

INSPECTION REPORT

Bordesley Green Girls' School
Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique Reference Number: 103493

Inspection Number: 183951

Headteacher: Clare Considine

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707956

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Female
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Zafar Iqbal
Date of previous inspection:	January 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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		Teaching
Saleem Hussain, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Natalie Moss	English	Leadership and management
	Equality of opportunity	
Geoffrey Hunter	Mathematics	The efficiency of the school
Colin Lower	Science	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Judith Tolley	Modern foreign languages	Curriculum and assessment
Tony Fiddian-Green	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Stuart Johnson	Music	
Gillian Salter-Smith	Physical education	
Malcolm McGregor	Art	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Leadership and management is strong and excellently placed to improve the school further.
- The pupils make good academic progress supported by close monitoring of their work.
- It raises the standards of pupils' literacy.
- Fosters the good use of computers by pupils across a wide range of subjects.
- It gives responsible jobs to pupils which contribute to their excellent social development.
- The support and guidance provided to pupils is very good.
- Pupils' careers education and related guidance is excellent.
- The partnership with parents and the local and wider community is very good.
- The daily act of worship and reflection is very good.
- It is efficiently managed and its finances are well controlled.

Where the school has weaknesses

- The accommodation available for physical education, science, music, art and design and technology is unsatisfactory and, in some aspects, poor.

There are far more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. A wide range of information is used to identify pupils' learning needs and to track their progress. Pupils are now grouped more appropriately, often by ability, to help them learn better. Nearly all teachers now use a variety of teaching methods and their expectations of pupils work has risen. Teaching and learning styles have improved and teaching throughout the school is now much better and more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. Heads of curriculum areas now enjoy more time for planning with their departments and their work is reviewed and supported more effectively by senior staff. A regular review of the curriculum is now made and more time has been given to teaching science, physical education and art at Key Stage 3. A General National Vocational Qualification has been provided at Key Stage 4 and a support course provided for those pupils likely to get lower grade GCSE's. Pupil reports are now better and supported by pupils' progress checks. The 'Tree of Achievement' recognises pupils' success at Key Stage 3. A marking policy is now in place and teachers are beginning to use it. A Determination for a broadly Islamic Act of Collective Worship has been obtained in 1999 and worship is very well observed through the daily broadcasts. School policies have been largely brought up to date. Over the last two years, work associated with the University of the First Age has contributed to pupils' learning, as has attendance at summer literacy and numeracy schools. Much work has been done with parents and community leaders about the importance of good attendance for their daughters' success. Pupils' use of the spoken and written word has been practised through such initiatives as the Language for Learning lessons and Literacy Hour. In discussions with younger pupils and within broadcast assemblies older girls speak excellently. Increased use has been made of computers, with some very good use of the Internet for research, for example, in geography. The use of clusters of computers and the personal development of pupils have both improved with the use of 'Microtechs' and 'Microtech Prefects'. Financial monitoring and accountability has improved from head of curriculum area level to governor level. Extra-curricular provision has improved greatly.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	
			<i>well above average</i> A B C D E
Key Stage 3 test	E	C	
GCSE examinations	C	A	

At Key Stage 3, English test results are the highest, then science, then those in mathematics. To some extent this reflects the very low starting points of pupils – their mathematical attainment on entry to the school is much weaker than their attainment in English. The trend, over three years, is showing an improvement, particularly so in English and science. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A*-G grades is above the national average. The proportion gaining 5 A*-C grades is below the national average though this proportion shows significant improvement in 1999. Mathematics adds much value to pupils' attainment in Key Stage 4 and pupils are much closer to national average results than in English or science. Pupils' attainment in information technology at both key stages is average and they use computers within a wider range of subjects than in many schools. Attainment in religious education is above expectations. Amongst the other subjects, Urdu, history, art, French, Bengali and information technology and business studies are comparatively the strongest. Pupils' attainment in the resistant material element of design and technology is well below expectations.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, art, geography, history, information technology, religious education	
Years 10-11	Good	English, art, geography, history, information technology, religious education, drama, business education	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better, only 3% is unsatisfactory. Nearly three quarters is good or better and almost one quarter very good or better. Teaching is a little better at Key Stage 4 with a higher proportion of very good lessons and no unsatisfactory ones.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Almost all pupils behave very well in lessons. A small number drop litter and act less sensibly at lunchtimes.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils are punctual to lessons
Ethos*	Very good. Pupils are well motivated to succeed and relationships between staff and pupils are positive.
Leadership and management	Very good. Headteacher is strong and effective and is ably supported by the deputy head and senior managers. The chair of governors works closely with the head and the community and is supported by a very good governing body.
Curriculum	Good. It is well balanced. Both pupils' work in primary schools and their future education and careers are well considered. Extra- curricular provision is good overall but there are few sporting activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good. Their progress is the same as for other pupils.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good overall. Social development is excellent. The level and quality of responsibilities for older girls is outstanding.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Unsatisfactory because of accommodation issues. Staffing and resources satisfactory. Staff development good.
Value for money	Good

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Standards of work •Attitudes and values of pupils •Behaviour of pupils •Information and communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of details about pupils' progress

Thank you for the returned questionnaires. Very small numbers of parents expressed any dissatisfaction. The inspection team found all reported aspects of the school, except accommodation, at least satisfactory, most at least good and many very good. The access that parents have to the headteacher and to the chair of governors is much better than in most schools. The inspection team members enjoyed their visit and wish the girls every success in their future lives.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

- ◆ To help pupils' standards of work to rise further and to improve the quality of education they enjoy the school should raise the standard of accommodation in the following ways:
- Physical education: improving the provision within the gym; improving the condition and provision of the outside yard; providing changing and showering rooms; resolving the health and safety issues identified during the inspection.
(Paragraphs: 217, 218, 220, 221)
- Science: providing an additional laboratory; refurbishing the existing laboratories to an approved standard; providing new storage space for chemicals and other stocks that comply with health and safety regulations and guidelines. (Paragraph: 143)
- Design and technology: immediately resolving the health and safety issues identified during the inspection; re-arranging the layout of the workshop to enable both whole class and individual pupils' work to be done better; and, in the medium term, refurbishing the workshop along lines established for good practice and also providing additional storage space for pupils' work. (Paragraph: 150)
- Art: seeking more space to allow for more pupils and their work. (Paragraphs: 160, 163)
- Music: providing more space for practice and instrumental teaching so that group work can proceed without disturbance. (Paragraph: 178)

In addition to the key issue above, the following additional smaller weaknesses should be considered for inclusion within the action plan:

- Improving the range, nature and standards of the work within the resistant material aspect of design and technology. (Paragraphs: 145, 147)
- Improving the range, quality, and quantity of resources for learning available within some curriculum areas. (Paragraphs: 103, 151, 163, 206)
- Re-considering the use of double lessons within subjects such as modern foreign languages and the effect of the two-week time-table on some subjects, for example, physical education. (Paragraphs: 212, 216)
- Improving the rigour and consistency of teachers' written advice on improving work and marks in pupils' books. (Paragraphs: 118, 139, 149, 183)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Bordesley Green Girls' School is a popular, oversubscribed school. With 600 on roll it is smaller than average and almost all the girls are of Pakistani heritage and live locally. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, 92%, is very high and the 61% entitled to free school meals is well above average. Pupils identified as having special educational needs form 21% of the school and this is above average, though the proportion with statements of special educational need, 0.7%, is below.

2. The attainment of the girls on entry to the school has been well below the national average until very recently, essentially 1998-99, where an improvement can be seen, especially in English. This improvement is considered by the school to be as a result of very good work in local primaries on raising literacy standards.

3. The main aims of the school are encapsulated within the school motto "Bringing Girls Greater Success". Steadily rising standards of work at both key stages and increasing numbers of girls pursuing substantial careers and higher education indicate this aim is being met. Specific targets set for girls' attainment, by the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, are on track to be achieved and similar targets for GCSE have been met a year early.

4. Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	0	121	121

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys			
	Girls	67	32	37
	Total	67	32	37
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (42)	26 (33)	31 (25)
	National	65 (57)	59 (60)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (11)	11 (11)	12 (9)
	National	36 (23)	36 (37)	27 (28)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys			
	Girls	45	40	53
	Total	45	40	53
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	37 (44)	33 (35)	45 (37)
	National	62 (60)	64 (77)	62 (53)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	5 (9)	12 (5)	21 (16)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)

1

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	0	112	112

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys			
	Girls	32	97	
	Total	32	97	
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	29 (35)	93 (90)	99 (97)
	National	46 (45)	87 (86)	93 (92)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.8
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.2
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	23
Satisfactory or better	97
Less than satisfactory	3

²

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

4. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

4. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

4. Attainment and progress

5.The attainment of pupils on entry to the school was well below national averages in the core areas of English, mathematics and science until 1998. From then on significant improvement is indicated, especially in English and science, though combined average scores in National Curriculum tests remain below average. Pupils in the current Year 8, on entry to this school, were in line with national averages for English, below in science and well below in mathematics. Older pupils were, on average, lower in attainment than this and mathematics was also their weakest area. In 1999 the current Year 7 pupils have a standard of attainment, from Key Stage 2 tests, in line with national averages in English and mathematics, but they remain well below in science. However, the proportion of pupils that read at an appropriate level when they enter the school is consistently well below that expected and the trend is difficult to establish though it is more upwards than otherwise.

6.In 1998 the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, across the three core subjects, was well below the national average but broadly in line with that of pupils from similar schools. Looking in more detail, English attainment was well above that of similar schools, science broadly in-line and mathematics well below. This hierarchy reflects, to some extent, the point from which pupils started. In 1999 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected National Curriculum level in English dipped but within mathematics and science it improved significantly. It is not possible to compare these figures with national results at this moment

7.In 1998 the attainment of pupils, at the end of Key Stage 4, in GCSE examinations, was well below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades but above the national average for 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G. The average total GCSE point score per pupil was in-line with national averages. Compared with schools with a similar social context all comparisons are well above average. These comparisons have been made with all state schools, average results in girls' schools are generally higher. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining the higher, A*-C grades, rose significantly from 29% to 36%, but it is not possible to compare this with national results at this moment. The trend in the proportion of A*-C grades over the last three years is broadly stable from a very significant rise in 1997. The average points scores attained have shown a steady rise over five years and were above the average Birmingham figure in 1997 and 1998. School targets reflect this rising trend and they are generally being met early.

8.There is no doubt that the school is adding significant value to pupils' attainment. Looking at the proportions, of the same pupils reaching their expected National Curriculum levels on entry and at the end of Year 9 in 1999, science added the most value and English and mathematics were similar to each other. At Key Stage 4 mathematics, GCSE results were closer to national averages than science which were closer than those for English.

9.Bearing in mind the mixture of full and short GCSE's and the different groups of pupils that took them, examination results that stand out positively are English literature, history, combined business education and information technology and Urdu for the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C and A*-G grades. In addition, physical education, information technology and religious education for both pupil grades and the proportion of pupils who gain accreditation within them. Design and technology overall is relatively low compared with other subjects but when the results are unpicked, the textiles and food options do quite well and it is the resistant materials' option that is well below average, especially in 1998.

10. Inspection evidence, observing pupils at work, looking at work they have done and talking to them about it, confirms the position indicated by the assessment evidence. Pupils' attainment in English is below national averages at the end of both key stages, but they are making good progress within them. Their attainment in mathematics is well below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4. Their progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and evidence indicates this progress is now beginning to accelerate. In science, pupils' attainment is below average at both key stages, with satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4.

11. In modern foreign languages pupils' attainment is below national expectations at both key stages and they make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Design and technology is a more complicated picture; overall pupils' attainment is below average at both key stages and their progress is just satisfactory. However, in food and textiles technology pupils' attainment is much closer to average and sometimes exceeds it in textiles. Their progress in these areas is good. In resistant materials technology attainment is below average and sometimes well below and pupils' progress within both key stages is unsatisfactory.

12. In information technology attainment is in line with the national average at both key stages and progress is consistently good.

13. In both geography and history attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national averages and pupils' progress is good. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in geography is below average and progress good; in history average and good. This difference in attainment has been maintained for some years and reflects, to some extent, the differences in the pupils who opt for each subject.

14. Pupils' attainment in art is below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and they make satisfactory progress and their attainment meets national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 with good progress.

15. In physical education pupils' attainment is average at both key stages and they make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4, largely due to almost all pupils following a short course GCSE.

16. Standards in religious education are average at Key Stage 3 and above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and very good progress in Key Stage 4.

17. In music, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and attain average standards. The course in Key Stage 4 is new and only operates in Year 10 so standards overall are less than average by the end of Key Stage 4 and there is insufficient evidence to judge progress. Standards in drama are average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average by the end of Key Stage 4 with progress consistently good.

18. Pupils only follow business education in Key Stage 4. In 1998 a combined business and information technology course was more successful than most other subjects in the school and standards were well above average for this course. Standards improved dramatically in 1999 and came close to national averages for any business course. A General National Vocational Qualification in business education started for Year 10 pupils in September 1999. Standards are at least in line with the national average. The progress that pupils make in business education is very good.

18. **Literacy**

19. There are, in most subjects, good examples of writing for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. There are good examples of lengthy writing in English, humanities, art, music, information technology and science subjects. Recording and reporting skills are often well developed. In all key stages and all subjects written work is characterised by the reinforcement of spelling, sentence structure and grammar. At Key Stage 4 many pupils can read for research and gist and summarise points well. Presentation is good throughout both key stages.

20. Speaking and listening skills are carefully nurtured at both key stages, so that many pupils learn to argue and debate well. There are examples across all subjects of pupils listening to and engaging in technical language when in class situations, such as mathematics, English, science and art. Pupils learn to express their ideas thoughtfully, and acquire a widening vocabulary. The school stresses these skills and is successful in attaining good progress in them.

21. Reading in lessons is usually satisfactory, but some pupils read aloud with little expression. Pupils read well for comprehension and are able, by the end of Key Stage 4, to note and understand different styles employed for different purposes.

22. The degree of literacy encouraged and promoted in the school has a very significant beneficial impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

22. **Numeracy**

23. Pupils demonstrate competent numerical skills across the curriculum. They make effective use of calculators and computers where required. Their ability with mental arithmetic is growing increasingly effective as the cumulative impact of the recently introduced emphasis on mental skills in mathematics lessons takes effect. Good graph drawing and interpretation is evident in geography at both key stages. Year 9 pupils demonstrate effective skills with calculator and computer when calculating the energy of a crisp in science lessons. 'Success Maker' independent learning software is being used appropriately by the mathematics department to help raise pupils' standards of numeracy as well as mathematics. The whole school numeracy policy is still developing and a coherent approach to the teaching of number is not achieved in all subject areas for all pupils, especially those with special educational needs.

23. **Pupils with special educational needs**

24. Pupils, identified as having special educational needs, make the same progress as other pupils; satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. As well as appropriate work within lessons, pupils benefit from in-class support, for example in art; paired reading and reading club. Reading tests show good progress in this aspect of their skills and knowledge. Considering that there is a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, but that A*-G GCSE passes are above average for all schools and in line for girls' schools, then it can be said that pupils with special educational needs attain well at this level. Individual Education Plans are very effective in supporting pupils to make progress.

24. **Pupils with English as an additional language**

25. Overall progress is good. The school makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language at stages 2, 3 and 4 in the Code of Practice. The Literacy Hour for Year 7 pupils and the Language for Learning programme in Key Stage 3 make a valuable contribution to this and are effective in improving pupils' language skills. In addition to this, pupils are supported well in lessons. The Language for Learning programme focuses on academic texts taken from actual lessons so that pupils are effectively supported in reading and writing skills directly linked to their experience in lessons. Displays around the school focus on language use and are helpful in raising pupils' standards in English.

26. Provision for the very small numbers of older pupils joining the school with little or no English, however, is less effective. A more detailed and focussed Individual Education Plan and scheme

of work is required for these pupils.

26.
development

Attitudes, behaviour and personal

27. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are as strong and as positive as at the last inspection. Almost all pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They co-operate well with teachers, show high levels of interest in their work and apply themselves well to tasks. Pupils are keen to answer questions and to participate in their lessons. Good examples of this were seen in science where Year 8 pupils were discussing the effects of exercise on the human heart and lungs. Most pupils listen well, concentrate for sustained periods and show a high degree of self-motivation.

28. Behaviour is generally good. The school is a friendly and orderly community. Pupils behave consistently well in classrooms and this good behaviour impacts positively on pupils' progress in their learning. However, behaviour in the corridors as pupils move around the school and at lunchtimes, is not as good. There are some minor lapses in behaviour at these times. Pupils show high levels of courtesy and respect for staff and visiting adults. They generally respond well to the high expectations set by staff. Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively by teachers and support staff. Sanctions are fairly but firmly applied. The school uses exclusion as a last resort, and there have been no exclusions in the last two academic years.

29. Relationships within the school are good. Pupils relate well to each other, showing respect for others' feelings, values and contributions in lessons. Inspectors were impressed by the mature way in which prefects spoke to their peers in carrying out their duties. Equally, the good relationships are evident as pupils spoken to accept criticism positively. Relationships between staff and pupils are also good. There is mutual respect and pupils have the confidence in staff to talk and confide in them about their worries and concerns.

30. The pupils at this school are trustworthy and care for property. They respect their own property and that of others. They share equipment and resources sensibly, for example in the information technology areas.

31. Personal development is very good. Student Planners are generally well used by pupils to organise their homework and monitor their own progress. The school provides excellent opportunities for personal development. Responsibilities are highly developed and allow pupils to use their initiative in many situations. All pupils accept responsibility positively and are very pleased to act as prefects, peer mediators and reading partners for younger pupils. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and, for example, prefects hold regular meetings after school to discuss their work. The School Council includes representatives from all classes and allows them to convey their peers' views on many serious issues. The Council has made a number of very good suggestions to improve aspects of school life. Inspectors found that pupils express themselves very confidently in lessons and interviews. Inspectors were particularly impressed by pupils' contributions to collective worship every morning. The school promotes pupils' independence in several ways. For example, pupils are regularly set research assignments for homework. Information retrieval skills are taught in Key Stage 3 and pupils make very good use of the library and computer facilities to develop their skills. Pupils' independence in their learning has improved significantly since the last inspection.

32. Pupils are very considerate and thoughtful about vulnerable people in society. They regularly raise considerable sums of money for a variety of good causes including international aid. Such activities teach pupils that there are people in society less fortunate than themselves.

32.

Attendance

33. Attendance is satisfactory. The attendance rate for all Year groups is slightly above the

national benchmark of 90% and this represents a slight improvement from the last inspection. The school has improved its overall rate of attendance appreciably in each of the last two academic years. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. A considerable amount of authorised absence is due to extended holidays to the Indian sub-continent. The school has worked very hard since the last inspection to successfully reduce the level of these extended holidays and continues to strive to impress upon parents the importance of continuous education. The school has well established and rigorous procedures in place to follow up absences. The Educational Welfare Officer is appropriately involved when this is necessary.

34.Registers are taken promptly at the start of each session and are conscientiously and accurately completed. Registration periods are efficient. A very high proportion of parents report that their children enjoy attending the school. Punctuality is satisfactory and lessons run to the published timetable.

34.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

34.

Teaching

35.Teaching is good. Out of 162 lessons observed only 5, three percent, are judged to be unsatisfactory. Almost three-quarters, 72%, of lessons are good or better and almost one quarter, 23%, very good or better. The few unsatisfactory lessons are all in Key Stage 3 and there is a higher proportion of very good and excellent lessons at Key Stage 4 – 30% as compared with 19% in Key Stage 3.

36.Within the raft of criteria used, by inspectors, to judge teaching most subjects are good, some are very good at some of them, satisfactory at others. Teachers are generally strong in the knowledge and understanding of their subjects and in the way in which they manage the pupils in their classrooms. At Key Stage 4 teachers use a better variety of methods to help pupils learn and this is reflected in the higher proportion of better teaching grades at Key Stage 4 and contributes to the good progress pupils make in this stage. Day to day assessment, including support and talking to pupils about their work, is generally good. The consistency and quality of written marking is variable and teachers do not often give sufficient information for a pupil or parent to know how marks are allocated or how improvements can be made. Homework is set and often encourages research and enquiry but its frequency is inconsistent and pupils are unclear about the work-load they might have.

37.Support teachers, for pupils with English as an Additional Language and special educational needs, maintain very good liaison with subject teachers and, as a result, emphasis is put upon the key words and phrases in teachers' lessons to allow pupils to understand the subject curriculum successfully. Teachers are aware of difficulties encountered by these pupils and materials produced for the pupils' use are effectively adapted to make them more accessible to them.

38.In Key Stage 3 judgements about teaching are often good. Differences between subjects are stated below:

39.Teachers' knowledge and understanding is very good in religious education, modern foreign languages, science, geography, art and drama. It is satisfactory in mathematics and information technology, unsatisfactory in resistant materials technology

40. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory in history, information technology and physical education, unsatisfactory in resistant materials technology.

41. Teachers' planning is very good in geography, English, drama and mathematics. It is satisfactory in information technology, music and resistant materials technology.

42. The methods and organisation used by teachers in lessons are very good in art and drama and satisfactory in modern foreign languages, history and physical education.

43. The management of pupils, by teachers, is excellent in art, very good in religious education, history, information technology, English and drama. It is variable in resistant materials technology, from good to unsatisfactory.

44. The use of time and resources, by teachers, is very good in art, drama and food and textiles technology. It is satisfactory in history and physical education. Timing is good in resistant materials technology but the overall use of available resources is poor.

45. The use of assessment by teachers to help pupils and inform their future teaching is very good in drama and satisfactory in physical education, science and resistant materials technology.

46. The use made by teachers of pupils' homework, to extend what is learnt in school, is satisfactory in design technology, history, information technology, physical education and art.

47. In Key Stage 4 judgements about teaching are often good. Differences between subjects are stated below:

48. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is excellent in drama, very good in English, religious education, modern foreign languages, science, geography, art, textiles technology, food technology, business education and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in resistant materials technology.

49. Teachers' expectations are very good in religious education, business education and drama, unsatisfactory in resistant materials technology.

50. Teachers' planning is excellent in drama, very good in geography, English, drama, food technology, business education and mathematics.

51. The methods and organisation used by teachers in lessons are excellent in drama, very good in English, mathematics, art, and business education and satisfactory in modern foreign languages.

52. The management of pupils, by teachers, is excellent in art, drama and business education, very good in religious education, history, geography, information technology, and English. It is variable in resistant materials technology, from good to unsatisfactory.

53. The use of time and resources, by teachers, is very good in art, business education, Drama, geography and food and textiles technology. It is satisfactory in history. Timing is good in resistant materials technology but the overall use of available resources is poor.

54. The use of assessment by teachers to help pupils and inform their future teaching is very good in English and drama and satisfactory in physical education, science, geography and resistant materials technology.

55.The use made by teachers of pupils' homework, to extend what is learnt in school, is very good in drama and satisfactory in resistant materials technology and art.

56.One positive use of resources by many departments is the use of computers for research, presentation, calculation, control, modelling and collecting information. It is particularly strong in science, mathematics, geography, music, history, business education, textile technology and food technology. It is weak in art and in resistant materials technology.

56.

The curriculum and assessment

57.In both key stages the school offers pupils a broad and balanced curriculum, although all pupils do not receive their entitlement to design and technology in Key Stage 4. This is a conscious decision by the school, influenced by available staffing and accommodation. A development this autumn is the General National Vocational Qualification in business education targeted at girls of appropriate attainment and reflecting their aspirations when they leave school.

58.All pupils enjoy equal opportunities to study the curriculum offered. There are clear, effective systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs on entry to the school and they have access to the same range of subjects, activities and clubs enjoyed by other pupils. The school effectively addresses the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language through the Literacy Hour in Year 7, the Language for Learning provision in Key Stage 3 and through effective support in subject areas. As a result all pupils are enabled to do all subjects at Key Stage 3 and pursue an appropriate range at Key Stage 4. The school offers a course in expressive arts that includes dance, drama and music and a GNVQ intermediate course in business education, in addition to courses leading to GCSE. Information technology is delivered effectively both within discrete lessons and across the curriculum at both key stages. A much higher proportion of pupils gain accreditation in physical education, religious education and information technology than in most schools.

59.Placing pupils in classes of similar ability, setting, in Key Stage 3 for English, maths and science are effective and similar, though less selective, banding, arrangements for other National Curriculum subjects ensure that lower attaining pupils have the support they need. Some setting takes place in Key Stage 4 and is beneficial to teaching and learning.

60.The time available to teach most subjects is satisfactory. The time provided for physical education and art in Key Stage 3 is below the national average. The ten day timetable hampers progress over time in some subjects; in physical education there are lengthy periods between lessons for some classes and this slows progress, particularly for lower attaining pupils; in Urdu it results in two hour lessons and slows progress for all pupils.

61.There are good policies for health, sex and drugs education. These topics are effectively taught in the personal guidance lessons and are effectively supported by a number of guest speakers. Planning documents and schemes of work for this course are comprehensive and well written.

62.There is good provision for extra-curricular activities, with pupils able to enjoy a good range of sporting and non-sporting activities. For example, in music there is a choir which involves around 40 pupils, an instrumental ensemble, the Jingles Project and a festival produced in conjunction with feeder schools. Instrumental teaching is available to all pupils free of charge. A lunchtime French club is being developed, there are plans to increase trips to France and 20 pupils from Years 9, 10 and 11 take advantage of after school Urdu lessons. There are clubs for dance, netball, cricket, rounders and football attended by approximately one fifth of pupils (120). Keep fit, basketball and rounders clubs are generally well attended (15-30 girls) and about a half of pupils are involved in internal inter-form sporting competitions and a fifth in inter-school competitions. The school offers a two week literacy school in the summer holidays and has recently introduced

a three day numeracy school.

63.The curriculum is enhanced by, for example, visits to France, the Botanical Gardens, Kenilworth Castle, the Black Country Museum and a design and technology activity day. In addition to this the school has a well established cross curricular week with a variety of activities linked by a theme and a “Super Learning Day” for pupils in Years 7 and 8 which includes a session for their parents.

64.The school is very good in preparing pupils for the next stages in learning. There is good planning to allow pupils to progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and beyond. Careers education, which includes a careers conference for pupils and parents, is excellent providing pupils with valuable information and guidance about the world of work and further education. In 1998 seventy-five pupils attended after-school revision sessions and this has had a beneficial effect upon standards attained in examinations.

65.Since the last inspection the school has made good progress. Time allocation for art and physical education have been improved and girls are now able to follow a course in physical education leading to GCSE. Schemes of work are now closely monitored and reviewed by senior staff. Links with feeder schools have been developed to ensure pupils’ work builds on that done in Key Stage 2. The curriculum team now monitors girls’ option choices to ensure their curriculum in Key Stage 4 is broad and balanced. Extra-curricular provision has been increased and girls participation in it is beginning to be monitored. The introduction of activity weeks and the Literacy Hour have improved cross-curricular provision.

65. **Assessment**

66.The school has very good procedures for monitoring and recording pupils’ progress. The school’s recent policy for assessment is both thorough and comprehensive. It provides clear guidelines for marking, completing reports and standardising assessments that are followed by all departments, but not all teachers within them are following the policy yet.

67.The systems in place are very well understood by both pupils and teachers and are effective in improving pupils’ progress. Form tutors, Heads of Year, Heads of Curriculum Areas and subject teachers are involved in tracking the progress of pupils on a regular basis.

68.The school identifies pupils’ attainment and potential using National Foundation for Educational Research tests, reading tests, National Curriculum levels in each subject and their Key Stage 2 National Curriculum SAT results, as well as data from internal assessments. When pupils join the school, information is also gathered through the use of the Middle Years Information System. The school also analyses GCSE results and in physical education and modern languages, for example, changes have been made to the curriculum so as to enable pupils to achieve higher standards at GCSE.

69.In some departments, for example English, geography and art, pupils build portfolios of work and track their own progress and in art and music pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work. In most subjects teachers monitor individual pupils’ progress effectively in lessons and help is given as necessary. During Key Stage 4, departments carry out assessments in line with the requirements of the examination boards. Target National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are set for each pupil and their progress towards these targets is regularly reviewed. In some subject areas marking gives valuable guidance about pupils’ progress and achievement, though there is inconsistency amongst staff. Pupils are not yet fully enough involved in tracking their own progress through National Curriculum levels or GCSE requirements to be effective in setting their own targets for improvement.

70. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed and their needs updated in detail on a regular basis in accordance with the Code of Practice. All have detailed Individual Education Plans and information is freely available to all teachers and appropriate support is given in lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language are assessed regularly and support focussed upon subject areas is effective in raising standards. All teachers are aware of difficulties encountered by these pupils and many adapt materials to make lessons more easily accessible.

71. Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress in establishing and improving systematic assessments and tracking pupils' progress and achievement and the good practice in some subject areas in involving pupils in self evaluation and target setting is being developed in order to raise standards further.

71. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

72. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Since the last inspection, the school has generally made better provision and significantly improved the corporate act of worship that is now of a very high standard and fully meets statutory requirements.

73. Opportunities for spiritual development are very good, and these include the daily act of worship in which pupils are encouraged to participate in and many do so as part of prefects' responsibilities. In religious education, pupils study worship, prayer and the beliefs and faiths underpinning four world religions. The expressive arts, which are, music, art, physical education, drama and dance, all offer some opportunities for pupils to consider values, reflect upon human experiences, and see problems from others' point of view. In English they have the chance to reflect upon feelings, such as joy, using Shakespeare texts. In drama they are encouraged to express their own feelings about the given themes, such as sorrow. In science they are studying the vastness of the universe, and the distances of planets from our own.

74. The school's provision for moral development is very good. There is a code of conduct and this is displayed throughout the school. It is linked to the school's aims, and there are specific expectations for behaviour and respect for all. Teachers set very good examples and their own expectations of good behaviour are clear to pupils. In religious education pupils are taught to respect their own and other people's faiths. They look at some of life's dilemmas from the various faiths' standpoints. For example, they consider the topic of euthanasia and what the religions teach about it. In history pupils consider the rights and wrongs of the slave trade. In physical education, a clear moral tone is established through high expectations of fair play and good behaviour.

75. The social development of pupils is excellent and the school is very successful in promoting harmony and co-operation. The opportunities for older pupils to take some responsibility in the life of the school include being mentors, prefects and junior technicians, called 'microtechs'. Pupils have both to apply for these posts and undergo appropriate training, sometimes from agencies outside the school such as Birmingham University. Younger pupils have the chance to represent their year on the School Council, help keep the school tidy, or join the group that discusses and makes suggestions about school food. Some pupils help at parents' evening, and others give a presentation, about some aspect of school life, at the annual parents' and governors' meeting. There are many clubs and activities that enable pupils to mix socially together, such as dance club, reading, and music, in the form of choir or band. The school organises residential visits and days out locally, such as visits to the Botanical Gardens. They visit places of worship, engage in climbing at a local centre, and sometimes go to an overnight camp.

76. The cultural development of pupils is very good and pupils experience the festivals and customs of different cultures in religious education, music, drama and dance. For example, in music, pupils have worked on reggae, blues, and also have links with the Birmingham Symphony Hall programmes. There are visits to the theatre, pupils write their own poetry and enter festivals of dance or music. They have visited the Black Country museum, art galleries and local libraries. Pupils discover the dress, food and customs of others, and they have designed and made costumes for 'Romeo and Juliet'. Musical instrument tuition is provided free of charge and some pupils learn to play traditional western and eastern instruments, such as the trombone and the sitar.

76.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

77. Provisions for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils are very good. The school has produced and implemented the outstanding policies referred to at the last inspection. The caring ethos makes a significant contribution to the school community. There are good arrangements for induction to the school. The very good partnerships with primary schools ensure a smooth transition into secondary school life. Prospective pupils have opportunities to attend well organised sessions in school, where they can experience the new routines. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported to enable them to participate in all school activities. They receive appropriate specialist support from outside agencies. Individual Education Plans for pupils with special educational needs are of very good quality, providing a firm basis for their progress. The school has a high proportion of pupils for whom English is a second language. Provision for supporting these pupils in their learning is sound. The school clearly values all pupils within its care.

78. There are very good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic achievements and personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully introduced more diagnostic testing to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils' records are in good order and there are a high number of tests and assessments undertaken at appropriate intervals. Assessments are very well detailed and are effectively used to inform and guide pupils in their day to day work. Staff liaise effectively with parents, outside agencies and each other about the needs and progress of individual pupils.

79. There is excellent provision for careers guidance and work experience. The school combines very effectively with a number of agencies and employers to provide pupils with advice and work experience. The school has gained national recognition for the high quality of its work experience arrangements, and very recently has received recognition for the high quality of careers guidance.

80. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour. Comprehensive records are kept of any significant behavioural problems. Where necessary, the behaviour of individual pupils is very carefully monitored by tutors and heads of department and appropriate support is provided. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their behaviour when it falls below expectation. The school has a very good quality and effective behaviour policy. Teachers make good use of praise, encouragement and rewards. Weekly whole school assemblies celebrate pupils' achievements, including positive attitudes and behaviour. The school has good strategies to eliminate oppressive behaviour. Pastoral education includes guidance on how to deal with bullying and the anti-bullying policy is of good quality.

81. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. There is a close and effective partnership with the education welfare service. Attendance and punctuality are monitored regularly, with good use made of a computer-based system of information. A 'late register' is maintained at the main office. The school takes many opportunities to promote better attendance. For example, newsletters make frequent mention of the issues and there is a prominent display in reception entitled 'attendance matters'. Individual and class certificates for good attendance are used to good effect.

82. Child Protection procedures are good. The school complies with legal requirements. There is a designated member of staff who has received appropriate training and liaises effectively with outside agencies. All staff are aware of the school practices and procedures, with the school providing good quality guidance about its procedures in the staff handbook.

83. The school has good procedures to promote pupils' health, safety, hygiene and well being. There are good quality schemes of work within the school's comprehensive health education programme and inspectors were impressed by the quality of pupils' work. Personal guidance lessons were seen by all inspectors and found to make a good contribution to raising pupils' awareness of many issues when teaching was satisfactory or better. Healthy lifestyles are positively encouraged. Topic work includes activities and work about healthy eating, good habits, the need for regular exercise and the effects of smoking and drugs. Outside agencies are well used by the school. For example, theatre groups give performances about health education and road safety. The school nurse works very closely with staff and attends the school fortnightly. The community police officer attends the school regularly and talks to Year 7 pupils about personal and road safety. Accident and emergency procedures are well developed and there are several members of staff trained in first-aid. The school has a good quality health and safety policy. However, inspectors felt that risk assessments should be carried out more frequently and thoroughly. Fire drills are carried out periodically. Sex education meets legal requirements.

84. Inspectors noted several hazards to pupils' safety, related to accommodation and practice, during the course of the inspection. The school's governing body and Local Education Authority are aware of these matters already, and are in the process of resolving them. A considerable number of pupils expressed concern to inspectors about the lack of variety in school lunches and the inspection team agrees with them.

84. **Partnership with parents and the community**

85. Partnerships with parents and the community are very good. They make a significant and positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. The quality of partnerships has improved considerably since the last inspection.

86. Parental involvement in the life of the school and in pupils' learning is very good. The school has significantly improved parental involvement since the last inspection. The school positively encourages and welcomes parents to become involved in school life. The Link Parents Group meets with staff on a monthly basis. This forum is effective in allowing pupils' mothers to discuss issues of concern. The school provides very good guidance for the group about becoming more effectively involved in pupils' learning at home. Some parents help in school regularly. They assist in lessons such as Urdu and listen to pupils read. They also help with special events and parents' meetings by acting as interpreters where necessary and parents occasionally lead acts of worship. Parents work effectively with staff. The school has worked very successfully with providers of adult education in starting nationally recognised courses for women. A high number of women undertook literacy, numeracy and information technology examinations recently and the school continues to provide such training. Inspectors were impressed at how well these courses are delivered and the positive impact they have in involving parents in their children's education.

87. Information to parents is good. Senior management and the chair of governors play a strong role at the start and end of the school day in making themselves freely available for parents. Staff spend a considerable amount of time with new parents to the school and carefully explain the school's routines. The school prospectus is well presented, as is the governors' annual report to parents. A very good aspect of governors' reports is the inclusion of pupils' presentations about the year's activities. The school provides a number of good quality information sheets and

booklets about certain topics. For example, there are guides to starting Key Stage 4, GCSE options and 'The Year Ahead'. Displays around the school give good levels of information about the current and forthcoming curriculum. The school produces newsletters regularly and frequently, and these are effective in updating parents about future events and school issues. The school provides sound quality pupils' annual reports that give clear guidance about pupils' strengths, weaknesses and future learning targets. The school has fully addressed the weakness identified in these reports at the last inspection. The school translates a considerable amount of information into Asian languages, as required by certain groups of parents.

88. The Parent Link Workers make a significant contribution to the school community by contacting parents, interviewing them and interpreting when necessary.

89. Links with the community are excellent. During the period of inspection, inspectors were able to meet representatives from The Women's Academy, the Careers Education Business Partnership, Challenge 2000, colleges, schools and other institutions. Clearly the school is highly valued in the community and seen as a very important focal point. The school has significantly improved the range and quality of links since the last inspection. School trips are very well planned to support and enrich the curriculum and topic work. For example, Year 8 recently visited the Sea Life Centre and Year 10 pupils the Botanical Gardens. There are very good links with the emergency and welfare services. For example, the community police officer makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and road safety. The school has an excellent partnership with local mosques and Islamic educational and cultural centres. Through visits and contributions to assemblies and acts of worship, an excellent contribution is made to pupils' spiritual, moral and religious education. The school has very good links with sports clubs. A good example is that with the Birmingham Bullets Basketball Club. Many pupils recently took part in a series of training sessions in school led by a professional player, and this made a very good contribution to physical education. There are very good links with the business community. The school works very closely with businesses and employers in providing a comprehensive programme of work experience for Year 10 pupils. Many local businesses are also generous with financial and non-financial donations to the school.

90. The school has effective links with colleges and other providers of further education. Staff liaise very effectively and this ensures a smooth transition to the next stage of education. A good example is the partnership with The Women's Academy, which provides support for a considerable number of former pupils. There was some concern at the last inspection about the quality of links with primary schools. The school now has excellent and very valuable links with primary schools in the area.

90. OF THE SCHOOL

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

90.

Leadership and management

91. The quality of leadership and management overall is very good and makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved by the girls, the ethos of the school and the quality of education which it provides. It was judged to be good at the time of the last inspection. Improvement since then has been very good.

92. The headteacher's leadership is unquestionably very good. Since her appointment, two years ago, she has made a profound impression on most aspects of the school's life and work and she is highly respected by parents, girls, staff and governors. There is much evidence of the effectiveness of the headteacher's leadership. The very good ethos of the school demonstrates an unusual combination of high expectations and rigour on the one hand, and on the other, of care and support which are based on close knowledge of and concern for individuals. Every pupil is valued and equality of opportunity is evident in practice as well as in theory. As a result, the

girls' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good and they are given every encouragement to reach their full potential. The school produces thoughtful young women, who demonstrate growing confidence in themselves. Standards of academic achievement have risen over the last few years, as has the reputation of the school in the eyes of parents and the community. The headteacher, strongly supported by the governors, has established a clear and excellent set of aims, values and educational principles which are widely shared by those with whom she works, and are fully evident in practice.

93.The members of the senior management team, consisting of the headteacher, deputy head teacher and five senior managers, work closely and effectively together, complementing one another's strengths. At the time of the last inspection, senior management was not deemed to be monitoring the progress of subjects closely. This is not now the case; the team has very strong procedures and practice for this area. The morale of the staff is good and relationships are friendly and productive. Management of people combines expectation of high performance and a high level of support for those who are experiencing difficulties.

94.The governing body is well structured to enable it to fulfil its statutory responsibilities through its system of committees. It satisfies legal requirements in all respects, unlike the situation at the last inspection. Governors are well briefed on school matters by the headteacher and deputy head teacher, with whom they work closely. They give considerable weight to their proposals, but they expect and receive full consultation on all matters of policy. Members question and challenge when they feel it is appropriate. The governing body exercises good oversight of the curriculum. They monitor test and examination results very closely and are becoming increasingly involved in the setting of targets for achievement. Governors receive reports on the curriculum from the headteacher and senior management. Individual governors are formally linked with different aspects of the school's work and some are linked with particular curriculum areas in which they have an interest, sometimes contributing voluntary help in those areas. Governors' committees are effective in their different areas and are actively involved in strategic planning and monitoring of finance, staffing and curriculum development. The Chair of Governors provides a very high degree of help, support and vision for the school, particularly in its links with the local community.

95.Leadership is excellent in drama and shows vision and commitment in the newly formed expressive arts. A number of subjects: English, drama, art, mathematics, science, information technology and religious education, have very good leadership. Leadership is good in music, history, geography and modern foreign languages and it is satisfactory in design and technology and physical education. The heads of curriculum areas and the heads of key stages make a particularly effective contribution, both to the welfare and guidance of the girls and, equally importantly, to academic standards. Their involvement in monitoring girls' progress, identifying strengths and weaknesses and setting targets for improvement, is well developed and successful.

96.The school's aims, values and policies are implemented with excellence. Pupils' learning and personal development, the desire for greater success for pupils and the level of commitment to achieve these aims are of a very high quality. Measures initiated to help reach these aims, such as the participation in the Investors in People programme and involvement in the University of the First Age, are proving to be of great value. The school knows that there is always more that can be done and is consistent in its intent and effort to continue to reach ever higher standards in all areas.

97.Development planning is good. The school development plan, co-ordinated by the deputy head, is clear, well-structured and based on relevant priorities over a sensible period of time. It has the merit of being concise and precise, so that it is easy for staff and governors to see the way forward at any given time. It shows evidence of thoughtful corporate planning. This demonstrates evidence of progress since the last inspection, which found that costings on the school development plan were unclear. Within departments, development planning and

evaluation, though mostly good, are more variable in provision, as noted at the last inspection. Some, as in English, are of high quality, whilst others, such as information technology, sometimes lack precision in targets and the detail of how they are to be achieved and monitored. Department plans do, however, generally take closer account of school priorities that they did at the time of the last inspection and departmental plans are firmly linked to the school's overall development plan and set of priorities.

98. The monitoring of and support for teaching and curriculum development are good and there are many strengths in this area of management. The extent to which heads of departments observe and monitor how their subject is taught is generally very effective. In most areas, there is sound observation of teaching outside the appraisal process. Line management between senior and middle managers is usually very effective. Regular meetings are held with heads of departments and examination results and targets are examined rigorously. Communication is effective and arrangements for consultations are good; staff feel that their views are taken into account and they are given many opportunities for comment and collaboration. Senior staff are approachable and supportive. The daily organisational arrangements of the school are effective and efficient; routines and procedures are well understood by staff, parents and pupils. The school's administrative staff, midday assistants and the kitchen and caretaking staff all make an important contribution to the smooth and efficient running of the school.

99. Management now very ably provides the means to continue to raise attainment and add to the good basis for progress already established and is in an excellent position to improve the school still further.

99.
resources

Staffing, accommodation and learning

100. There is a satisfactory match of number, qualifications and experience of current staff to the demands of the curriculum. Provision within the areas of art and design and technology are stretched thin and contribute to problems in delivering all aspects of the relevant National Curriculum programmes of study. Teachers have a good level of expertise and sufficient skilled support staff are available in administration, laboratories and lunchtime supervision, although provision for supporting English as an additional language is weaker. The library and information technology network systems are adequately staffed by a full time information technology technician and a substantive full time librarian and are well supported by pupils with special responsibilities.

101. Staff professional development is good. Staff induction programmes are in place for teaching and non-teaching staff at both whole school and departmental level. Staff development reviews are taking place on an annual basis. They consist of a teacher self-review, a discussion with the headteacher and identifying individual training needs which are linked to the School Development Plan. Providing individual teacher targets, with the emphasis on teaching and learning where appropriate, is not built into the system. Attaining the national standard for Investors in People has brought cohesiveness to the staff as a whole and the Staff Training Evaluation Group is providing valuable support in addressing staff training needs. Since the previous inspection, the arrangements for the training of middle management have improved and are now good.

102. Although there have been many improvements in accommodation since the last inspection the judgement is that it is now poor. The improvements include the refurbishment of a science laboratory, building a health education room and a reading room, re-decorating and refurbishing classrooms and the provision of extra storage space and carpeting. However, serious deficiencies in accommodation remain that have an adverse effect on the delivery of the curriculum in several areas. The gymnasium is under pressure and does not allow the full delivery of National Curriculum physical education. The workshop is inadequately planned to deliver design and technology effectively. The shortage of science laboratory, storage and preparation

space places limitations on practical science. Music has only one practice room and limited storage space. Storage space is also a problem for expressive arts. In common with many classrooms, the library is small and has limited space for bookshelves. The playground steps are crumbling at the edges and are hazardous and the central heating system is old and is prone to failure. In spite of these problems the school offers a clean, pleasant, well-maintained and generally secure environment for its pupils and staff. The quality of display of pupils' work is very good and contributes to pupils' learning and aspirations. Plans are in place to make some improvements to the front and rear of the school, including outside provision for physical education and notification of funding to assist these plans to come to fruition came towards the end of the inspection.

103. The provision of resources is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection in science, music and modern foreign languages but not in music, art or physical education. Provision is good in English and geography. The provision of computers has improved since the last inspection. However, some subjects find sufficient access difficult, notably mathematics, music, English and modern foreign languages. Library provision is satisfactory. It is good for mathematics, science and English but poor for geography where many of the books are out of date.

103.

The efficiency of the school

104. Very good financial planning, co-ordinated by the deputy head teacher, both strategically and in the short to medium-term, enhances the provision for pupils' learning. The governing body plays a leading part with energy and commitment. Well supported by a most competent finance committee, it is active in maintaining high standards of financial probity and ensuring that the school's resources are used to the best effect. The school development plan identifies the costs of future priorities and this practice is picked up on in subject planning. Heads of curriculum areas are well aware of the systems used to provide them with financial resources and have been party to changes in formula funding and the use of the bidding system for additional money. The fact that some areas have just satisfactory resources or lack them, for example design and technology, indicates that these systems are not always being used effectively. This positive picture shows improvement since the last inspection report, when financial planning was good and weaknesses were indicated in school development planning, the involvement of the governors and the place of middle managers in the system.

105. The use of teaching and support staff is very good. Contact time between teachers and pupils is average and class sizes are most often appropriate. Tight staffing of design and technology and current time-tabling does not allow all pupils to follow a recognised design and technology course at Key Stage 4 and, in addition, group sizes within technology are now exceeding the average. Learning support teachers and classroom assistants are used effectively in the first term to help raise pupils' literacy standards. They are then allocated as fairly as possible to where there is most need. Efficient use is made of lunch-time assistants to monitor pupils and they work hard at their jobs. However, the paucity of teaching staff in and around public areas at lunchtime allows the small amount of pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour mentioned within the attitudes and behaviour section of this report to flourish.

106. Almost every curriculum area makes good use of its accommodation. However, problems of finding suitable teaching spaces in some areas, for example science and art, work against efficient teaching and learning and the workshop, as it is now, is not utilised as effectively as it might be. Departments use other resources well, including computers and the library. Pupils' access to these is improved through careful planning and the use of trained pupils in support. These practices both improve efficiency and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.

107. Additional income from funding earmarked for pupils with special educational needs is spent

well and its use supports their learning. Gains in literacy, particularly, are supporting pupils' progress across the curriculum.

108. Financial control and school administration, led by the deputy headteacher, are very good. The most recent auditors' report, in 1997, identified areas for improvement. All of these issues have been rectified. Checks by the Local Authority finance department conducted since the last audit have not identified any problems. Administrative and technical staff are encouraged to engage in their own development and they show versatility and a willingness to take on jobs that need doing, adding to the efficient use of their time. The caretaker and cleaners are rigorous in their duties.

109. The school provides good value for money. This judgement takes into account the standards of pupils' work on entry to the school, the good progress they make, particularly in Key Stage 4, the good teaching that pupils receive, the very efficient way in which the school is managed and the higher than average cost per pupil the school incurs.

109. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

109. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

109. **English**

110. The attainment of pupils in English on entry to the school is well below the national average. The results of standardised tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that most pupils' attainment in reading and writing is below average at the start of Year 7. A very high percentage of pupils have special educational needs related to linguistic skills or are pupils for whom English is an additional language.

111. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the National Curriculum SAT's in 1998, 55% of pupils attained Level 5 or above and 28% reached Level 6 or above, below the national average. However, these percentages were high when compared with the results for similar schools. In 1999, In Key Stage 3 tests, results were well in line with the previous year. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have begun to acquire some sense of formal appropriate speech. Most participate in oral work with enthusiasm and readiness. Many can convey ideas with relevance and illustration, but few can do so in a fully sustained manner. Many pupils can read fluently and with technical precision, but others, particularly those on the register of pupils for whom English is an additional language, struggle with basic reading and grammatical skills. They read with a growing degree of comprehension, though not always with full expression when reading aloud and some read without understanding everything they read. Pupils' written work often shows the ability to write thoughtfully, in an extended manner and with an understanding of many genres, though it was judged that there was little opportunity for writing at length or creatively in the last inspection report. The range of written work now includes longer and more creative work. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were selecting implicit and explicit meaning from a cross-examination in court, based on the Bentley trial, and writing their own interpretations of the persuasive tactics of the lawyers. Presentation is emphasised and is often neat and structured. Throughout Key Stage 3 progress is rapid and good, especially for pupils of higher and average levels of attainment and for many with special educational needs. Pupils make much progress in oral skills, learning to speak with greater fluency and they read with increasing levels of comprehension, with the help of the dedicated teaching in the English department. New initiatives have been introduced, such as the introduction of the Literacy Hour in Year 7 and the series of lessons in Language for Learning, which successfully helps to support their studies in other subjects, as well as in English. Written work develops too, in content and in quantity, though spelling, grammar and sentence structure are not always strong.

112. GCSE results in 1998 were below national averages for girls' schools nationally, as at the time of the last inspection, though good when measured against those for similar schools. In English, 40.5% achieved grades A* to C, a percentage at least matched in the last three years and showing every sign of steady improvement in lessons observed and written work examined. 1999 GCSE results in English were in line with the previous year. In English Literature in 1998, over 47.3 reached grades A to C. English results and English Literature results remained consistent over the three years up to 1998. English Literature results greatly improved in 1999, when the whole year group took the subject. In both English and English Literature, the percentage of candidates achieving Grades A* – G is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have learned to speak in a wider variety of styles of speech. Many can argue, debate and express clear opinions on literature and media work. They read Shakespeare with much understanding, use good comprehension skills and many have the ability to see the sub-text of what they read. A particularly impressive example of this was seen in a Year 11 lesson, where pupils were making the connection between two D. H. Lawrence short stories they had read and the influence of fable on these stories. Pupils write in a more sustained and concentrated manner, though not all pupils use personal initiative and research skills as a

matter of course. At Key Stage 4, progress is good. All pupils progress in the development of oral, reading and writing skills and the quality of work sometimes increases in terms of National Curriculum levels by two levels within one key stage. Many pupils show commitment and are ready to work hard, with thought and care. Pupils learn to write lucidly, as observed in a Year 11 lesson on 'The Withered Arm', writing on the story with critical understanding. Some coursework seen showed sensitive understanding of a W.H. Auden poem and the ability to form individual and coherent judgements. Again, pupils of all levels of attainment make rapid progress, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

113.The good quality of teaching is making a marked impact on pupils' progress, both at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. The department concentrates on teaching the skills of English through a variety of methods, but primarily through the opportunities for purposeful discussion, reading and writing provided by the study of literature. This has a significant impact on the development of reading skills, the acquisition of a sensitive response to novels, plays and poems and an understanding of the ways in which authors use language to create effects.

114.Standards of progress are enhanced by the fact that Years 8 and 9 and both Key Stage 4 years are taught in setted groups. Lesson plans always include graded work to ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment reach their full potential. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language are full, specifically aimed at the individual needs of each pupil. The department provides extra material for higher ability pupils as a matter of course.

115.The attitudes of pupils across all levels are usually good. Most listen with interest to the opinions of their teachers and fellow pupils. Levels of concentration and perseverance sometimes vary in line with the level of language skills, but the motivation of most pupils to study hard and to succeed is impressive. In one lesson, pupils in Year 9 were composing their own mnemonics with great initiative. At Key Stage 4 in particular, there are many examples of pupils who apply significant time and energy in order to produce good work and they take much pride in it. Relationships with teachers are very good, with an ethos of mutual respect and collaboration permeating lessons. Very few instances of poor behaviour were seen; most pupils behave with a high degree of courtesy and response and attention to teachers. Some pupils are keen to develop the skills of working by themselves and most, as they progress through the school, rely on their teachers less and less to tell them exactly what to do. Pupils grow in confidence in their abilities and their command of English and clearly enjoy the literary content of their work.

116.The teaching of English is good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, three-quarters were good, over a third were very good and one was excellent. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and it is patently very good in Key Stage 4, which was considered to be the least successful area by the last inspection. Unsuccessful lessons are those few in which work is not sufficiently graded for all abilities or in which pace is slow. Pupils often work in groups or pairs, as well as independently, methods are sufficiently varied to keep the interest of pupils for the whole of the lesson and expectations of pupils are usually high at both key stages. The best lessons are the many where the teacher conveys interest and enthusiasm to the pupils and where clear targets are set. In these lessons, expectations are high, pupils are constantly challenged and all levels of attainment receive advice, support and attention. Management is a strength in the department; teachers keep the interest of their pupils skillfully. They are firm, but relationships are pleasant and good-humoured. Planning is very good at both key stages. Schemes of work help teachers to plan across parallel classes within a year, while keeping autonomy over their methods and flexibility of approach. Lesson plans are always well focused, with objectives which are made clear to the pupils and contain opportunities for practice of all modes of language teaching. Good use is made of literature. Where extra work is given to higher attainers, as in a Year 8 lesson observed, it is eagerly accepted. Strategies for teaching differ from teacher to teacher and teachers are given opportunities for sharing good classroom practice. The standard of discipline and management is unfailingly very good. Most classes are

managed through friendly relations and respect. Pace is usually brisk and concentration is not allowed to flag.

117. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because of the goodwill and effort of their teachers, who take great trouble to ensure that their needs are met. Pupils for whom English is a second language also make good progress.

118. Assessment has been developed well, both through the keeping of records of progress and through productive and effective individual feedback throughout lessons. It is particularly good in the GCSE classes. The department is building a portfolio of graded work, so that teachers have examples of what is expected at all levels of the National Curriculum and within examination work. A good homework policy is now in place, always consistently implemented. Marking of written work, though done regularly and accurately, still varies in the degree of constructive advice offered to pupils.

119. The department's contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school is very good. Much literature is used in teaching, which allows reflection on character and atmosphere, as in work seen on the Dickens' short story, 'The Signalman'. Empathy with and understanding of other times and of moral and social dilemmas were promoted by the study of the novel 'Granny Was a Buffer Girl' and the play, 'An Inspector Calls'. Pupils are trusted by teachers, who provide them with very good role models. They show great care and commitment towards their pupils, in a pastoral, as well as an academic sense. Socially and culturally, pupils are introduced to experiences which broaden their understanding of life and society and help them to appreciate and enjoy literature and other media. Poetry workshops, the making of 'broadcast' tapes and the production and filming of their own videos, are extremely productive in terms of literacy as well as in interest. Pupils are given many opportunities to experience plays and films and they have, for the last two years, had many high quality poems published in the two volumes of Birmingham schoolchildren's poetry, 'Kaleidoscope' and 'Spellbound'.

120. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is clearly nurturing a very capable department, containing many young, experienced teachers, with vision and energy. She herself provides a very good example for them in the quality of her teaching and practice, as well as her commitment. Both key stages are very ably led; as a result, progress is good. Importance is attached to the monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice in the classroom. The continuous review of the curriculum, the professional development of teachers and the use of the results of monitoring and assessment to set appropriate targets for all pupils are all areas of strength in the department. The aims of the school are very well reflected in the work of the department, where the greater success of every girl comes before any other consideration.

121. There is a good mixture of experience and youthful enthusiasm in the department and all staff have a high degree of expertise in the subject, though this was not judged to be so at the time of the last inspection. Support assistants are well deployed to assist pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Teaching resources in the department are generally good. There is much inviting fiction in the library, but the supply of reference books is thin. The initiation of "Successmaker" computer software, in the Integrated Learning Suite in teaching Year 7 pupils, is a strong factor in improving the level of literacy, as well as information technology skills. The use of information technology in the subject is developing well, with a departmental website, though widespread use of computers by all pupils is still a little limited. Accommodation is adequate, though some of the suite of rooms used by the English department are a little cramped for some classes. The opportunity for the use of drama in English teaching afforded by the drama studio is used to the full, and all pupils in Key Stage 3 receive regular drama lessons of a stimulating nature.

122. Observation during the inspection suggests that standards have risen sharply since the last

inspection. Speaking and listening skills have improved, in that pupils are very willing to volunteer ideas, but some still find it difficult to use sustained speech or to adopt an appropriate tone. Writing shows rather more technical expertise than was suggested in the last report. The head of department has developed many areas with commitment and strong management, co-ordinating and training teachers in order to improve attainment further.

123. This is a good department, with many strengths which underpin the literacy of the pupils and enhance their success in other subjects, as well as raising their confidence and self-esteem.

123.

Mathematics

124. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, was very low when compared with the national average for 1998 for girls achieving Level 5 or better and well below the national average for those achieving Level 6 or more. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, girls' results were below average. Over the years 1996 to 1998 the Key Stage 3 results were very low in comparison with the national average. The summer 1999 results indicate an improvement. By the age of 14 girls can recognise simple probabilities and express them as fractions on a number line from 0 to 1. More able pupils can multiply and divide decimal numbers by 10, 100, 1000 and by other numbers greater than 10. Some can also tell by inspection whether their answers are likely to be correct or not.

125. Results in the 1998 GCSE exams were below the national average. However, the number of pupils gaining a grade C or better has increased by 250% since 1996 (14%) to the 1999 examination figure of 35%. When compared with other Birmingham schools in a comparable family grouping, the number of pupils achieving a C grade or better was above average and the average point score per candidate was well above average. By year 11, able pupils understand the meaning of direct proportionality and can find rules associated with proportionality from graphs and ratios. Lower attaining pupils have a good grasp of percentages but find some difficulty in working out the original cost price of an article if given its sale price.

126. Pupils' progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Regular testing and monitoring of work enables the pupils to maintain and focus their efforts. Pupils' performance is monitored by common testing arrangements at the end of each module of work. These results are analysed alongside the excellent pupil tracking sheets to ensure that pupils are progressing in line with their ability. This is good practice that should further enhance pupils' performance and motivation when, as is planned, the pupils are more fully involved in the process of reviewing themselves. Pupils with special educational needs achieve the targets on their individual education plans and make good progress.

127. Numerical skills are well developed in mathematics lessons. The introduction of a brief five to ten minute introduction to each lesson, consisting of mental arithmetic games and testing, is having a very positive effect. Numeracy across the curriculum, however, is less well developed. A whole school numeracy policy is still under development. The result is that little work is done to support the pupils' mathematical understanding outside of the mathematics department, except in science and for graphical and statistical work in geography.

128. The pupils' behaviour and commitment to success in their learning are good. In almost ninety per cent of lessons they were seen to be giving of their best. Books are, for the most part, neatly kept. Behaviour and application in lessons is usually very good, reflecting the high standards set by the teaching staff as well as the pupils own desire to do well. Relationships between the pupils and each other, and the pupils and their teachers are warm and cordial. The strength of these relationships does much to promote the attainment of pupils.

129. Teaching is good at both key stages. The best lessons seen followed the departmental policies closely. They began with the lesson objectives written on the board. A space was also left

for writing a list of key words as they occurred in the lesson. Preparation and planning is very good and extremely thorough, with work matched to individual students' need. These lessons are delivered with a good pace. A good example of this was a year 7 lesson on plotting positive and negative co-ordinates in all four quadrants. The teacher ensured that all pupils were engaged with the work. The pupils had done graphical work in the first quadrant previously but, had not extended their understanding to include negative numbers. Pupils were challenged by the work, but found it stimulating and very enjoyable. By the end of the lesson every child was well equipped to complete the relevant set homework. Assessment of pupils' work is good.

130.The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Good curriculum links have been established with primary schools. These are best reflected in the "Moving on Up" project in which pupils start a project in their primary school which they take with them upon transfer and complete in their secondary school.

131.The mathematics department benefits from the very good leadership of the acting head of department, who is ably assisted by a most capable second in department (also acting). All of the regular teachers in the department are fully qualified teachers of mathematics. The supply teacher covering the head of department's teaching timetable is a qualified teacher, but not a specialist. The team is a cohesive unit of hard working teachers committed to building on the successful improvements of recent years. Improvements in teaching are arising from monitoring of performance and from teacher in-service development. Monitoring arrangements both for teaching and marking are in place but are subject to further development.

132.Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has been enhanced by a concentration on improving the pace of lessons. Improvement for the most able is being secured by involvement with the Birmingham Mathematics Working Group, which is investigating the needs of the most able. The lower attaining pupils, especially, are benefiting from the use of the computer support provided by "Success Maker." The use of information technology has increased, enhancing the pupils' learning experiences with programmes such as "Omnigraph", and "Logo". There is room for still further improvement here. The proposed mathematics dedicated computer network should assist in this respect.

132.

Science

133.Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average in the statutory tests for 1998 but close to the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The 1999 results show an improvement on 1998 which is in line with the trend of improvement over the last four years but remain below average. Attainment in lessons is mainly average and occasionally above average. The department needs to continue to raise standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 to address preparation for the national tests.

134.At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils was well below the national average in 1998, but the 1999 results demonstrate a continuing gradual improvement over the last four years. Attainment in lessons generally meets national expectations and occasionally exceeds them. The department needs to continue to raise standards at Key Stage 4 in all areas, but with particular emphasis on physical science and GCSE examination preparation.

135. Progress is satisfactory in lessons at Key Stage 3. Very good progress is to be found in those lessons which are planned meticulously, have very clear objectives and are delivered in a way that constantly challenges pupils to think about the topic by skilled questioning which searches for reasons as well as the correct answers. For example, the difference between rusting away and dissolving was skilfully teased out from the pupils by asking them to give a scientific explanation of each process. Experimental and investigative skills are of a good standard. Pupils know how to control variables, collect data using electronic sensors and present and interpret data using spreadsheets. Progress over time is good from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

136. In Key Stage 4, progress is good in lessons. The progress is very good in those lessons in which abstract ideas are explained in terms of meaningful models, for example, when the electrostatic forces between atomic particles were likened to the forces between magnets. Practical work is of a good standard and pupils are able to plan and carry out controlled experiments making good use of information technology. Progress from Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4 is good.

137. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 due to the provision of appropriate assignment sheets, support from their teachers and access to the Intranet. Pupils who require help with English as an additional language are occasionally without support, which impedes their progress in that particular lesson.

138. In both key stages pupils are very interested in their work, sustain concentration and behave well. Only a very small number do not. The pupils show respect for each other and their teachers and work together well in small groups when required.

139. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Excellent and very good lessons are characterised by enthusiastic delivery, which motivates the pupils. These lessons are brought alive by applying what is taught to the real world, such as the use of chlorine and iodine in killing bacteria and the importance of fluorides in dental care. Teachers manage the pupils well and expect high standards of behaviour and of what pupils need to know and understand. Planned resources are good, but the materials or equipment have sometimes not been checked before the lesson starts. The timing throughout lessons is often good, but a few lessons require a brisker start to ensure that all the planned objectives are met. The marking of homework is good in relation to assessment and assignment sheets. However, the marking of exercise books is variable, with a lack of comments informing pupils of what they need to do to improve. The departmental marking policy is not fully implemented throughout the department.

140. The science curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages and provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, provided English as an additional language support is available. Staff are fully aware of individual pupils' needs through the departmental tracking sheets. The curriculum is planned effectively to allow pupils to progress from one year to the next, with detailed schemes of work in place. The assessment of pupils' attainment is good and regular end of unit tests are used to inform planning. Good use of information technology is used within the department to monitor the progress of pupils. Extra curricular involvement with Creativity in Science and Technology, the Schools Nutrition Action Group and Internet quizzes together with the Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education project during lesson time, enhances pupils' experience in science and shows signs of a forward-thinking department. The use and development of information communication technology to enhance pupils' learning is a strength of the department.

141. Pupils are given the opportunity to consider the parts played by early scientists such as Becquerel and Galileo and the present day role of women scientists. The rights and wrongs of scientific issues such as nuclear energy are also debated. When working in groups, pupils are encouraged to work as a team and the right of the individual to be listened to uninterrupted is also stressed.

142. The department has very good leadership and the staff work well together as a team. The department is well organised and well run on a day-to-day basis. The head of science leads by example and is very supportive of staff. The strengths of individual departmental members have been recognised and utilised, resulting in, for example, effective information technology development across the department. Clear departmental targets which reflect the school aims are in place.

143. The match of number of staff, qualifications and experience to the demands of the science curriculum is good. Professional development needs are being met and the induction of two new staff is underway. However, there is no structured programme for the latter and information technology training does not continue across the department. The two laboratory technicians give valuable support to the pupils' learning by the effective deployment of practical resources. Learning resources are adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum and library provision is good. There are not enough laboratories and laboratory services are limited, apart from in one laboratory that has been refurbished. Storage space is extremely limited. Many items have to be unsatisfactorily stacked on high shelves and preparation space is inadequate. The laboratories are maintained in a clean and pleasant manner, with good displays of pupils' work. The department is efficiently run with the auditing and purchase of resource needs being well organised.

144. Since the last inspection teaching has improved, the time allocation for Key Stage 4 is now good and there is more use of information technology in the classroom. Some improvements have been made to the accommodation and the storage of radioactive materials now conforms to statutory guidelines.

144.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

144.

Design and technology

145. In this school design and technology has three components at both key stages – food technology, textiles technology and resistant materials technology. Pupils' attainment across all three is used to make a judgement. However, statements about each create a better picture. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, overall, is below national expectations. It is well below within the broad areas of resistant materials and systems, it is in line with expectations in food technology and meets expectations in textiles technology. In the making, rather than design, component of textiles, pupils' attainment is sometimes above expectations particularly in years 9 and 11. Pupils do bring different experiences of these three technology areas with them when they join the school and have greater experience of food and textiles. Nevertheless, the overall progress that pupils make in Key Stage 3 is good in food and textiles but unsatisfactory in resistant materials and systems. The range of work made available to pupils in the latter is insufficient to support better progress.

146. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 mirrors the position at the end of Key Stage 3. In textiles and food it is close to average and sometimes exceeds it in both making and design; within resistant materials it is well below average. With different groups of pupils taking the three areas of work and a substantial proportion of pupils not following an approved design and technology course, simple comparisons do not give a complete picture. GCSE results in 1998, overall, were well below national averages in the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades but above them for A*-G grades. However, a high proportion of pupils was not entered. Food and

textiles technology candidates achieved similar and much better results than resistant materials technology. Many of the pupils took short courses and this clouds the picture. In 1999 overall results appear to be similar, but both food and textiles show very significant improvements, textiles rising to be in line with 1998 national averages, though this figure may also have risen in 1999.

147. Pupils' progress through Key Stage 4 is good in both food and textiles, but is poor in resistant materials, as inadequate Key Stage 3 work is re-visited and consolidated rather than being developed and built upon. Within lessons, at both key stages, pupils' progress, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory overall, always good and sometimes very good in food and textiles. Several factors contribute to these differences. The most significant is the poor content of the resistant materials curriculum at Key Stage 3 that does not meet with National Curriculum requirements and fails to provide the pupils with a diet likely to motivate them to do their best. An insufficient range of materials is used in projects unlikely to capture the imagination and work involving electronic and mechanical systems is hardly touched upon. Information technology is not used to design or manufacture, though some equipment is available, and pupils are aware of the concepts through food and textiles technology. Contributing to, but not an excuse for, the inadequate curriculum arrangements at Key Stage 3, is the layout and poor impression given by the workshop accommodation. Neither workbenches nor clean tables can be used to best effect and there is an absence of any stimulating display of objects, pictures and work to provide ideas or motivation. The complete opposite is obvious in the rather cramped textile room and in the range of resources available in the food technology room. Also available within the workshop are good heat treatment facilities for metal, not used at all, and for plastic, used in a very limited way. A combination of uninspired work and a boring workshop fosters some discontent amongst pupils and leads to some unsatisfactory behaviour at both key stages. This contrasts sharply with food and textiles, where pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4 the lack of motivation and behavioural problems are compounded by pupils not in their first option choice; about one third of girls in Year 10 resistant materials option groups indicated they did not want to be there. There are large group sizes that are difficult to safely and efficiently manage in a practical subject, particularly in a workshop. However, if Key Stage 3 operated as it should, pupils would be more likely to want to pursue resistant materials at Key Stage 4, as it is a completely new experience for them.

148. Teaching of design and technology is good overall with two thirds, in textiles and food technology, being consistently good or very good, whilst that in resistant materials is satisfactory. The best lessons are characterised by very good pace linked to some meaningful project, for example the bag in Year 10 textiles, with pupils' previous knowledge skills and understanding taken into account. Lower attainers are supported and coaxed to do satisfactory or good work and high attainers allowed more freedom for personal development. In food technology, pupils are encouraged to experiment, work well on their own or in pairs or small groups and the teacher uses searching questions, directed at individuals, to keep the whole class on their toes.

149. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is most often good within lessons, but lacks sufficient written comments on how improvements can be made in files and folders. On the other hand, good progress has been made in establishing levels of pupils' attainment through departmental meetings that look at the pupils' work, the use of displays of work and examination board materials. The school pupil tracking sheets are in full use. This picture is an improvement since the last inspection.

150. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall, though it does have good features, especially in seeking to improve standards, assessment, the fostering of the use of information technology by pupils and staff, efficient use of very good technical support and, more recently, monitoring the work of teachers. Despite various strategies being tried, the resistant material curriculum remains less than satisfactory and was a weakness identified at the last inspection. There is also a lack of risk assessment within the workshop area and health and

safety issues identified during the inspection.

151. The school does not comply with National Curriculum requirements that all pupils follow a recognised design and technology course at Key Stage 4. Contributory reasons for this are insufficient staffing and accommodation to offer meaningful courses to all pupils. As new curriculum requirements are revealed, this position should be kept under review. A contributing factor to pupils not covering all the programmes of study at Key Stage 3 is insufficient resources, in quantity and range of consumables and equipment, kits and books. This impacts on Key Stage 4, when pupils' work may be restricted to what they can supply.

151.

Expressive arts

152. Expressive arts has only been operational as a curriculum area since January, 1999, so that the present Key Stage 4 pupils will be the first to sit the GCSE in the subject. Its aim is to bring together the work of the four arts' departments, drama, music, art and physical education, in a cohesive manner and to show how these subjects can work together, while still retaining their discrete nature.

153. The syllabus provides for a choice of two of the three elements of drama, dance and music. Art will still be taken as a discrete GCSE subject, but will play a large role in the whole experience of pupils who take Expressive Arts. The dance element of physical education will combine with the skills of drama and complement each other, and music will enhance this provision. All pupils will continue to sit the GCSE examination in physical education and will have a choice between art and expressive arts.

154. This combination of curriculum subjects under one umbrella is aimed at providing pupils with a fuller artistic experience, while rationalising the amount of time spent at Key Stage 4. It will give pupils the opportunity to choose two of their favourite arts' disciplines and will provide many opportunities for performance, wide links with the community and the world of arts in general.

155. The head of curriculum area is the head of drama. She has great commitment and vision for the future of the subject at GCSE and has developed the policy and organised the schemes of work with enthusiasm, vigour and precision. Pupils, observed in the relevant Key Stage 4 lessons during the inspection, were clearly enjoying the opportunities they offered and were wholeheartedly involved in them.

155.

Art

156. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment for the majority of pupils is slightly below national expectations. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results for 1998 are broadly in line with the national average for all schools but below the national figure for girls' schools respective to grades A*-C. The GCSE results have improved year on year since the previous inspection, although the most recent 1999 results for grades A*-C indicate a small decline.

157. At Key Stage 3 pupils learn to handle the formal elements of line, tone, texture and colour through very structured units of work. They develop work in a range of materials predominantly in two dimensions, with pattern, printmaking and painting skills being strongest. Skills in three-dimensional work are not so well developed. Pupils show growing awareness of the work of artists and the historical context of works of art. For example, Year 9 pupils were able to recall and discuss with sensitivity the painting by Ford Madox Brown entitled, 'The Last of England'. Pupils can make use of sketchbooks to record images and make some use of them for homework. Pupils' expressive work, particularly in Year 9, is limited by the nature of the tasks that focus upon techniques that leading to predictable results at the expense of more imaginative responses. The progressive development and application of a wide range of art skills is therefore limited. Pupils do not make use of computers to develop their work in art.

158. At Key Stage 4 attainment in the current Year 11 is broadly in line with the national average for about half of the group. Pupils do extend the range of their work beyond the tasks set by teachers and their course work already shows some well executed drawing work. Pupils continue to make use of sketchbooks to record and develop their ideas. They are more able to make personal and imaginative responses to a theme, but some continue to rely heavily upon copied images and teacher direction. The use of specialist vocabulary is limited but most pupils can discuss their work and can often relate it to the work of artists. A very small number make some use of computers in the form of CD-ROM's for research. They can draw upon research from visits to galleries and some high quality line and colour studies of plants by Year 10 pupils who had visited the botanical gardens were on display in the school.

159. Pupils make satisfactory progress over Key Stage 3. Although the structured approach constrains some pupils it helps many low attainers make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. In Key Stage 4 progress is good as pupils become more independent. Work in folders shows that many pupils can develop their own ideas and widen the range of work they attempt. For example, several pupils were developing design work based upon their own studies of plants and work by a range of artists from different cultures. The best progress is with the use of colour and pattern. Pupils do not make progress with the use of computers to support and develop their art.

160. Attitudes to art are very positive, behaviour is excellent and pupils show interest in their work and apply themselves well. The single option system and the limitations of accommodation mean that take up of art for GCSE is restricted to twenty pupils.

161. Teaching is good and often very good in lessons because very effective use is made of questioning and discussion to clarify and develop knowledge and understanding. Specialist art knowledge is communicated clearly through structured tasks, particularly at Key Stage 3. At times there is a tendency for teaching to be over-prescriptive and the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 lacks opportunities for creating three-dimensional and more expressive individual work. Teachers work hard to redress this imbalance at Key Stage 4 in preparation for the GCSE examination. Through opportunities to visit galleries and look at paintings, discussion and well produced support materials in lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect upon and consider the meaning of cultural and social aspects of art.

162. Assessment is satisfactory overall. It is often given verbally in lessons to help pupils understand what they must do to improve. Teacher assessment is carried out against National Curriculum criteria at the end of Key Stage 3. Reports give clear and concise information to parents and pupils about their attainment in art. The recent introduction of a school system that enables pupils' progress to be tracked effectively and clearly should improve monitoring further.

163. The head of art, supported by a very effective learning support teacher with some art skills has sought to introduce some breadth to the art curriculum at Key Stage 3 and management of the department is very good. The support teacher also provides well focussed pupil support at Key Stage 4. However, the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has few opportunities for three-dimensional work and the use of computers. There has been a strong focus upon examination analysis and review, with clear targets for pupils and examination results have improved since the last inspection until 1998. Pupils unable to complete a full GCSE course are provided with the opportunity to take a Certificate of Achievement. The number of visual resources and books to support work in art has also improved since the previous inspection and these are now good. Within the constraints of staffing and some teaching in non-specialist accommodation, which have not improved since the last inspection, art makes a positive contribution to the school, particularly through displays of work and some contribution to the work in expressive arts.

163. **Drama**

164. Overall standards of attainment in drama are above national expectations. The number of pupils gaining grades A to C at GCSE in 1998 are in line the national average, and were of a comparable standard in 1997. 1999 results, too, are consistent with these. Attainment in lessons is varied because of the many pupils who have linguistic difficulties on entry to the school, but it is in line with, and often above, that of national expectation. Pupils who do not come to school with drama skills acquire them in Year 7 and throughout Key Stage 3. From Year 7, pupils are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' work and by the end of Key Stage 3 a majority are able to do this with confidence and knowledge. Group work is very effective in encouraging collaborative skills and most pupils learn to control and organise their imaginative energies during the key stage. At Key Stage 4, where the subject has, until now, become an optional one for GCSE, pupils acquire good skills in improvisation, performance and critical appraisal, and become strong in all these areas. Pupils can produce concentrated improvisations which carry conviction and they respond well to the tasks they are set, such as group and pair work, improvisations and character role work. They show a knowledge and grasp of dramatic techniques and conventions and are able to discuss and evaluate their work sensibly and with good response. A Year 8 group, improvising a scene in a World War 2 air raid shelter, were able to make many perceptive comments and to approach the project with empathy and enthusiasm.

165. Progress is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, where drama is studied by all pupils, much of value is acquired. Pupils progress in oral skills, enlarging vocabulary and finding the right voice for a specific occasion and character; they also progress in self-control, collaborative techniques and in moral, social and cultural understanding. It is a strength of the school that all pupils have this opportunity to develop in this way during their first three years at the school. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress in relation to prior attainment.

166. Throughout the school, pupils work with interest and enjoyment. Pupils of very differing academic attainment collaborate constructively and develop a strong sense of teamwork, as well as the ability to work independently. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are able to achieve at a high level in many cases.

167. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic and take much pride in their work, whatever their level of aptitude. They behave politely and responsively, listening to the teacher with care and interest. They are co-operative and support each other in performance work and in evaluating their progress. They respond well to advice and suggestions by the teacher. Year 9 pupils were eager to refine their performances of choric speech as the witches in 'Macbeth'.

168. The curriculum is wide-ranging and full, with emphasis on practical performance, as well as improvisation. The drama studio lends itself to a variety of activities, including performance evenings for parents or other pupils, which are frequent and popular. Pupils have many opportunities to visit the professional theatre, which serve to enrich the curriculum. Assessment is well developed and is used both to monitor individual pupils' progress and to modify schemes of work.

169. The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 3 and excellent at GCSE level. Specialist knowledge and practical skills are evident at all levels. Teaching displays a very high degree of subject knowledge, a sense of excitement and enjoyment, high expectations, very skilful planning and great support and challenge to all pupils. Objectives are always made clear, as are targets for improvement. Lessons are always carefully planned, to cover as many areas of attainment as possible and methods are widely varied, engaging pupils' continued interest. Evaluation is constructive and encouraging and pupils learn to evaluate their own and others' performance. Lessons always offer challenge and stimulus. Management and discipline are excellent and often appear to be effortless.

170.Planning at all levels is very good and comprehensive. Schemes of work are carefully planned and reviewed. There are many cross-curricular elements, especially with English, where performance complements appreciation. Extra-curricular activities include regular theatre visits, school productions and links with primary schools. The school has its own theatre company, who devise and perform their own productions, such as the current 'Ashygirl'. Links have been forged with schools of speech and drama and other institutions and every attempt is made to introduce pupils to all areas of artistic performance. Assessment is constant, with formal reports and very good day-to-day lesson evaluations for the pupils' benefit.

171.The department is led with excellence by its head. Her enthusiasm and energy are boundless, as is her determination to widen the scope of the arts through the new Expressive Arts GCSE syllabus. She supports and guides other teachers with great skill and appreciation of their qualities. She has developed the curriculum widely in the last year and has planned with thought and resourcefulness for its future development. She monitors the curriculum constantly and the results of her assessments are immediately fed back into development plans.

172.Resources are adequate and the drama studio is a great asset. The department is just about to install a new sound and lighting system, which will greatly enhance its work. The last inspection report did not mention drama as a curriculum area.

172. **Music**

173.In Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are close to national expectations. Pupils use keyboards and percussion instruments to perform and compose, listen to and appraise music from different cultures and are experienced in evaluating their compositions. They have a good awareness of the elements of music and relate them to the music they hear. The standard of performing and composition skills is varied. For example, on the keyboard, they are familiar with the structure of chords, but only a small minority are able to use fingering techniques. They do not read or write staff notation well, so most melodic work is extemporised or memorised with some use of letter names. Performance levels are acceptable for low-attaining pupils in relation to their ability, but higher attainers should achieve more if more was demanded of them. In Key Stage 4, music is now offered in Year 10 as a component of an Expressive Arts GCSE course. As the pupils only started in September 1999, and observation of the music part of the course was not possible during the inspection, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement. Examination of pupils' written work so far, indicates standards close to national expectations.

174.Most pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There is evidence of continuity from one lesson to another and from year group to year group. For example, in composition there is progression from using graphic scores in Year 7 to using melody and chords in Year 8; in Year 9 the pupils compose variations on simple melodies. Pupils are able to acquire and consolidate skills at a level appropriate to their prior attainment, but higher-attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they would if they were given more demanding tasks. Instrumental pupils make good progress.

175.Pupils of all attainment levels have a good attitude to the subject; they work with enthusiasm and enjoyment and concentrate well when listening and during practical work. They are courteous and have good relationships with each other; for example, in class they listen attentively to each other's performances and discuss and evaluate them. They also work well together during group work. The take-up for instrumental teaching is close to the national average and there is a good take-up rate for the Expressive Arts GCSE course and extra-curricular activities. Pupils use computers to mix, edit and synthesise their compositions.

176.The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3. In most lessons seen the teaching was good or better and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Planning is effective, with lessons well sequenced with a variety of activities. Management of pupils is good, as are relationships with pupils. A strength of the teaching is the use of assessment with the pupils being involved in

discussing and evaluating their work, but this sometimes causes a lack of pace in the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into class activities and their individual programmes are used to inform planning and set targets.

177.The management of the department has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There are now well documented schemes of work, covering both attainment targets, which offer a balanced programme of study that includes music from different cultures. There is a lack of more ambitious performance work, both vocal and instrumental, and notation skills are not taught systematically across Key Stage 3.

178.The accommodation has not improved since the last inspection and the lack of spaces available for teaching inhibits effective group work, particularly when the only practice room is being used for instrumental teaching. The location of the various expressive arts subjects in different parts of the school campus makes collaboration between the departments difficult.

178.

Geography

179.On entry to the school, pupils' levels of attainment are well below national expectations. In addition, most pupils' general knowledge of geography is weak. By the end of Key Stage 3, there has been marked improvement, and pupils' attainment is nearer to nationally expected levels. In Key Stage 4, geography is a popular optional subject, and take-up rates greatly exceed local norms. GCSE results have improved over the last five years, and in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining a pass at grade G or higher was above the 1998 national average. In the same year, the percentage of pupils gaining a pass at grade C or above was below the 1998 national average. However, when the prior attainment and ability levels of pupils opting to study Geography at the start of Key Stage 4 are taken into account, the pass rate at grade C or above is satisfactory.

180.Pupils of all abilities make good progress in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In Year 7, pupils in mixed ability classes progress particularly well. In Years 8 and 9, the broad banding of pupils by ability is an effective system for ensuring that all pupils are taught at an appropriate level, and so progress at a rate which matches their ability. From the outset of Key Stage 3, pupils are set appropriate and challenging work that encourages rapid progress. Thus in Year 7, pupils learn to understand their local environment in greater depth; by Year 8 they are able to interpret satellite photographs in detail and by Year 9 they can appreciate and evaluate factors relevant to the management of a Tropical Rain Forest. In Key Stage 4, smaller teaching groups ensure that pupils can be given the individual assistance they need to maximise their progress. In both key stages, individual pupil test data is used effectively to inform teaching, and the new portfolio system should further improve the ability of staff to assess progress.

181.In both key stages, the most pupils demonstrate a positive and frequently enthusiastic attitude to work. Behaviour is of a high standard and this enhances learning. Pupils are polite, demonstrate a high capacity for personal study, and work effectively in collaboration. Group work seen in one Year 11 lesson was excellent, with groups of pupils willing to adopt different roles in considering the production of chocolate, and later an effective debate took place between the groups, resulting in a whole class viewpoint. Pupils in Year 7 can be trusted to act responsibly to leave the class for short periods of time to take photographs without direct staff supervision. Overall, pupils take pride in their work and persevere with tasks set. Many pupils are particularly conscientious over their homework.

182.In most lessons teaching is good or very good. The most effective teaching seen was in Key Stage 4, where one lesson was excellent. No lessons seen were less than satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, there is a succinct, purposeful start. After a brief recap using directed questions, the lesson proceeds through a number of varied activities that involve pupils in tasks that require them to use a number of different skills. Tasks are timed, providing short-term targets

for pupils to work towards, and clear outcomes are set. In this way, lessons are injected with a clear sense of pace. Work is well planned, the pupils find it challenging, and the strategies used encourage independent learning and self-reliance. In less effective lessons there is a slower start. The teacher introduces the lesson without much use of question and answer, so pupils are not all fully engaged, and some tend to talk. The lesson proceeds with varied activities, but at a pace that does not extend or challenge the majority of pupils. In all lessons, good relationships encourage a mutually supportive working environment that enhances learning. Pupils are well managed and lessons are well planned. Of particular note is the extensive provision and effective use of information technology. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Video film clips, projected digital camera images and the Internet are all used effectively by pupils and by the head of the curriculum area.

183. The leadership and management of the department is good. The development plan provides clear, measurable targets, although these are not clearly time-related. The scheme of work ensures pupils progress but would benefit from a more detailed approach in breaking down units of work into smaller sections. The scheme of work is not clearly resource linked, but all departmental members are fully aware of the resources available, and of their location. The amount of fieldwork has increased since the last inspection, and the introduction of a Key Stage 4 residential trip represents a particularly good advancement. The head of curriculum area monitors marking and teaching effectively. However, the department does not make much use of more formative comments in pupils' marked work. The departmental review process is effective. The head of curriculum area is aware of and implements whole school policy.

184. There is one Geography classroom, which is well equipped and which contains good display material. On a number of occasions when more than one Geography lesson is time-tabled, pupils are taught in a non-specialist room. While this was not seen to have an adverse effect on teaching and learning, the department should monitor this situation to ensure that no individuals or groups are disadvantaged.

184.

History

185. The previous inspection described pupils' achievements in history as average against national standards. GCSE examination results were above the national average in 1993 and close to the national average in 1994. The quality of teaching and learning was good and pupils made good progress. Schemes of work were described as thin, and resources were inadequate for Key Stage 4 work.

186. Evidence from this inspection shows pupils' attainment to be average at the end of both key stages and pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress. The number of GCSE entries has risen and examination results have improved. In 1997 and in 1998 there was a 100% pass rate at A*-G grades, with almost half of these being A*-C grades in 1997 and four-fifths being A*-C grades in 1998. Early indications suggest that the 1999 results are similar. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. Schemes of work are now very good with adequate resources to support the full curriculum.

187. Through Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 9 pupils are working at or towards National Curriculum Level 5. During the autumn term a programme of extra literacy replaces some history lessons for Year 7 pupils. However, there is often an historical element in selected reading materials, such as the story of Anne Frank. They study the myths and legends of ancient Rome prior to progressing to Roman and Mediaeval British history. In Year 8 pupils move onto Tudor studies, considering the impact of the reign of Henry VIII on English life. In Year 9 pupils examine the change from cottage industries to factories. They develop research and discussion skills, holding class debates on child labour during the industrial revolution. There is evidence of improved literacy skills, particularly in handwriting and spelling when drafting or re-drafting of written work.

188. In Key Stage 4, all pupils make good progress in their preparation and coursework for GCSE examinations in social and economic history. Year 10 pupils compare enclosure with the open field system of farming, while in Year 11 there is much evidence, in work folders and during lessons, of personal study and research into women's rights and enfranchisement. Pupils develop debating skills and class discussions on topics such as women's opportunities and traditional or non-traditional jobs are well argued.

189. Most pupils respond well to teachers' expectations, sharing and collaborating as necessary. They raise their hands to answer questions, show respect for each other's ideas and views, and are mostly enthusiastic in their work. Classroom debates are sometimes noisy, but the pupils remain on task and concentrate well. Lively debates on the rights and wrongs of historical decisions promote pupils' moral awareness. Their good attitudes towards learning are evident in neatly presented work, which frequently includes well-annotated sketches and worksheets.

190. The standard and quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, with almost three-quarters of lessons being good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and classroom and pupil management is good, with some very good features, such as the close attention to seating arrangements, which ensures that all pupils receive adequate support. Extra work is available in most lessons to allow more able students to get on further. The rare occasions of inappropriate behaviour are sensitively handled with a minimum of fuss. Lessons are well planned, with a good balance of variety and challenge, which consolidates learning and promotes interest. Classroom assistance is rare, but when used, it is effective and efficient. Teachers create a pleasant atmosphere and lessons are lively and fun. Day to day assessment is efficient and informs lesson planning. Where pupils have individual education plans, teachers use them as working documents to monitor and record progress. Marking of written work is inconsistent, though the new policy for giving both effort grades and achievement levels has begun to be implemented.

191. The curriculum is designed to ensure pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are built upon and closely matches the National Curriculum programmes of study. It is further enhanced through cross-curricular projects, such as local canal renovation and residential field trips to Stansfield, Oxfordshire, which promote pupils' social and cultural development.

192. The three teachers of history are well qualified and new training needs are met on a regular basis. All are computer literate. Classroom accommodation is adequate although, with larger classes, space is restricted. Available resources, including a shared computer cluster, are used well to support learning and to encourage pupils' personal study skills. Textbooks, historical artefacts and computer software are adequate to support history at both key stages.

193. Departmental documentation is very well planned. Schemes of work are thorough, with detailed short-term schemes outlining relevant resources and including criteria for monitoring and measuring pupils' progress. Assessment procedures include detailed analyses of examination results, which in turn lead to target setting aimed at raising academic standards. The observation of teaching and lessons further contributes towards departmental target setting. The department

is well led and efficient, giving good value for money.

193.

Information technology

194. Under the previous inspection, standards, which varied between departments, were generally appropriate in relation to the pupils' age and ability. The quality of teaching was good, but balanced towards direct methods rather than encouraging independent learning. Assessment procedures lacked formality. Teachers had good subject knowledge, but information technology was in the early stages of co-ordination and the pupils were not competent. The potential for those pupils with special educational needs was not fully realised.

195. There is now a significant improvement in the school's provision of information technology and in pupils' progress in both key stages.

196. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are working at or towards National Curriculum Level 5, which is in line with national expectations. Year 7 pupils know the basics of computing and the rudiments of touch-typing. They use passwords to log-on and open new files and use word processors competently, producing stories and poems, which they save, retrieve and print out. By Year 8, the pupils use formulae accurately to input and amend information on spreadsheets and databases. They begin to convert numeric information into line graphs, which supports their mathematical studies. By Year 9, pupils use the Internet and e-mail with confidence, which promotes independent research skills and consolidates their learning in a range of subjects. In geography, pupils use digital cameras to support environmental studies. In music they use computers to mix, sequence, and edit their compositions. In science, pupils confidently control specific events, such as setting off alarms and cooling fans, modify their instructions for comparative testing and investigate the planetary system, transferring their Internet research into spreadsheets and databases. At all ability levels, pupils make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language make good progress in relation to their individual needs.

197. In 1998 51 pupils took a GCSE combined information and business studies course. All were entered and 96% achieved A*-G passes, with 49% achieving A*-C. Of 31 less able pupils offered a short course in information technology 97% achieved A*-G passes, with 6 of these achieving A*-C grades. Results for the 31 students entered for the 1999 examinations show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the combined course – 76%. Similarly, of the 104 pupils taking the short course, results show an increase to 56% of the proportion achieving A*-C.

198. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is average. In Key Stage 4 pupils continue to use basic software to support all aspects of their learning. Additionally, they retrieve satellite weather maps from the Internet to support geographical studies. In science, they extend their control and modelling skills, experimenting with sensors to record speed and velocity. Data obtained on census figures is presented in graph format to highlight population trends in 20th century history. There is much evidence, in their work and in lesson observation, of pupils using a range of techniques to conduct independent research that strongly promotes their personal development and self-esteem. Pupils make good overall progress.

199. Pupils' attitudes toward learning are very good, they are interested, well motivated and respond well to teachers' good expectations. They respect staff and each other, and work well, either individually or collaboratively. They are trustworthy when using computers for independent research and equipment is treated carefully. The school's lunchtime and extra-curricular computer clubs are popular and many pupils use these to develop personal skills, particularly in modern languages and desktop publishing. 'Microtechs', the school's computer prefects, give very good support to pupils and staff. This system strongly promotes the social and moral

development of pupils and prefects.

200. The standard and quality of teaching is good. In the twelve lessons observed, three-quarters were good or better, with one being unsatisfactory. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and confident in their teaching strategies. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of available resources such as overhead projectors. Classroom organisation and pupil management is good. Lesson expectations are high. Individual education plans record and monitor the progress of pupils with special needs and of pupils with English as a second language. Teachers' records and pupil tracking systems inform lesson planning and ensure pupils build on their earlier work.

201. In English and mathematics the use of 'Successmaker' supports learning and progress in these subjects. Computer technology features strongly in the development of language and literacy skills for pupils with English as a second language. Computer aided learning is very well integrated across the curriculum, reinforcing many subjects.

202. Long and short-term planning is good, with reviews and curriculum assessment used to inform forward development. The well-balanced curriculum is matched to National Curriculum programmes of study, and fully meets statutory requirements. Cross-curricular planning and organisation is a strength of this very well led department. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the department and strives to acquire quality equipment in line with departmental aims and as near to business standards as possible.

203. Staff and departmental needs are identified through meetings and lesson observations, and the team of five appropriately qualified teachers ensures whole school computer literacy. An experienced technician efficiently maintains two well-equipped computer suites and four small clusters of computers, shared by several subject areas. Deployment of resources is mostly efficient, although the English department has limited access to its shared cluster. Funding is used wisely for maximum pupil benefit. This is a very well-managed department, which gives good value for money.

203.

Modern foreign languages

204. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils achieve below national expectations in French. Teacher assessments confirm this. Pupils understand and respond appropriately to routine instructions and questions with little hesitation, recall previously learned vocabulary and structures, but their recall of patterns in the language is less secure. Pupils respond to questions with brief answers or set phrases, substituting words to change meaning, participate in short dialogues following a model and using written prompts. The higher attainers do this mainly from memory, but lower attaining pupils are often too dependent upon written prompts and this adversely affects their pronunciation when there has been insufficient opportunity for them to practise. All copy accurately and the higher attainers write sentences successfully to a model describing events in the present, past and future and expressing simple opinions in a variety of topic areas. Most write for a variety of purposes and audiences. All identify the main points and specific detail from extracts of speech at near normal speed and short texts containing familiar language with some repetition and guidance. Higher attainers succeed in interpreting for others.

205. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils achieve standards below national averages and in line with the requirements for grades D- G of GCSE examinations, higher attainers achieve in line with requirements for higher grades. They participate in dialogues, most using set phrases and following a model, describing events in the past, present and future, higher attainers in some detail, expressing opinions and justifying their views. They identify the main points and specific detail from longer extracts of speech at near normal speed and from a variety of texts. Pupils write longer pieces for a variety of purposes and include a fair amount of detail. Writing is usually fairly accurate. In Urdu and Bengali pupils achieve standards generally in line with national

averages. Pupils studying Bengali in Year 11 achieve standards above national averages. They identify detail and the main points from texts and read scripts with ease. They respond appropriately to instructions and questions in the language at normal speed and with little need for repetition. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in dealing with extracts of speech on tape, but this is because of the nature of the written questions in English or in Urdu. Writing is well developed; pupils have a good understanding of the scripts and are competent at using the characters themselves. Speaking skills are less secure; pupils respond with short one or two word answers and have insufficient opportunity to use the language informally or participate in communication for real purposes. The percentage of candidates gaining A*-C grades in Urdu and Bengali are in line with national averages; the percentage gaining grades A*-G is above national averages in both community languages. The percentage of the cohort entered for Urdu is above national figures. In French, the percentage of candidates achieving grades A*-C and A*-G is below national averages. The short GCSE course that contributed to these figures has now been replaced by a full course. The percentage of the cohort entered for examination in French is well below national figures.

206. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 in French. They increase their range of vocabulary and structures and develop all four skills. Listening skills are well developed because of the effective use of French in lessons, speaking skills are well developed in lessons where pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally in pairs and when they are required to use the language in realistic situations and use more than one skill. Opportunities for them to do this need to be developed more fully. In Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in French and Bengali, but in Urdu progress is satisfactory because of the limited range and variety of activities provided. Progress is hampered in Bengali because there is inadequate opportunity for the reinforcement of reading and writing through display and because of the lack of appropriate resources in both community languages, thus restricting the variety of activities that can be provided, but this is acknowledged as a priority in the departmental development plan.

207. Pupils have positive attitudes towards language learning; they are keen to try out the languages for themselves. They listen attentively to their teachers, are well behaved, have good relationships with each other and their teachers and are concerned to do well. They work well in pairs and small groups. However, some pupils become restless when their eagerness to participate is frustrated by lengthy teacher-led activities in some classes. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, however, are in the early stages of development.

208. The quality of teaching is good. All lessons seen were judged to be satisfactory or better and 7 out of every 10 lessons seen were judged to be good. Teachers' knowledge of the languages they teach is very good and they use the languages effectively and often exclusively in lessons; this is effective in developing pupils' listening skills. In some lessons pupils are not given enough opportunity to test out skills for themselves; they are often too dependent upon the teacher's guidance and written prompts so that activities sometimes present little challenge. In the best lessons, however, expectations are high and pupils are given a challenge appropriate to their ability and encouraged to solve problems themselves in realistic situations. Objectives and presentations are usually clear and activities appropriate and well sequenced to ensure that pupils build successfully on previous learning. In community languages presentations make insufficient use of visual aids to focus attention and develop speaking skills. However in some lessons planning is not always sufficiently focussed on the needs of higher attainers to always be effective in allowing these pupils achieve their full potential. Good use is made of the modern foreign languages assistant.

209.Strategies used are sometimes limited in variety and range, particularly in Urdu and Bengali and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use the languages for real purposes. In French pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise informally but pairwork activities are too often limited to rehearsal.

210.Control and management of pupils is good and often very good; this is effective in creating a supportive and purposeful atmosphere for language learning. Teachers make good use of time and resources; the pace is usually brisk but is sometimes slowed by lengthy teacher- led activities or resources that are not sufficiently adapted for pupils of differing ability within mixed ability groups. Where pupils are encouraged to rely on written prompts, this adversely affects pronunciation in French. In French classes teachers use the overhead projector, video and flashcards effectively to clarify meaning and focus attention but there is no evidence of this in community languages. Teachers monitor individual progress effectively and give help as necessary. Good practice seen in French at Key Stage 4 to challenge higher attainers needs to be developed further. Good use is made of homework to reinforce and extend learning.

211.Statutory requirements are met. The department has recently introduced an after school class in Urdu for Year 9 and as enhancement for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils needing extra help with reading and writing. There is an effective system of monitoring and teachers observe each other's lessons. This, together with plans for sharing and developing methodology and resources across all languages, is effective in spreading good practice and achieving consistency across the department. Guidance contained in the departmental handbook is clear and comprehensive. Schemes of work detail content but are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3. They are linked to potential GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 but contain insufficient detail as to how materials and topics are to be approached by groups of differing ability or how to cater for classes containing a wide range of ability.

212.Procedures for assessment are very good. Pupils' involvement in tracking their own progress or setting their own targets is being developed. Timetable provision leads to inefficiencies in the use of time and resources and hampers progress; for example two hour lessons in Urdu hinder progress and the length of lessons in all languages is too long and hampers progress over time. Bengali is taught in several classrooms at a distance from specialist areas and this makes sharing of resources difficult and specialist resources are not easily accessible.

213.The leadership and management of the department is now good. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last report; accommodation for French and Urdu has improved, but there is still a problem in Bengali. The quality of teaching has improved and the use of the languages as the main means of communication is now consistent in all lessons. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment has improved but there is still scope for further development. GCSE results and standards achieved in lessons have declined, but with the clear policies and vision of the new head of curriculum area, together with the commitment of members of the department to raising standards, the development of teaching strategies and the sharing of good practice across languages, the department has a very good capacity for improvement.

213.

Physical education

214.Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation. This reflects the most recent teachers' assessments for 1999. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils plan and perform complex sequences of movement in dance and gymnastics. A small number of pupils perform at a higher level in dance. These pupils show good extension, poise and grace when they dance. However, in gymnastics, many pupils do not achieve good quality

movement. Pupils know how to warm up and cool down and in gymnastics they often take responsibility for the warm up in a lesson.

215.The attainment of the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. Unlike most schools in the country, all pupils in Key Stage 4 follow and enter a short course in GCSE physical education or games. The introduction of this course has played a significant part in raising standards in Key Stage 4. In 1998 the percentage of pupils gaining higher grades (A*-C) was well below the national average. However, in 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining higher grades almost doubled. At the end of the Key Stage, most pupils have sufficient knowledge and understanding of fitness and health to be able to plan an appropriate programme of exercise. Pupils' attainment in rock climbing and dance are strengths of the GCSE course. Pupils' attainment in rounders is line with expectations, though performance in basketball is weaker. Although pupils refine and perform skills in practice, they use few advanced strategies and tactics in a game. Attainment in both key stages has improved since the last inspection.

216.In Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils improve their performance in dance and gymnastics. They improve their ability to evaluate performance in dance because teachers ask well-focused questions. Progress is slower in some gymnastics lessons because the teacher does not give enough guidance to help them to improve. In some lessons in Key Stage 3 progress is slowed down because pupils have difficulty in remembering what they have learnt between lessons that are two weeks apart. Inappropriate footwear worn by the pupils inhibits their ability to produce high quality gymnastics.

217.In Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress. They improve their knowledge and understanding of theory because lessons are well planned and the teacher provides a good range of activities to ensure that pupils reinforce what they have learnt. Pupils make good progress in learning the skills of basketball but their progress of learning about game strategies is limited because teachers do not emphasise this in their teaching. In addition, limited accommodation prevents pupils from playing full games frequently. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language in both key stages improve their knowledge of the language of the subject because teachers make good use of whiteboards, flash cards and worksheets to help them.

218.Pupils have good attitudes to learning in both key stages. This is an improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Key Stage 4. Most pupils enjoy physical education lessons and there are very few non-participants. Around half the pupils take part in inter-year sporting competitions held at lunchtimes. However, far fewer pupils take part in extra-curricular dance and sports clubs held after school. In most lessons pupils listen carefully and follow instructions. They concentrate well and work well with others to plan dances and gymnastic sequences. Behaviour is often very good and pupils are well mannered and courteous to visitors. They are quick to help with the equipment. However, in some in some lower band lessons pupils take a long time to settle and listen to instructions. The pace of the lessons slows and pupils make less progress. A significant number of pupils do not remove all jewellery and leave long hair loose. These are risks to their personal safety.

219.The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 the teaching is good. There is no teaching that is unsatisfactory. All teachers are well qualified and have a good knowledge of the activities that they teach. They are very clear of the requirements for GCSE and this ensures that they have consistently high expectations of their pupils in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 expectations of pupils' performance are satisfactory. Teachers' planning is good. They have clear learning objectives for each lesson. In the best teaching the range of approaches used by teachers is good and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers always start a lesson by re-capping what has been learnt and by making clear what is to be learnt. In the best lessons they give clear demonstrations and ask probing questions to review and develop knowledge and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to

observe, analyse and evaluate performance. Lessons include a warm-up, often led by pupils, and most include a cool down. Teachers make good use of white-boards, flash cards and worksheets to help pupils to learn the language of the subject, both in practical and theory lessons. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and include good levels of physical activity. Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well and they have established good working relationships with their pupils. Teachers give homework that supports learning in both practical and theory lessons.

220.Satisfactory teaching has scope for improvement. In some Key Stage 3 gymnastics lessons teachers do not encourage enough demonstration, observation and analysis of performance by the pupils. In some dance lessons the warm up is not vigorous enough and in some games lessons there is insufficient emphasis on improving pupils' understanding of game strategies and tactics. Teachers are not always vigilant enough in ensuring pupils are safely prepared for lessons.

221.The recent re-structuring of the expressive arts has led to improved management of the subject. The subject staff work well as a team to raise expectations and standards. The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. The balance of activities in Key Stage 3 enables pupils to learn fewer activities over a longer period and therefore to make better progress. The accommodation overall is poor. The lack of changing and showering facilities, the poor condition of all the outdoor facilities and the limited indoor facilities are a real restriction on the curriculum and the progress that pupils make. A newly created health and fitness room is an asset to the department. The health and safety policy does not contain enough detail and risk assessment has not been carried out. A number of health and safety concerns were reported to the school.

221.

Religious education

222.By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils study a variety of world faiths and forms of worship including places of worship. They know details about the importance of Easter to Christians, and they have a good grasp of stories about Moses and understand the sequence from his birth to the exodus. They understand the reasons for domes and minarets in mosques, and they work in some detail on this.

223.By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average, and in Year 11 it is well above expected national levels. Examination results, which are a mixture of full GCSE courses and short courses, have been improving over the last four years. Grades A* - C have risen from 38% in 1996 to 58% in 1998. Grades A* – G have risen from 95% to 100% over the same period. The latest results show a very marked improvement, and A* - C grades have risen to 94% in Islamic Studies.

224.Pupils are able to give reasoned arguments in their discussions. For example, in Year 11 they could give several of the traditional proofs for the existence of God, and were able to discuss this from well balanced points of view. In Year 11, they have very good knowledge of the facts about Muslim marriage, but they are also able to understand and write in considerable depth about the importance and significance of ceremonies and practices.

225.Pupils in Key Stage 3 make good progress and they are building a good foundation for later examination work. They are well motivated and interested in their work. They answer questions well and are able to give their own opinions. In Key Stage 4 pupils make very good progress. In their multi-faith studies they are learning about the faith and practice of several religions, such as the importance for commitment of bar/bat mitzvah in Judaism. In Islamic Studies they learn the details and reasons concerning the topics in great depth. All is carefully referenced to the teachings and traditions of Muhammad (pbuh). Pupils who have special needs make similarly good, or very good progress towards their own targets. Overall, the successful progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is due to the high expectations and very

good management by the teachers.

226. Pupils' attitudes and responses towards religious studies are very good. In one Year 11 class, response was excellent both in behaviour and scholarship. Pupils persevere with their work, concentrate well, and behaviour is usually very good. They are keen to answer questions, and they join in discussions and the lesson's activities well. They work co-operatively together and with the teachers.

227. Teaching is good overall and there are some very good features in Key Stage 4. For example, teachers display very good knowledge and understanding of their topics, and can often give more detailed background to the work. Their expectations and management of pupils are very good, and they bring good pace and challenge to the work. Planning is good and includes activities and methods which are well matched to the aims of the lessons. They have produced many of the resources themselves, and they use both these and the time in each lesson well. They have established a good environment for work and behaviour, and the relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

228. The religious education curriculum follows the locally agreed syllabus well, and also addresses the requirements for the examinations. It is broad and well balanced and allows pupils to move successfully from one key stage to the other. Assessment is thorough with assessment tasks at the end of each topic. Teachers meet regularly to discuss the outcomes of their work and to make adjustments to the planning in the light of these outcomes.

229. The leadership of the department is very good. The subject is monitored well, and there has been considerable work on improving the overall quality of display and of examination results. The head of the department has encouraged a calm respectful approach, which is passed onto the pupils. She is rigorous in showing respect to Muhammad (pbuh) and to the prophets of other religions as well. She also accords respect to pupils and consequently gains their respect. This is undoubtedly a feature and a strength of the department.

230. There has been significant improvement since the last report, especially in the examination results, and in the quality of teaching. The subject is now very effective and makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

230.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

230.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

231. The team consisted of 12 inspectors who spent a combined total of 47.5 days in school over a five day period. All teachers were observed in the classroom and all subjects seen. Registration was observed and assemblies listened to in the mornings and visited on the Friday before the inspection. Extra-curricular activities were observed, for example in music. A representative group of pupils were interviewed and many more talked to in and around the school. Pupils' work was looked at carefully. Representative samples were scrutinised and work available in classrooms or on display around the school inspected.

232. Interviews or discussions were conducted with governors, the headteacher, other staff with senior and middle management responsibilities, heads of department, staff involved with the special educational needs department and other support staff.

233. Prior to the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers and parents. A questionnaire was sent out to parents and 202 replies received. The school provided a good deal of documentary material, prior to the inspection, that helped the team get a picture of the school and set the agenda for their time within it.

234.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	598	5	244	360

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	37.17
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week	219

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	74.4
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24.2
	KS4	23.6

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	1 487 614
Total Expenditure	1 476 074
Expenditure per pupil	2 468
Balance brought forward from previous year	84 805
Balance carried forward to next year	96 345

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	420
Number of questionnaires returned:	202

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	23	66	8	1	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	26	62	6	4	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	55	19	5	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	25	64	7	4	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	31	57	5	6	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	56	7	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	34	56	6	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	37	51	6	5	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	57	13	4	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	53	12	6	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	52	9	3	3