determination to tackle any weak performance or poor conduct decisively.
55. The curriculum has been led well by the headteacher. He has overseen the design of an imaginative and flexible programme of learning that incorporates many aspects of best national practice, especially in relationship to ICT and vocational education. This has created opportunities for a curriculum that can be closely matched to individual needs in Years 10 and 11. In most cases the overall aims of the curriculum have been reflected well within subject teams.
56. The headteacher is fully supported by able and committed senior and middle leaders, particularly the deputy headteacher who, with the headteacher, was appointed before the school opened and managed an enormous workload in helping to steer the development of the new school. The leadership team has been highly successful in establishing the spirit of the school, winning the support of parents, students and the wider community and raising achievement. Subject and pastoral leaders have been well trained and supported. They are able to contribute directly to whole-school policy making and evaluation, although the procedures for this are not yet fully developed. Strategic planning at all levels is very good. Subject leaders interpret the key priorities of the school development plan into the context of their own department well. They play an important part in the performance management of staff; a process that is closely connected to very effective arrangements for the continuing professional development of all members of staff. This has led directly to the high proportion of lessons where the teaching is good or very good. Teamwork is a very strong feature of this school – an important factor in its success.
57. Subject leadership is: very good in English, modern foreign languages, science, ICT, history, geography, religious education and technology; good in mathematics and art and design; satisfactory in music; and unsatisfactory in physical education and citizenship. Subject management is: very good in science, modern foreign languages, religious education and technology; good in English, ICT, history, geography and art and design; satisfactory in mathematics and music; and unsatisfactory in physical

education and citizenship. Within physical education, the leadership and management of boys' physical education are unsatisfactory, whilst the leadership and management of girls' physical education are very good.

58. The leadership of the provision for students with special educational needs is very good. The learning support manager is a very well respected member of the senior management team who is approachable to both staff and students. Her position allows her to challenge teachers on inclusion issues when the need arises. The learning support team have a high profile across the school and the expertise of the team is sought by teachers when dealing with challenging students within their mainstream classes. The learning support team provides good quality information on the individual needs of students with special educational needs. Available funding has been effectively deployed to meet the diverse range of need found in the school. The school fulfils the required statutory requirements with regard to special educational needs. There is close monitoring of the progress of students on specific teaching programmes.
59. A great deal of thought has been given to recruiting capable and enthusiastic new teachers and support staff. The combination of many favourable factors (such as the high quality accommodation, dynamic leadership, good relationships and increasing student numbers) has attracted sizeable numbers of applicants for some posts. The procedures for their induction and subsequent training and deployment are very good. There is a strong commitment to training new teachers under the Initial Teacher Training scheme. This is seen as a natural component of a school that is committed to all levels of learning.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2488261	Balance from previous year	71835
Total expenditure	2415547	Balance carried forward to the next	72714
Expenditure per pupil	3846		

60. Expenditure per pupil in the last financial year was higher than in most schools, but this reflected the special circumstances of the creation of a new school and a move to a new site. Core expenditure per pupil is in line with similar schools. A wide range of specific school improvement grants and initiatives has been used very well to improve students' learning opportunities and also the quality of leadership at all levels. For example, the Leadership Incentive Grant has been used constructively for such purposes as training subject and pastoral leaders, appointing support staff to assist with management and administrative activities, evolving new self-review procedures and working collaboratively with other schools to develop a strong vocational curriculum. Income gained from membership of a local Excellence Cluster (with associated funding from the Behaviour Improvement Programme) has enabled the learning support centre to function, learning mentors to be appointed and new opportunities for gifted and talented students to be created. These are all having a beneficial impact on students' personal development and achievement. The school is well supported by the local education authority, whose officers and advisers have shown great insight in establishing this new school, encouraging local collaborative arrangements and monitoring its progress. The complex finances of this school, which was built and is maintained under the conditions of a Private Finance Initiative, are

very well managed. The many different funding streams have been capably used for their allocated purposes, in turn allowing the school to achieve most of its educational priorities. The principles of 'best value' have been rigorously applied to the management and use of resources. This has enabled the school to offer good value for money and to justify the large expense involved in setting it up.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision for work-related learning is **good** and meets all statutory requirements.

Provision for WRL was sampled during the inspection. The statutory requirements for WRL are for schools to provide programmes in Years 10 and 11 so that students learn from direct experience of work (through, for example, work experience), about work (through, for example, vocational courses and careers education) and for work by developing skills for enterprise and employability.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student achievement on vocational courses is very good.
- Teaching on vocational courses and programmes is very good as it promotes high standards and provides relevance to the world of work
- A carefully planned programme, in collaboration with employers, Tameside College of Technology and other training providers, meets the requirements for WRL.
- The co-ordination of WRL is good.

Commentary

61. The most recent examination results for those students (about half of the year group) taking vocational subjects have been above the national average in both GCSE business and communication and GNVQ ICT. These examination results represent very good achievement by students as a result of very good teaching. Students respond well to these subjects and see their relevance to the world of work. In lessons in these subjects, and in the school's vocational programme, students showed a good understanding of the world of work and were using work-related skills well.
62. The school provides a carefully planned programme of WRL opportunities. This allows students to complete a good quality two-week work experience placement. The great majority of students complete this; the remainder are given other opportunities for direct work experience through the school's vocational programme. The WRL programme also includes a course of careers education and guidance; mock interviews with local employers or representatives of the local Education Business Partnership; and study units on 'The Economy' and 'Rights and Responsibilities in the World of Work' as part of their PSHE programme. Whilst the careers programme is satisfactory, the school has already highlighted this as an area for further improvement to increase support material and to remove any inconsistency between the work of different tutors. High quality curriculum enrichment includes activities such as visits to workplaces and work-related conventions such as 'Skill City'.

63. In addition to the general provision for all, some students have the opportunity to take part in some of the following very good programmes: extended work placements involving two days a week with a local employer; day release college courses through the 'M Power' scheme (covering, for example, bakery, motor vehicle maintenance and child care); and the school's own vocational studies programme which involves accredited short courses ranging from brickwork and groundwork conservation to media studies and key skills. Most of these programmes are provided through close and very effective collaboration with Tameside College of Technology, but also involve other local training providers, employers and the school's own staff. These vocational programmes are having a very positive effect on increasing student motivation for all aspects of their study by providing relevance and practical approaches to aid learning.
64. Some other subjects have identified opportunities for WRL. A particularly good example is in technology where technical skills related to the world of work are developed well and the curriculum is enriched by visits to workplaces and exhibitions, such as 'The Clothes Show'. Other subject areas are not as well advanced in identifying ways in which they can contribute to WRL, but this is highlighted as a priority in the school's development plans.
65. The scheduling of the various vocational programmes within the two-week timetable meant that it was not possible for inspectors to observe any of the lessons offered by other providers, but in discussion staff and students spoke highly of them. A small number of lessons from the school's own programme were seen during the inspection week. Two very good lessons were observed in business and communication where an exceptionally good working environment with high quality ICT mirrored the workplace with 'business standards' being expected throughout. Carefully structured, individual programmes with very good support allowed all students to make rapid progress in developing workplace skills in, for example, letter writing. In an excellent lesson as part of the vocational programme, a small group of students was taught practical skills in tiling. The teacher was very effective in presenting the topic as an important activity and developing understanding about the practical application of numeracy skills in measuring, planning, costing jobs etc. In addition, all students were able to complete a high quality product in a short space of time.
66. The co-ordination of WRL across the school is good. A senior member of staff has responsibility for overseeing development and other members of staff have specific responsibilities for careers education, work experience and the vocational programme. The school has a clear policy and strategy for implementing WRL, including sensible plans to monitor, evaluate and report on the new requirements. This includes bringing greater coherence to the effective ways in which different elements of WRL are assessed.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led with vision and a sense of purpose.
- Good teaching results in students achieving well.
- Standards are not yet in line with national averages, mainly because too many students have weaknesses in reading, writing and spelling.
- Methods of assessment do not lead teachers to tackle sufficiently students' key learning needs in the skills of reading, writing and spelling.
- There is too little reading for pleasure linked to imaginative and successful teaching of writing.
- Teachers in the department work together well, support each other and are committed to raising standards.

Commentary

Examination and test results

67. Results in national tests in Year 9 in 2004 were a significant improvement on those of 2003. They were close to, but still below, the national average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were also an improvement on 2003, but were still below the national average.

Standards and achievement

68. Standards overall are below average. In Years 7 to 9 standards are just about average and in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Higher attaining students in Year 11 respond to very good teaching and achieve well, for example in relating thoughts and feelings to their understanding of the poem *Exposure* by Wilfred Owen. They work at a fast pace in identifying what is 'poetic' about the writing. Year 9 students successfully adjust the writing of travel brochures to remove ambiguity and manage language to present positive or negative images of a resort. These successes are the result of very good teaching. However, even with these higher attaining students, spelling is often inaccurate and students' reading aloud lacks expression. Middle and lower attainers' facility to read with expression, write in sentences and spell with consistent accuracy is very limited. In a very good lesson looking at images linked to Browning's poem *Meeting at Night* with a lower attaining Year 8 class, students recognised how images were created through the use of adjectives extending nouns, but could not write accurately themselves to put their recognition into written form. Weaknesses in these

basic skills prevent students from attaining higher levels and grades in tests and examinations.

69. Achievement is good. Students perform better than expected as a result of good, sometimes very good, teaching. Given their starting points students improve their performance significantly, especially in speaking about their work and in the writing of simple sentences. Higher attainers by Year 9 show a mastery of more complex sentences. They respond well to work that makes demands of them and show they can work at a good pace. Their learning shows that they are working at a level that can reasonably be expected of them. This was also true when very good teaching and good support from support assistants encouraged a large class of students with special educational needs in Year 7, through practical work, to write accurate instructions for a given task.

Teaching and learning

70. Teaching and learning are good. As a result students achieve well. ICT is used well as a teaching aid, but few examples were seen of students using it to enhance their learning. The best teaching is characterised by the energy and enthusiasm of the teachers. This small but effective department achieves well because of collaborative planning to a high standard. Teachers encourage students constantly and praise their best efforts. Consequently, in most lessons students work hard, do their best and achieve. For example, gentle but persistent teaching that focused on the text of another war poem, *Disabled* by Wilfred Owen, with a low attaining Year 11 class resulted in students staying on task and grasping the essentials of the poetic expression.
71. However, teaching could be better still. Time-keeping could be better in some lessons to ensure that students fully understand what is expected of them. In the department's approach to the subject, not enough attention is given to reading suitable literature together, especially that shared in class that helps support imaginative and expansive writing and the use of skills learned. Marking does not always indicate how students might improve their work. Weaknesses in the basic skills are too often left without comment or the need to correct. The qualities expected of good teaching are clear in the department and the reason why students achieve well. At present, though, these qualities are not applied sufficiently to harvest the full riches of the English curriculum.

Leadership and management

72. The department is very well led with a clear vision of what is needed to improve further. Management is good and the department is making the most of the national initiatives in Years 7 to 9. Teachers work together to share good ideas and agree levels of students' writing. Improvement over the years since the school opened is good; teaching is better now and standards show an improving trend.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Standards of reading, writing, spelling and speaking are below average in Years 7 to 9 and well below average in Years 10 and 11. This is holding back effective learning in English, modern languages, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, art and design and religious education. Higher standards should be attainable in these subjects if students' writing skills were closer to those expected at each stage through the school. Teachers are aware of this and lessons usually have a focus for improving these basic skills. The school has produced a sharp and accessible literacy policy that emphasises the need and indicates a range of appropriate approaches to raise standards. In geography, for example, the department provides effective support for all students for report-writing and reading to gather information. In ICT teachers give good support for students' evaluative writing and many departments use techniques to ease the writing process, especially with lower attainers. There is a shortage of books and the library is not laid out to encourage reading for pleasure.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were very low, mainly because of students' low motivation.
- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of good teaching and very good departmental leadership.
- Students make rapid progress in Spanish because of very good teaching.
- In Years 7 to 9, able students do not make fast enough progress in some French lessons because learning tasks are too simple.
- Able students in Years 10 and 11 are making very good progress.

Commentary

Examination results

74. GCSE results in French in 2004 were very low and students did not do as well as in their other subjects. The school explains this as being due to the poor experience that these students had in the past and the very negative attitudes resulting from this. Standards in the current Year 11 are still below average, mainly due to weak literacy skills. However, standards are rising because of the department's firm commitment to improvement and are now significantly higher than the poor examination results would suggest.

Standards and achievement

75. In Years 7 to 9, all students learn French, and most study Spanish as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. German is currently taught to one group in Year 9. In French, lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress, because teachers and support staff jointly plan well for their learning needs. However, some abler students make slower progress in French in Years 7 to 9 than they might because teachers' expectations of them are not high enough and homework opportunities are too limited. In Spanish, most students achieve very well; in a short time they make rapid progress because of very good, enthusiastic teaching. Students make satisfactory progress in German, using the complex noun and verb forms with increasing confidence. In all languages, many students make good progress in reading and listening, but most still lack confidence in writing and speaking. In Year 11, many students make good progress in spite of their limited French, due to the well-planned examination practice teachers provide. In Year 10, standards are much higher, being average in both French and Spanish. Abler students in Years 10 and 11 reach above average standards and achieve very well. Students in most years now have very good attitudes to learning because of their teachers' enthusiasm; boys respond confidently in Spanish lessons.

Teaching and learning

76. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is reflected in the rising standards, particularly in Year 10, but not yet reflected in the examination results. Teaching is particularly good in Spanish. Three new members of staff have joined the school in the last two years and the department is also working closely with an Advanced Skills Teacher from a local language college. Enthusiastic teachers have very good subject knowledge across all three languages and lessons are well planned with clear objectives and intended outcomes. For example, within lessons there is good progression from word to sentence level work. However, in a few lessons there are some missed opportunities for speaking practice and in some French lessons there are insufficient opportunities for the most able students to show what they can do. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use the interactive whiteboard imaginatively, providing clear images, text, and grammar patterns and helping to improve many students' low standards of literacy. Teachers mark written work carefully, giving students motivating rewards for good work. However, despite the good marking, some students still have limited awareness of their progress through the National Curriculum levels.
77. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very precise with a strong focus on examination requirements and how they can be met. Careful planning and very good use of a wide range of resources encourage students to become more independent learners. The teachers provide a great deal of individual support and challenge with a stress on accuracy and pace. As in Years 7 to 11, ICT is a powerful aid to learning. For example, *PowerPoint* presentations are used by staff and students to present images and words and demonstrate how the language can be constructed. Support for both students with special educational needs and talented linguists is very good as work, resources and support staff are matched to their different requirements.

Leadership and management

78. Leadership and management are very good. Since appointment, the new head of department has shown vision in moving forward a weak area in the school with evident improvement in all years. Much has been done to overcome the negative attitudes to the subjects and this is evident in increased numbers opting to study modern foreign languages at GCSE. Clear analysis of past performance and current requirements has been used to develop a scheme of work and teaching strategies to support personalised learning. Future development plans and very good departmental organisation give strong direction to a dedicated team, and are contributing to rising standards. The teachers work harmoniously together for their students' success.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in mathematics because of generally good teaching.

- The department is a cohesive and hard-working team.
- Good leadership has set up effective systems and schemes of work with associated assessment tasks.
- Teachers do not use the wealth of assessment data well enough in planning different tasks for different students in classes formed on the basis of attainment.
- Schemes of work cover all the required ground but do not yet include guidance on methods nor enough opportunities for practical and investigative work, literacy or citizenship.

Commentary

Examination results

79. Results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average, but were a significant improvement on those from the previous year. The most recent GCSE results were well below average.

Standards and achievement

80. The current standards seen in the school in Year 9 and Year 11 broadly mirror those attained in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations in 2004. Standards are below average in Year 9 and they are well below average in Year 11. However, year-on-year comparisons are difficult as the starting points of different year groups are not the same. Standards are relatively stronger for younger students. Good teaching throughout the school enables students to make good progress from their different starting points and consequently they achieve well. Schemes of work do not yet contain enough guidance for teachers on the investigative and practical aspects of the subject and students do not complete enough of these tasks to achieve really well in this area. Good support for students with special needs ensures that they make the same good progress and achieve equally as well as their peers. Students who are gifted mathematicians are identified by the department and make the same good progress as their peers.

Teaching and learning

81. The best lessons have a brisk pace, which is assisted by the use of rigorous time limits for sections of work. In these lessons, tasks are closely matched to students' needs so that they are challenged beyond their comfort zone. In all classrooms, very good relationships between teachers and students mean that teachers do not need to spend time managing behaviour and consequently students' progress is accelerated. Students respond to the high expectations teachers have of their behaviour and attitudes by working solidly and enthusiastically on their tasks. However, the schemes of work do not give enough guidance on the methods to be used and some lessons are pedestrian and lack sparkle. In these lessons, the focus is on the skills to be mastered rather than understanding, and the match of task to needs is patchy. The department has a wealth of assessment data from tests built in to the schemes of work. In addition, students rate their own understanding of the lesson's content at its end, giving them good opportunities to reflect on their understanding and gain a better understanding of their learning. However, this wealth of information is not consistently used when planning the next stages or to set short-term targets for their immediate progress. The quality of marking varies; the best marking is exemplary, notes strengths and weaknesses, gives advice and sets targets for improvement. Other books receive more superficial marking that does not challenge students to do better. Long-term targets for students' performance are set based on assessment data and students are fully aware of these.

Leadership and management

82. Good leadership has set up new systems and schemes of work, with comprehensive assessment tasks and homework assignments built in. Leaders provide good role models for the department in the quality of their teaching and the use of, for example, the recently installed computer-linked whiteboards. Management is satisfactory; formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the department's work are in place, but have not yet been implemented fully, which is a factor in, for example, the inconsistency

seen in the quality of marking. The development plan dovetails appropriately with the school's plan. Since the school's inception, significant progress has been made to cope with the changing intake and to provide fuller schemes and other back-up documentation for staff. A good, enthusiastic and hard-working team has been built, which works together harmoniously. Standards are rising. All of this indicates that the department has made good progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. Provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Standards of mathematics across the curriculum are below average in Years 7 to 9 and well below average in Years 10 and 11. The school has completed an analysis to identify where numeracy is taught in other subjects and where it can be developed further to support mathematics. Useful work has also been done on identifying where weak numeracy skills are holding back learning in other subjects. This work has been used to develop a policy for numeracy across the curriculum and there are good examples of the impact of this in ICT, design and technology, geography and English. In other subject areas, support for numeracy is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising in all year groups, but weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills are limiting attainment.
- Leadership and management are very good and make a significant contribution to improved standards.
- Very good teaching, with effective marking, is raising standards.
- The final session of many lessons needs to do more than review main learning objectives.

Commentary

Examination results

84. Results in national tests in Year 9 in 2004 were a significant improvement on those of 2003 and in line with similar schools, but still below the national average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were also an improvement on 2003. They were well below the national average, but students did better in science than in their other subjects

Standards and achievement

85. Standards in Year 11 seen in the inspection are below average, but higher than those in the previous year. They are higher in Year 10. Most students in Year 11 were working at low levels in science in Year 7 and have made very good progress since

then. Current standards of students in Year 9 are higher than in previous years, but remain below average. They are higher still in Years 8 and 7, continuing the rising trend. Improved standards are due mainly to very good teaching, with an emphasis initially on Years 10 and 11, and very strong subject leadership and management.

86. Students acquire knowledge across all areas of science and develop satisfactory practical techniques leading to a satisfactory standard of investigations in Years 10 and 11, although prediction and evaluation are comparatively weak. Basic literacy skills are weak and this means that students are not always able to demonstrate their understanding in their written work. Higher attaining students make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. For example, Year 11 students use data from observations of the evolution of animals to compare the accuracy of theories of Darwin and Lamarck.
87. Across the school, students use ICT confidently with some students in Year 9 producing high quality *PowerPoint* presentations that identify problems caused by abuse of drugs. Numeracy skills are satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or students with special educational needs.

Teaching and learning

88. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Very good teaching is leading to outcomes at the end of Year 11 that are significantly higher than might have been expected, with strong improvement in test results in Year 9. However, the barriers to learning resulting from weak literacy and numeracy skills are still limiting student attainment despite the department's attention to these core skills. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, structure their lessons well and put forward challenging ideas at a brisk pace. As a result, scientific ideas are presented in an interesting manner so as to promote effective understanding. The best lessons have material that challenges students of all levels of attainment well. Students respond with interest and undertake practical work confidently. Learning objectives are stressed strongly, but the endings of lessons are sometimes hurried and do little more than review the main content. ICT is used to consolidate understanding and to promote research skills. A wide range of teaching and learning strategies is employed including effective use of interactive whiteboards. Students' work is marked comprehensively and detailed comments show how to improve. Test results are recorded effectively and the data is analysed well to identify underachievement and curricular weaknesses. Very high attainers are presented with extended tasks and students with special educational needs are supported well with alternative worksheets.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision directed to raising standards. This has already led some marked improvements and all the systems are in place to take things further. Staff are well motivated and form a very effective team, sharing ideas and providing strong mutual support. There are detailed schemes of work in place for each year enabling teachers to formulate effective lesson plans. Innovative teaching techniques are used. For example students compose role-plays or produce presentations. A diagnostic marking scheme has been developed and used effectively by the whole department and the quality of learning is regularly monitored. Test results are analysed to assess overall progress and monitor individual achievement through a comprehensive database in teachers' electronic mark book. Resources are managed well. The laboratories provide effective flexible accommodation in a suite supporting practical work well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very well planned curriculum and very good teaching result in good achievement by Year 9 and very good achievement by Year 11.
- ICT is used very well in most subjects to help learning and to improve motivation.
- Very good resources for the use of ICT make it available both in lessons and outside the formal school day.
- The excellent assessment system has yet to have its full impact, but has the capacity to make both students and their parents know how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Although the department has good knowledge of the use of ICT in other subjects, it does not yet have all the measures in place to check that all students in Years 10 and 11 are receiving their full entitlement to ICT.

Commentary

Examination results

90. Results in the 2003 and 2004 GNVQ examinations were above average. In 2004 all students gained a pass or better.

Standards and achievement

91. Standards in ICT lessons reflect the good examination results. They are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. In the most recent Year 9 assessments, girls' attainment is higher than that of boys. Work seen by inspectors shows that the highest attainers are girls, but this is not a consistent pattern across the school. By Year 9 the highest attainers understand how to design to meet the needs of the audience or user, in terms of function, content and appearance. The majority have good technical skills that they apply well to their work in other subjects. The lowest attainers and students with special educational needs work accurately to describe their tasks, although in Years 7 to 9 they have some incomplete work. GNVQ examination students follow guidelines well. Students base their planning on research. They evaluate their outcomes, using annotations to track amendments and justify them clearly in writing. Higher attainers design business systems using databases with accurate reference to the requirements of the task. Middle and lower attainers are well supported to help them to design queries that meet the needs of different users in relational databases. Year 11 students have good knowledge of computer systems and can explain the purpose of input and output devices and understand where each is most appropriate. This shows good achievement over the same students' standard on entry to the school, which was below expected levels. Students of all abilities achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well by Year 11. Unlike other subjects, middle and low attainers are not held back by their level of literacy, as teachers provide very good support to help them understand instructions and express their ideas.

Teaching and learning

92. Very good teaching in all year groups supports good achievement, despite their low starting points, in Years 7 to 9 and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Teachers work very well with support staff to accelerate learning. They design tasks and resources to meet the needs of individuals and groups. Their planning develops learning very well by building on and linking ideas and skills. Students are interested in the tasks and contexts. In a few lessons teachers fail to grasp quickly enough that students are struggling or disengaged. Assessment is excellent with a very positive impact on standards, encouraging students to work very well. Students are well informed about their levels in Years 7 to 9 and their GNVQ grades in Years 10 and 11. They also know their assessed potential, and teachers give individual detailed support to help them to meet it. Teachers use assessment very well for course and lesson planning.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership is very good. Teachers and technical support staff are deployed well to make maximum use of their strengths. With well-designed materials on the website for use by all staff, there is a good level of agreement about the objectives while tasks are well adapted to meet the needs of individual students. The head of department leads the development of the curriculum very well. Management is good. There are close co-operation and efficient systems for communication. The network manager with his assistants has designed and maintains a fast, effective and reliable system. In this they have very good support from the school leadership and governing body.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. The use of ICT across the curriculum is very good resulting in students having levels of competence that are above those found in most schools in spite of their low starting points. In almost all subjects ICT is used extensively to support learning, in imaginative ways. Teachers use ICT effectively to demonstrate teaching points and to encourage whole-class discussion. Students have a good ability to use it to analyse data and to express their ideas in a variety of forms. They research well using the Internet with care to provide information that they can apply to their work. Those aspects of the ICT curriculum that are not covered in ICT are taught elsewhere in the school; for example, data-logging is used in science to provide results that are analysed rather than simply displayed. ICT is used naturally in the vocational areas and supports the learning of students with special educational needs very well. The head of ICT has managed this aspect of the curriculum very well, providing training to increase staff awareness of the potential of ICT. The school is beginning to track students' experience in different subjects. Whilst there is no evidence that those students in Years 10 and 11 not taking full ICT courses are not receiving their full curriculum entitlement and their achievement is very good, the school accepts the need for more extensive monitoring across the curriculum to check that all requirements are met.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Years 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved as a result of good teaching.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. However, their potential to reach even higher levels is not fully realised as a result of weaknesses in reading and writing.
- Creative use of ICT has a positive effect on learning.
- Higher attaining students are given too few opportunities for challenge and involvement within some teaching groups.

Commentary

Examination results

95. GCSE results in history in 2004 were below average and students did not do as well as in their other subjects. However, the gap between their results in history and their other subjects was much less than in previous years, with a significant upward trend.

Standards and achievement

96. The standard of work seen in Year 7 to 9 is broadly in line with that found nationally. Standards have improved as a result of good teaching which focuses on the build up of understanding and knowledge and the improvement of skills. The broad and varied curriculum gives students many opportunities to learn about a variety of periods and cultures and as a result students have good understanding of social and political history. Appropriate emphasis is placed on students' ability to interpret historical sources of evidence and as a consequence of this students' skills of analysis are well developed by Year 9. Progress in Year 10 and 11 is also good, but the students started from a lower base, particularly in their ability to read and write well which is central to the study of history, so they are still below average. The good progress in Year 10 and 11 is because many topics are revisited in class work and homework. This allows students to build on prior knowledge and improve their skills and, as a result, the quality of coursework is improved.
97. All students achieve well, including those with special educational needs. This is due to the effective individual support and guidance given by their teachers. Students' literacy skills are less well developed than other aspects of their work particularly within lower attaining groups and this can often block access to higher levels of learning. Although higher attaining students generally make good progress there are too few opportunities for choice or independence within lessons.

Teaching and learning

98. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. Strong personal relationships create a positive atmosphere for learning and creative lesson planning captures the interest of students, who enjoy their history lessons. ICT is a strong feature in every lesson and enriches learning. Teachers produce a range of interactive tasks and activities which allows students to gradually build up their knowledge and understanding and often laptops are used for individual and group research. Students are willing participants and standards of behaviour are high when all students are appropriately challenged. A significant number of students remain passive in class and lack the confidence to talk about history or use appropriate language. Also opportunities are missed for higher attaining students to extend their learning through greater involvement in the lesson. GCSE students are confident in their approach to study and secure in their knowledge of history. This is because teaching is of a good quality and appropriate to the needs and requirements of all students.

Leadership and management

99. The subject co-ordinator manages the department efficiently and is committed to raising standards through the continuous review of the curriculum and through improving the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership of the humanities faculty is very good. The team of historians works well together and is effective in sharing good practice and monitoring standards. It now remains for the department to

ensure greater consistency across teaching groups in serving the needs of higher attaining students.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Years 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in geography is good because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress due to the very good support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The leadership of geography by the head of humanities is very good and the management of the geography department is good.
- Standards in Year 11 are below average as students have a weaker grounding in the subject.
- The development of students' fieldwork skills and techniques is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 due to the lack of field study opportunities.
- Although students' work is frequently assessed, students are unclear about how they might improve and the steps they need to take to meet their target grades.

Commentary

Examination results

100. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well below average and standards are currently below average in Year 11. This is due to the weaker grounding older students have received in geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. Standards at the beginning of Year 7 are below average but students make good progress in geography and the standard of work in Years 7 to 10 is now broadly average.

Standards and achievement

101. Students' achievement is good. The developing focus on strengthening literacy skills helps them make good progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress due to the well-directed support from teaching assistants and targeted support from class teachers. More able students are extended and challenged and also achieve well. Year 7 students develop a good range of map skills and have a secure understanding of settlement patterns and location factors. Year 8 students know how river drainage basins function and make good use of technical vocabulary. Year 9 students are able to describe and explain patterns in global development and make good use of ICT to analyse development data for individual countries. The development of students' fieldwork skills and techniques is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 due to the lack of field

study opportunities. Students in Years 10 and 11 had a below average starting point in geographical understanding, but are making good progress from this. Students in Years 10 and 11 show increasing confidence in their understanding of geographical patterns and processes. They make good progress in skills of data interpretation. Students in Year 10 are encouraged to discuss issues and this helps them understand the subject.

Teaching and learning

102. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and include a good range of activities and resources. As a result students display good attitudes to their studies. Students work co-operatively and work well in groups. Lessons are purposeful and clear learning objectives are met. Students are challenged to think for themselves and good provision is made to extend the most able. Teachers deliver effective lesson starter activities based on the use of interactive whiteboard technologies and this motivates students. ICT is used very well for whole-class demonstrations enabling students to grasp new geographical ideas and concepts. Students also have very good opportunities to use computers in geography lessons and to support their independent work out of lessons. Teachers mark and grade students' work frequently. However, students are often unclear about how they might improve their work and the steps they need to take to meet their target grades.

Leadership and management

103. The leadership of geography from the humanities faculty is very good and the management of the geography department is good. The head of humanities provides very good strategic planning. An accurate and detailed evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the department has taken place and an appropriate development plan has been constructed. Good use has been made of continuing professional development opportunities to strengthen the subject team. The provision of resources for geography is very good and standard of accommodation is excellent.

Religious education

The provision for religious education is **good**.

	Years 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and in the full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, but the standard of attainment in the GCSE short course remains considerably below the national average.
- The scheme of work is very detailed, imaginative and well planned, with good cross-curricular connections.
- Students' progress is very well tracked; all are made aware of their learning targets and are given plenty of help to reach them.
- The subject is well taught and is very well led and managed.

- A few students have problems sustaining their concentration for a one-hour session, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Examination results

104. The 2004 results for the GCSE short course in religious education were well below the national average. The school explains this as being due to the poor experience that these students had in the past and the very negative attitudes resulting from this. A number of students did not respond well to the school's implementation of national requirements for all students to continue with the study of religious education to the end of Year 11.

Standards and achievement

105. Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, but only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 as a result of past underachievement. In most cases, students enter Year 7 with relatively low levels of knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers work hard to develop their capabilities using a very well designed scheme of work that is supported by imaginative teaching approaches and a skilful use of new technology. Students' achievement is accurately and frequently recorded and records reveal good progress from Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, students reach a standard that is in line with the expected outcomes of the Tameside Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Currently, students in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress in the full GCSE course and satisfactory progress in the GCSE short course from their starting points at the beginning of Year 10. The 2004 results for the GCSE short course were considerably below the national average. Current assessment information indicates that approximately 25 per cent of Year 11 students who take the short course and 60 per cent of those who take the full course are working to GCSE grade C standard or above. The higher predictions for the full course reflect those students who have an interest or an aptitude for the subject and who have chosen to do more than the minimum requirement. The predicted short course results for 2005, if achieved, would still be below the national average, but would represent a considerable improvement on those of 2004. A considerable number of students continue to be restricted in their attainment in religious education because of weak literacy skills. Inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of the school's own evaluations and predictions.

Teaching and learning

106. The overall quality of teaching is good. There are examples of inspired and well-organised teaching that motivates students to succeed. Lessons are prepared extremely thoroughly with careful attention to: defining objectives; building on prior learning; individual or group tasks and a summary of what has been achieved. The electronic whiteboards fitted in each classroom are used very effectively to convey information and to display work done by students on laptop computers. Teachers are well informed and enthusiastic. They know their students well and often give well-targeted personalised support. Students' work is marked well, with constructive comments that give judgements on how well they are doing and what could be improved. In many cases, the use of new technology and the library enable students to gain access to valuable sources of information on topics being followed, such as the life of Gandhi or Martin Luther King. However, there are a few occasions, especially in classes where the students are of middle or lower ability, where teachers organise learning activities to such an extent that students become too reliant on following instructions or using only the resources and ideas provided for them.

107. Students' attitudes to learning are good. In most cases they are very attentive and keen to learn and teachers captivate their interest and enthusiasm well. Most can study independently

for a sustained period and can gather information from the Internet or present their work on a *PowerPoint* presentation. A small amount of low level disruption was seen in two lessons where lower attaining students lost concentration when dealing with relatively abstract issues such as euthanasia.

Leadership and management

108. Both the leadership and management of the subject are very good. A great deal has been done to move forward a subject that was judged by the school as an area of weakness in the past and the results of the very good leadership and management are starting to be seen in the standards achieved. The subject leader has undertaken the nationally accredited 'Leading from the Middle' course and is very well trained and effective. She has produced a detailed scheme of work backed up with lesson plans and resource sheets for every lesson in every year group. This is accompanied by a very efficient system of logging students' attainment and setting future targets. The subject team includes another specialist religious education teacher and three additional people who teach the subject for a few periods each week in Years 7 and 8. These teachers benefit hugely from the extensive range of resources built up by the subject leader. This helps to ensure that all students have access to comparably good learning opportunities regardless of who teaches them.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The school teaches courses in all five strands of the subject: resistant materials, textiles, food, systems and controls, and graphical communication. The courses in systems and controls and graphics were sampled through the scrutiny of work. Provision in systems and controls is satisfactory when taught as part of another strand. Graphics is well taught and this leads to students' good achievement.

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong leadership has a clear vision for improvement and how to manage change effectively.
- Accurate assessment of results and academic monitoring of students are very good.
- Excellent accommodation and resources contribute significantly to raising standards.
- Teaching and learning that using ICT raises standards for all students.
- Students' literacy skills are not developed sufficiently and this limits the quality of their written evaluations.

Commentary

Examination results

109. Examination results were well below average in 2004. All students that were entered gained a GCSE grade but few students gained A*-C grades.

Standards and achievement

110. Standards in the current Year 9 are below average. This tallies with the results of the teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below average, and for a significant number it is well below average. It has been well below average in the past. Students have had mixed exposure to and experience of technological processes previously. The good progress made in Years 7 to 9 is due to the challenging tasks set by teachers and their expectations that standards will rise. The inclusive approach of the department enables all students to experience each strand of the subject in a rotational system of four ten-week modules each year. All students experience the design process and how it can be adapted to the demands of the different strands. They acquire technical skills with a variety of tools and equipment. There are clear links with the commercial world. The most able students are helped to make good progress by opportunities to learn through more challenging work. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
111. Students on the GCSE food and textile courses are reaching standards that are below average. However, this represents good progress for the students on the course in relation to their capabilities and their previous achievements. This is because students develop an effective understanding of a working method that starts with researching design briefs. Students select the best alternatives to make. Then they evaluate their final outcomes. Students in Year 10 who study resistant materials, at either GCSE or at vocational level, make good progress. This is because much of their learning uses computers on which they design artefacts that are manufactured on electronically-controlled machines. However, their written evaluations are not always as good as their understanding of their work, as a result of weaknesses in literacy. Boys achieve as well as girls on all the courses inspected.

Teaching and learning

112. Teaching and learning are good. They are very good on the resistant materials course, but student achievement is only good as a result of their limited skills in literacy and numeracy. In the good lessons observed varied tasks are explained in ways that students understand and this allows them to learn in clearly defined incremental steps. The structure of these lessons responds well to the needs of students with different learning styles. When teaching is only satisfactory, it is either because monitoring of the progress of all students' work is insufficient or that class management lacks sufficient firmness. All teachers know their students well. Relationships are respectful and lead to effective support for individual learning. All students get help or advice that is based on teachers' good subject knowledge. There are insufficient means available for teachers to improve sentence construction in students' written evaluations. Nor are sufficient procedures in place to encourage students to write about the characteristics of their own, or other people's, good designs.
113. Students respond well to the teachers' high expectations and consequently, for the large majority, attitudes are positive. Students benefit greatly from the dedicated technical and learning support they receive. Students enjoy working in the large, light and airy workshops. They have very good opportunities to learn using modern equipment and up-to-date resources. Assessment of design outcomes is thorough and rigorous. All students have their progress checked by teachers regularly updating their records. Students are set challenging targets. However, in lessons, some students do not know the National Curriculum levels that they have reached, or those that they are working towards.

Leadership and management

114. The department is very well led and managed. The experienced head of subject has created a very strong team by his approach to the individuals in it. The head of department knows the strengths and weaknesses of the department and how best to build on the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. This clear view has led to specific aims for progress for the department in the future. The management of the department is very good. All aspects of the department's work are monitored carefully and when concerns arise remedial action is taken. The development plan shows clearly the way that it intends to improve in the future. The management of improvement of students' literacy skills requires further attention.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and are close to the national average at GCSE. However, students' written evaluations are not as strong as the rest of their work.
- A well-planned scheme of work and carefully structured lessons lead to students learning well.
- Teachers' high level of demand leads to students achieving well.
- The assessment and academic monitoring of students are very good.

Commentary

Examination results

115. GCSE results in 2004 were in line with the national average and students typically did better in art than in most of their other subjects, but few attained the very highest grades. The course is more popular with girls, who have done better than boys in the most recent examinations.

Standards and achievement

116. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with the national average which means that students' achievement is good when their attainment on entry in Year 7 is taken into account. The good progress made in Years 7 to 9 is due to learning that builds cumulatively on previous work. All students reach a satisfactory technical standard of handling the formal elements of art when painting, drawing and sculpting. They also have a satisfactory knowledge of the work of artists and sound understanding of how other cultures use imagery for different purposes. The most able students are helped to make good progress by the opportunities to learn through independent enquiry both in lunchtime clubs and at home.

117. Students on the GCSE course are achieving standards that are average and are making very good progress from their starting point. This is because students develop very effective understanding of a working method that starts with researching topics in sketchbooks. Students then select the best ideas and through a careful process of refinement produce coursework that satisfies examination requirements well. However, students' written evaluations of their intentions and outcomes have only rudimentary sentence construction and do not deal with the conceptual elements of art sufficiently. All students are helped to achieve the standards they do by the extremely rich sets of examples that line the walls in all the studios.

Teaching and learning

118. Teaching and learning are good. Both are very good on the GCSE course which explains why standards and achievement are as they are. In the lessons observed varied and ambitious tasks were explained in ways that students understood and this allowed them to learn in clearly defined incremental steps. When teaching is less than good it is because class management lacks sufficient firmness and teachers are having to deal with disruptive students sent to them from other classes. All teachers know their students well and support them well with individual attention, within the constraints of the high number of students in Year 9 groups. All students get help or advice that is based on teachers' very good subject knowledge and their expertise in teaching it. Students respond well to the teachers' high expectations and attitudes are usually positive. Students enjoy visits to art galleries and tuition from artists in

residence. Their subsequent outcomes show that they have learnt how to evaluate the work of artists and then use these influences effectively. Opportunities to use computers for teaching and learning are insufficient. Assessment is thorough and rigorous. All students have their progress checked by teachers who regularly updated records. They are set challenging targets. In Year 11 the work of all students is reviewed to indicate how well they are doing. The teacher and student agree ways of pursuing further improvement.

Leadership and management

119. The department is well led and managed. The experienced head of subject has created a good team. The views of all teachers are sought and valued, particularly when the departmental self-evaluation takes place or when the moderation of work is completed. Consequently, the subject leader has an accurate picture of what needs to be done to move the department forward in the future. The management of the department is good. The monitoring of standards, the curriculum and the recent refinement of assessment procedures are all good. The way that the department intends to improve is expressed clearly in the development plan.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses are

- Accommodation and resources support learning well.
- There is excellent use of ICT for recording students' work and assessment.
- There are too few opportunities for singing.
- Links with the local community are strong.

Commentary

Examination results

120. A small number of students were entered for GCSE in 2004. Their results were well below average, but their starting points were also very low.

Standards and achievement

121. In 2004, according to the teacher assessment of students' attainment in the National Curriculum for music, standards were below the national average. However, the criteria were applied too severely. By the end of Year 9, students' composing and improvising skills are broadly average and they can use technical vocabulary well to describe the music they hear. Students show awareness of their part within an ensemble when working in pairs or performing as a whole class but otherwise performing and singing skills are weak. They achieve well when tasks set are appropriately challenging; however, the workbooks used in Years 7 to 9 do not sufficiently support lower attainers and there is no clear progression through the

booklets, so that students cannot easily see what they have to do next in order to develop.

122. Those few students who continue with the subject in GCSE classes have started from a low base, but their progress is good. In GCSE classes, students use ICT to notate complex compositions using a variety of orchestra textures and demonstrate that they understand and can use standard compositional techniques to develop and extend their ideas

Teaching and learning

123. All class teaching is undertaken by a specialist music teacher with individual teaching being supported by visiting teachers. Teaching takes place in very high quality accommodation with very good resources to support learning. Teaching includes a wide variety of tasks that engage students, both challenging and reinforcing what is already known. Relationships are good, resulting in a calm atmosphere that supports learning. Well-established classroom routines ensure that students remain focused even in practical lessons. Students work well together and support each other in their learning. However, in Years 7 to 9 some lower attaining students are not able to access a whole-class task such as playing the recorder where they have to overcome co-ordination problems as well as playing the correct notes. Likewise higher attainers cannot always develop fast enough as they are not routinely offered tasks to extend their skills. Students receive individual support in practical lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where their different needs are fully recognised. The most able students are provided with opportunities whereby they can achieve their full potential beyond lessons; for example, a Year 11 pupil was able to work on a music project at Lancaster University.

124. Good use is made of ICT to demonstrate to students the level at which they are working in relation to the rest of the group and their target grade for the end of the key stage. Each component of the course is assessed in all attainment targets. At GCSE level work is carefully marked with very detailed comments, and comprehensive feedback is given as to how work can be developed in order to access higher marks. Excellent use is being made of ICT to record students' work and to record assessments over time. Marking is also detailed and constructive in Years 7 to 9, but insufficiently focused on the National Curriculum level descriptors.

Leadership and management

125. The leadership and management of the subject are both satisfactory. Good use is made of outside agencies to enrich the experience of students and to support students with special educational needs in some classes. Curriculum time for the delivery of GCSE is below average although this is in some way redressed by the provision of individual instrumental lessons funded by the school. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 include emphasis on music from other cultures and offer the opportunities to reflect on the emotional impact of the music and to learn about its place within the culture. However, insufficient opportunities are offered to develop singing skills and the ability to read music notation. Instrumental tuition and a small range of extra-curricular activities offer opportunity for developing performing skills; however, opportunities are not currently being offered for singers to be involved in music making. Links with the local community are good with school ensembles being fully involved in providing music for special occasions and to raise funds for charity. This results in raising the profile of the school within the community.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**. There is a marked difference between the unsatisfactory provision for boy's physical education and the very good provision for girls' physical education.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average

Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of girls' physical education is very good.
- The teaching of boys' physical education is unsatisfactory.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities. School teams are successful.
- The curriculum allocates different amounts of time for boys and girls in some activities. Dance is not available for boys. Outdoor and adventurous activities are not available for girls in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

126. There has been no examination in physical education in previous years. The present Year 11 is the first cohort of the new school studying the GCSE course.

Standards and achievement

127. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, with boys' standards significantly lower than girls' standards. Students enter the school in Year 7 with a low level of skill and experiences. All students understand the need for a warm-up prior to an activity. In gymnastics, girls in Year 7 are unable to link movements into a sequence with flow. They do not perform a range of rolls and balances, although they know that body tension is important to maintain a balance. However, they make rapid progress as a result of carefully structured teaching. In Year 8, boys are unable to pass a ball in rugby with control and accuracy and their understanding of the game is below average. They have not achieved well enough as teaching does not show them how to improve. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average except in Year 10 where students studying the GCSE course demonstrate above average standards in their theory work. Their knowledge and understanding of exercise, the cardiovascular system and the difference between aerobic and anaerobic respiration are very good. They understand why lactic acid is produced as a result of fatigue. In Year 11 students lack interest in their GCSE work and do not progress as well as they should. The immature attitudes of some students result in underachievement on the course.

Teaching and learning

128. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, but the quality of teaching is not consistent across the department. The teaching of most boys' physical education is unsatisfactory. The teaching of girls' physical education is very good.

129. Good and very good teaching takes place when there is good planning and objectives are shared with students. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and, where they are enthusiastic, good relationships with students exist. Where teacher expectations are high, this creates a good ethos for learning and students make very good progress. In a lesson where ICT was linked with the effect of the heart rate in exercise, students demonstrated interest and their capability with computers as a result of very good teaching. Teachers make good use of *PowerPoint* to enhance their presentation in lessons. Despite the teachers' best efforts, some students show a lack of interest in

dance which restricts their learning on the GCSE course. In theory lessons, very good teaching leads to good progress by Year 10 students and they achieve well, but weaknesses in basic literacy skills mean that they do not do even better. Students with a special educational need are integrated into lessons and although there is no specific planning for these students, they make good progress

130. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by work that is not pitched at the right level for the different abilities within the class so that some students are bored and not gainfully employed, whilst others are frustrated. Boys with poor attitudes to their work are not challenged sufficiently by the teacher. Poor class management of discipline and a lack of activity impact on students' learning and they do not make the progress expected. Teachers' expectations for these boys' behaviour are low and they respond accordingly. Theory lessons are dominated by worksheets and this restricts any extended writing. In written work, there is no evidence of calculations, such as heart rate, or the use of graphs to interpret data.
131. Assessment is unsatisfactory as it is very varied. At best, it is carefully linked to National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. Marking of work at GCSE varies between teachers. Grades are given to some students but not others and this is a difficulty for these students as they are not aware of the progress they are making in line with the predicted grades they may have been given. Few comments are made for these students to improve their work.

Leadership and management

132. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. There is a head of department for both boys' and girls' physical education, but there is limited evidence of co-operation between them. There is duplication of documentation and a different curriculum plan for boys and girls. The amount of time devoted to some activities is different for boys and girls. There is no dance offered to boys in Years 7 to 9. Outdoor and adventurous activities are not offered to girls in Years 7 to 9. Schemes of work and general administration is of a much better quality for girls' physical education. The department is committed to a wide range of extra-curricular activities for students. School teams are successful in badminton, football and particularly netball. Some students have been successful in a range of sports especially football, where there are links with Premiership clubs, such as Manchester City. All teachers are specialists and there is good support from a departmental assistant both within classes and for administration of the department. Accommodation is excellent and is complemented by very good outdoor facilities. The all-weather AstroTurf and the indoor facilities are used extensively by the community.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

This was not a focus for the inspection. GNVQ ICT was inspected and the judgements about this are included within the ICT report. Two lessons were sampled in business and communication and two lessons were sampled from the school's own vocational programme. These lessons and other elements of vocational provision are reported on within the section on work-related learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

All students have a timetabled lesson once a fortnight covering personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Other aspects of PSHE and citizenship are covered

within tutorial time and through other subject areas. The distribution of PSHE/citizenship lessons within the two-week timetable meant that only a very small sample of lessons could be seen during the week of the inspection. The arrangements for PSHE (including sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drug misuse) are satisfactory. All requisite aspects are taught, but the limited time made available for this work inevitably means that some aspects are not given prominence.

Citizenship

The very small sample of lessons and the lack of work specifically identified as contributing to the subject means that it is not possible to reach an overall judgement about provision in citizenship education which includes standards, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship is carefully planned to meet National Curriculum requirements across the school and there are good examples of citizenship activities in all year groups.
- Insufficient time and weight are allocated to citizenship to provide the proper depth of coverage of all the National Curriculum requirements.
- Teachers do not, as a matter of course, identify where topics are contributing to citizenship and student awareness of the subject is low.
- Arrangements for assessing students' work in citizenship and reporting on this to parents are not fully in place.
- The school has a strong record of encouraging participation and taking responsible action.
- Very good programmes of enrichment and extra-curricular activity with very high levels of participation enable students to become involved in community activity.

Commentary

133. The school has completed a thoughtful analysis of how different subjects can contribute to citizenship. Using this analysis as a starting point, planning has taken place to cover all aspects of the citizenship curriculum through different subjects, a dedicated lesson, tutorial time and wider activities. However, much of this work is not explicitly described as citizenship and students are not always aware that they are undertaking citizenship activity. This low profile is reflected in the lack of proper arrangements for assessing standards in citizenship and reporting these to parents. There are limited opportunities for students to develop the strand of citizenship concerned with enquiry and communication.

134. The school provides many opportunities for students to participate in the running of the school. Regular student surveys are appreciated by the students and they are seen as a real way of influencing school policies. Most, but not all, tutorial sessions are used well and provide a well-planned opportunity to consider the 'theme of the week' and discuss local, national and international developments in a structured way. The school council plays a useful part in enabling students' voices to be heard. Students appreciate the budget they are given to spend and reflect sensibly on how to share the money.

135. The school is aware that the current citizenship programme has deficiencies and is already considering ways in which this can be addressed so that the profile of the subject is raised and all requirements, particularly for assessment and reporting, are fully met.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); Not Applicable (8).