

INSPECTION REPORT

KING'S NORTON BOYS' SCHOOL

Northfield Road, King's Norton

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103562

Headteacher: Mr Ian Sonley

Reporting inspector: Akram Khan OBE
27296

Dates of inspection: 24-28 January 2000

Inspection number: 184599

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Wright
Date of previous inspection:	27-31 March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Akram Khan OBE	Registered Inspector	N/A	How well the school is led and managed
			Sixth form
Geza Hanniker	Lay Inspector	N/A	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents
John Brigden	Team Inspector	Art	Accommodation
Patricia Walker	Team Inspector	History	Staffing
Judith Tolley	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well are pupils or students taught
Jacqueline Pentlow	Team Inspector	Religious education	Equal opportunities
			Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Norman Bertram	Team Inspector	Geography	Careers
Graham Preston	Team Inspector	Design and technology	Resources for learning
		Information and communication technology	
		Business studies	
Paul Hartwright	Team Inspector	Science	How high are standards
Sheila Nolan	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students
James Bowden	Team Inspector	Physical education	Special educational needs
Elizabeth Charlesworth	Team Inspector	Music	Extra-curricular activities

Barbara Baughan	Team Inspector	English, media studies	English as an additional language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King's Norton Boys is a smaller than average foundation comprehensive school of 739 pupils aged 11-18, with 127 students in the sixth form. The school is very popular and heavily oversubscribed. The vast majority of boys comes from economically and socially advantaged parts of Birmingham. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average. There are proportionately fewer high attaining boys than in a typical comprehensive school. Approximately 12 per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage, 7.44 per cent, of pupils with English as an additional language, is above the national average. Nine pupils have statements of special educational needs and a further 66 pupils are on Stages 1 to 4 of the Code of Practice. The percentages of pupils with statements of special educational needs and the number of pupils on Stages 1-4 are below the national average. The collaborative arrangement with King's Norton Girls' School at Sixth Form level brings about 50 girls into the school daily.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school achieves standards that are at least as good as they should be. It is well governed and through effective leadership and a strong commitment to school improvement it provides sound education. Pastoral support is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and can express themselves clearly and confidently. Teachers are hard working and 94 per cent of lessons are at least satisfactory or better, including more than half which are good or very good. Pupils are well prepared for higher education courses and the world of work. Extra-curricular sports, music and outdoor pursuits extend pupils' learning experiences. The school has responded positively to the last report and has made satisfactory improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment in National Curriculum Tests is above the national average in English and well above in mathematics and science. A-level results, since the last report, show a marked improvement.
- Marked improvements were noted in design and technology, history and art.
- Effective and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and clear education direction.
- The senior management team, staff and governors have a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment.
- Very good understanding by governors of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Good parental support. Highly effective applications of the principles of best value. Effective and efficient use of learning resources including specific grants and other funding.
- The supportive and caring environment promotes positive attitudes, good behaviour and a strong positive ethos. Effective guidance for higher education and pupils' careers.
- Good provision for extra-curricular activities which are well supported by pupils.

What could be improved

- Current statutory requirements in respect of information technology. Insufficient time given to the school's curriculum.
- Consistent application of school's and departmental assessment policies. Inconsistent approaches to homework and marking.
- Provision for spiritual development.
- The roles of senior and middle managers do not extend to include monitoring, challenging and evaluating teaching and standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement. Members of the senior management team and the school's governors take responsibility for subjects and participate effectively in most aspects of the school's development. The senior management team is not big enough to monitor, evaluate, challenge and support effectively the work of all subject departments. The school's development plan identifies measurable targets but subject plans, however, do not include specific targets. The heads of department have formulated good policies and curricular plans for all subjects but monitoring and evaluation procedures, however, are not rigorous enough and all heads of departments are not involved in evaluating teaching and standards. The school offers a well-coordinated and structured personal and social education programme. Policies to promote good attendance and improve pupils' behaviour are proving successful. Attendance rates have remained broadly in line with the national average. Exclusion rates have decreased significantly. The length of the school day has not been extended and still remains a weakness. Much thought has been given to assessment but there are still weaknesses and inconsistencies across subjects in the way pupils' progress is evaluated and reported. Systems and structures for improvement are satisfactory and the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	C		

In 1999, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, in National Curriculum test results was above the national average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, their performance was

well above average. Over the last four years the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was close to the national average and above the average of similar schools. Over the years, GCSE results have varied and in 1995 the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C(55 per cent) was well above the national average of 41.2 per cent. In 1999, the percentage, (44.1 per cent) of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was above the boys' average (41.1 per cent) nationally but was close to the national average and the average for similar schools. The average total GCSE point score was close to the national average. A-level results have improved since the previous OFSTED inspection. In 1999 and consistently since 1997, GCSE results in English were above national averages for all pupils, significantly above national averages for boys and was well above average for boys in similar schools. In mathematics GCSE results were below the national average but in line with similar schools' averages. In science, over the same period, GCSE results have been above the national and similar school averages. GCSE results in art, history and design technology have shown consistency and improvement. Realistic and measurable whole-school targets are set and communicated through the annual governors' report to parents. The average A/AS-level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE-A levels or AS equivalent rose from 10.2 (National: 16.6) in 1994 to 16.2.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are good. They like the school and participate enthusiastically in extra music, inter-school sports and out-door pursuits.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour is good in and out of classrooms. Nonetheless, a small minority does not have the social skills and maturity expected of them.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils of all ages are helpful, co-operative, courteous and trustworthy. The relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils' personal skills in taking initiatives are less well developed when organising their own studies, though still satisfactory.
Attendance	Attendance at the school is satisfactory; it is close to the national averages of similar schools and above the Birmingham LEA average. Pupils in the lower school attend well but the attendance of a small group of Year 11 pupils is unsatisfactory.

The school is an orderly community. Most pupils are keen and eager to acquire new knowledge and contribute constructively to the lessons. The behaviour of the older pupils is generally a good example to the younger ones. Relationships in the school are good. The pupils are sympathetic to other people's feelings, values, beliefs and predicaments. The sixth form students are good role models and are helpful.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years

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

The quality of teaching is good overall in all stages of learning. In 94 per cent of lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better, in 54 per cent it was good or better and in 18 per cent it was very good and contributed significantly to pupils' learning. Very good and good teaching which enabled pupils to make rapid progress was seen in German, history and music in Key Stage 3; in some lessons in mathematics, English, science, design and technology and physical education in both key stages and in business studies and physical education in the sixth form. Teaching in art and history is consistently good. A small number of ineffective lessons were seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 where pupils' rates of progress were too slow. The support for pupils with special educational needs is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and carefully considered relevant curriculum. Legal requirements in respect of information technology are not met and aspects of music provision in Years 7 and 8 are weak.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There are effective procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs. Targets in individual plans are precise and systematic assessment and reviews are carried out.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Most of the pupils with English as an additional language have no problems in following the school curriculum. They do as well as other pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE examinations.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for social and moral development is good. Satisfactory cultural development gives pupils an understanding of both their own culture and that of others. The school makes unsatisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development in many subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a safe environment and the quality of pastoral support is good. However, how pupils' attainment and progress is assessed and their use for curricular planning is unsatisfactory.

At Key Stage 3, the school provides a broad and carefully considered relevant curriculum but the legal requirements in respect of information technology are not met. Other weaknesses in the balance of this curriculum include the low time given to performing arts such as music and drama. At Key Stage 4, not enough time is given to the taught curriculum. The breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum provision is strengthened by the collaboration with the neighbouring girls' school and

twenty-three A-level courses are offered. Pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum throughout the school. The overall provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, ably supported by the two deputy heads, provides clear, purposeful and effective leadership. Senior and middle managers roles need to include monitoring, challenging and raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive, meets most of its statutory duties and oversees effectively the work of the school. Well supported by the administrator it manages efficiently the school's funds to ensure good value for money.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The head, deputy heads, heads of department and staff have been appraised. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and standards in subjects is not rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Experienced and well-qualified staff are deployed suitably. Accommodation and learning resources are generally well used. The library is under-resourced and under-used.

The headteacher has been successful in creating an environment in which staff and pupils can achieve success. There are sound and effective strategies for consultation, planning and review. The governors readily question policies, procedures and practices. Development priorities focus sharply on standards, teaching, learning, management and learning resources. Departmental plans are of variable quality and do not include specific quantifiable targets. Effective procedures are in place to manage provision for pupils with special educational needs. New teachers are well supported. There are a few weak teachers who need professional support and training.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school. • Children making good progress. • Good teaching and good behaviour of boys. • Comfortable to approach school with problems. • Expect children to work hard. • Helping their children mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • Information on how the child is getting on. • School working more closely with parents.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interesting range of activities outside lessons. | |
|--|--|

Overall the inspectors agree with the parents' views on ethos, standards, behaviour and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very happy at school. A few parents observed that the lower attaining pupils were not expected to work hard enough. In some lessons, these pupils are not well supported and are under-challenged. Homework planners have been introduced and their completion monitored regularly by form tutors. Greater efforts are needed to improve the quality and consistency of homework assignments. At times, it does not provide sufficient extension to the pupils' learning. The year-end reports to parents on their children's attainment and progress do not tell what to improve and how the parents can help. The school is keen to strengthen the already good relationships with parents, to enable all pupils to benefit from the many opportunities that are offered.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average. Standardised reading and spelling tests in Year 7 and the Cognitive Ability Tests administered in Year 9 confirm this. However, there are proportionately fewer high attaining boys than in a typical comprehensive school. Approximately ten per cent of boys in Birmingham go to selective schools. The ability profiles for the end of Key Stage 2 show an improvement in the National Curriculum tests and pupils' attainment in Years 7 and 8, at the end of Key Stage 2, was in line with the national average. Most pupils with English as an additional language are fluent speakers and have no problems in following the school curriculum. For the few pupils with little knowledge of English there is no Section 11 support but they are offered a special programme to support them until they are more confident and independent. The proportion of boys with special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is also below the national average. The pupils having the highest level of need have moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, speech or communication impairment, or are autistic or dyslexic.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the attainment of pupils in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science was well above the national average when taking all subjects together. The percentage of pupils reaching level 5 in English, mathematics and science was above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 was above the national average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. In 1999, in comparison with similar schools, pupils' performance in the mathematics test was very high and their performance in English and science tests was well above average. Over the last four years, 1996 to 1999, the results have varied considerably. Overall results are close to the national average and compared with boys' performance nationally over the same period, the results are above average. In mathematics results have improved each year. Overall, the trend over the last four years for the three subjects is in line with that observed nationally. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys from different ethnic groups.
3. Over the years, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results have varied and in 1995 the percentages of pupils obtaining grades A*-C(55 per cent) was well above the national average of 41.2 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* -C, or equivalent, and over the previous three years was close to the national average. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grades A* - G was close to the national average in 1999 and close to the national average over the last three years. The average point score per pupil was close to the national average. The trend in the school's average total GCSE point score per pupil over the last six years is below the national trend. Compared with similar schools, results are broadly in line for students gaining five or more GCSE subjects at A* - C. For pupils gaining one or more subjects at A*-G, results are

well above the national average. Pupils with English as an additional language do as well as other pupils in GCSE examinations.

4. A-level results for students entering two or more General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-levels in 1999 and over the last three years are close to the national average. The best A-level results for 1999 were achieved in drama, English literature, media studies, history, business studies and geography.
5. The analysis of performance of pupils with special educational needs indicates that their results in the National Curriculum Test in English, mathematics and science and GCSE are commensurate with their prior attainment. In 1999, one pupil on the Code of Practice achieved at least a GCSE grade F and the majority 2 or 3 F+ grades.
6. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in English is above average. Pupils are confident and articulate in their speaking and can express ideas with some elaboration. Presentation is careful and neat. Reading levels at the end of the key stage are just below expectations for their age. GCSE results were above average in 1999. Pupils in the upper band are working at above the national expectations but pupils' attainment in lower band classes in Year 10 is poor in relation to their potential because of limited motivation. English literature results have been near average for the last three years. Standards are in line with, or just below, course requirements in the sixth form. In English literature some high level grades, including two 'A's were obtained in the A-level examinations. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, work in smaller groups and, although they do not all acquire sufficient skill to take the GCSE examination; they increase their basic competence significantly.
7. Pupils present good levels of spoken English, even at the start of their time in school. They enjoy discussion and respond well to the opportunities given in different subjects of the curriculum, notably in music when they plan group compositions and presentations and in science when they discuss their experiments. Pupil representatives from all parts of the school were articulate and confident in their conversations with the inspectors. There are opportunities to develop reading skills in most subjects, by reading silently and aloud from textbooks. Pupils in Year 7 whose competence is still limited work with trained volunteers from Year 9 who hear them read. Most departments support the extension of vocabulary, together with accuracy of spelling, by displaying lists of words and terminology in their subject areas.
8. Pupils' attainment in mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 3, is average, taking account of the work seen, even though in 1999, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum test results was above the national average. The attainment is in line with that expected for the range of ability in each class. GCSE results for 1999 were below the national average but in line with the average for similar schools. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 show good recall of work previously covered such as work on angles and simple equations and they show improving algebraic skills. Those of average attainment are beginning to explore patterns and notice generalizations. Pupils of below average attainment, including those with special educational needs, can work

with addition and subtraction of money to amounts exceeding whole numbers of pounds. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 4 are in line with national expectations. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 work well with trigonometric ratios and can apply these to finding areas of triangles as in a lesson involving two dimensional and three dimensional shapes and solids. However, the standards seen in several pieces of coursework for GCSE are unsatisfactory and below that appropriate for the highest tier of entry. Pupils of below average attainment, and those with special educational needs, still have weak numeracy skills at the end of Key Stage 4. Students in Year 12 build on their data handling skills from GCSE. Students in Year 13 are able to apply their trigonometric and algebraic skills to solving problems on the conservation of momentum. Sixth form results with a small number of students are well below average due to student entry levels being too low.

9. Numeracy skills are used in a few subjects apart from mathematics. In physical education they use mental arithmetic skills satisfactorily to work out fitness levels and count pulse rates. In science, pupils use numeracy skills to measure lengths in metric units in Key Stage 3 but they use graphical representation more rarely than could be expected. Accuracy in measurement is enhanced in design and technology. Music uses numeracy well to enhance pupils' understanding of octaves. There is, however, insufficient support for numeracy from many subjects across the curriculum.
10. In science, pupils' attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 3 and in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, most pupils with average and above average attainment show good knowledge of ideas such as force, light energy, simple chemical reactions and functions of different parts of the human body. They have good satisfactory manipulative skills and show confidence in setting up experiments, making accurate observations and recording. At Key Stage 4, most pupils studying the double award science are able to perform complex calculations of energy and efficiency with confidence and understanding and demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of properties of materials, physical processes and simple biological concepts. Sixth form A-level students' achievement is below expectations and there is little evidence of planned opportunities for structured practical work. Some students in a Year 13 class had a good understanding of radioactivity. Some could explain the progressive conditions required for the germination of seeds whilst others used a complex nomograph to make predictions about temperature, moisture content, storage period and final viability.
11. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art are above national expectations. Pupils' are inventive when they experiment with visual images in their sketchbooks and they develop ideas for different purposes. Lower attaining pupils use a narrow range of ideas. Higher attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 are acquiring the skills needed to write careful evaluations. At Key Stage 4, pupil's achievement in lessons and in the work seen is above the national average. Pupils make lively and colourful designs in their sketchbooks. They plan their work and ideas to exploit the expressive characteristics of media and make rapid progress, learning how to use graphics, printmaking and ceramic techniques. All pupils develop a capacity to adapt and refine their work,

including special educational need pupils. In 1999, A-level art results were above average compared with other boys' schools and similar schools. In the sixth form, students' sketchbooks and finished work show bold and intricate technically accomplished images. Practical and theoretical work is enriched by visits to galleries and places of local interest.

12. In design and technology pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, achieve above average standards in practical making skills, particularly in timber and plastic. Knowledge and skills are also secure in the use of graphics. Less developed design awareness and more limited understanding of systems and control balance these strengths in part. At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress and achieve above average attainment in both GCSE design and technology courses as well as in a further option course leading to a foundation award in food technology. Higher attaining pupils taking graphic products, demonstrate greater strengths in research and understanding of industrial contexts and processes. The resistant materials course has a higher proportion of lower attaining and special educational needs pupils who though more limited in their range of design ideas show continued good progress in their making skills, predominantly in timber. GCE Advanced level results have improved though in 1999 are still below the national average. Current students make good progress and achieve standards more in line with the national average reflected in a variety of projects that includes furniture manufacture.
13. Pupils taking business studies, in Key Stage 4, achieve standards broadly in line with the national average. Pupils can apply their knowledge in classroom activities and discussions. Higher attaining pupils have a stronger conceptual understanding and are able to apply tactical and operation strategies required in business decision making. In GCE Advanced level business studies, standards attained by students are average. Students in Year 12 made very good gains in knowledge and understanding relating to finance and accounting, and in-group work and presentation skills.
14. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in geography is in line with expectations. Most pupils can use the necessary skills, for example graphic construction of climatic data when studying Equatorial climates. The great majority can use maps of different scales and make reasoned descriptions of differing social and economic conditions in various parts of the world. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is above the national average and they show a satisfactory grasp of industrial location factors, for example the siting of the Toyota factory at Burnaston, and factors involved in economic decision making. Pupils with special educational needs cope reasonably well with an examination course of study suited to their needs. At A-level, most students achieve standards in line with their prior attainment. A-level students can make sense of the planning needs of places such as Glasgow when forming judgements about urban redevelopment.
15. Attainment in history, at the end of Key Stage 3, is above the national expectation. Inspection evidence confirms the teacher assessments for this judgement. Pupils have a generally good grasp of a good range of historical facts, situations and figures and can recall these in future lessons in order to reflect on what they have already learned. Attainment at the end of Key Stage

4 is above average. Pupils have secure knowledge of a wide range of historical facts and situations and use these effectively to illustrate and justify their arguments. Pupils acquire a range of historical vocabulary and use this with developing confidence, despite the fact that much of this is unusual and unfamiliar to them. In the sixth form students studying history achieve above average standards. Most students read a wide range of historical sources and commentary and they select and evaluate these well. Students studying government and politics use a wide range of complex detail effectively and show clear understanding of constitutional and political complexities, often drawing upon contemporary parallels to illustrate their views.

16. In information technology, although Key Stage 3 teacher assessments are reported to be above average this is not apparent from pupils' visible achievements. Within design and technology, pupils acquire good skills in graphics applications and are introduced to computer control. Other subjects, including English and geography, enable some gains to be made in communicating information using word processing and desktop publishing, but in most other subjects pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, show varying confidence and skills. Pupils make some use of information technology in the GCSE course and project work and gain confidence to use spreadsheets for graphical presentation, word processing, graphics and desktop publishing. Higher attaining pupils can use other applications such as databases and spreadsheets for modelling, for example, in break-even analysis in business studies. However, for the majority of pupils, achievement is below standards reached in similar schools. The low standard in the sixth form is a reflection of limited prior experience and the lack of use of information technology in GCE Advanced level courses, by the majority of students.
17. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations in French and German. GCSE results in French were above average in 1999 and there is an upward trend from being near average in 1997. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils can identify the main points and some details from short texts and all pupils can match single words and short phrases to meaning. They describe events and express opinions simply and participate in short dialogues but their speaking skills are weak; many pupils lack confidence in speaking. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national averages in French but below national averages in German. In French and German pupils' reading and writing skills are of a high standard. Lower attaining pupils write short texts following a model. Most pupils identify the main points from speech with some guidance and repetition, higher attaining pupils can interpret some unfamiliar language for others but many lack confidence in speaking at length or spontaneously.
18. At Key Stage 3 standards in music are well below the national average for 14 year olds with about a quarter of boys working at the expected level by the end of the key stage. In Years 7 and 8, the basic musical skills are well taught but pupils do not have enough time to consolidate and deepen their understanding and practical application. Concepts of pitch, rhythm and timbre are understood and boys across the whole attainment range in Year 9 working on their own performance of 'My Girl' combined the elements in a convincing performance.

Pupil's attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national average. Most pupils make effective use of technology to assist them in composition. This is of particular benefit to lower attaining pupils who are able to express their ideas and develop and improve them unhindered by a lack of instrumental skill. Achievement in written work done in response to listening and appraising is in most cases below what is expected because pupils do not listen analytically enough to give detailed answers. Students studying music technology are achieving in line with what can be expected of Advanced students. They are all competent musicians with a significant minority performing at a high level.

19. In physical education, teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that all boys achieve at national expectations. All pupils have a good understanding of health-related fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They lead aspects of their own warm-up and, for example, name the muscle groups being stretched. At the end of Key Stage 4 the great majority of pupils attains the national expectations in games such as basketball and football. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and integrated into lessons and make progress in line with their capabilities.
20. In religious education, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with expectations as outlined in the Birmingham Local Authority Agreed Syllabus for religious education. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have acquired a significant body of knowledge and are able to recall the basic facts of the various world religions studied. In both the full and short GCSE courses pupils are confident in the understanding of religious facts and sensitive to the views and practices of other faiths.
21. Since the last inspection the school has taken positive actions to improve attainment. There has been emphasis on data collection and interpretation, which has resulted in tracking pupils' progress through school. Improved resource provision, staff appraisal and professional development have contributed to raising staff awareness of the link between effective teaching and pupils' attainment and progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. The school operates as an orderly place for learning and pupils have good attitudes towards their work. Most pupils are keen and eager to acquire new knowledge and contribute constructively to the lessons. They persist with the tasks that are difficult particularly when the teachers provide opportunities to use their knowledge and understanding to discover relationships themselves between things they already know and the topic being studied. They participate well in the many outdoor pursuits the school offers and they put something back, for example helping to clean the school minibuses. More than one in five pupils took part in the successful inter-house athletic competition in the last calendar year. There was a good response to attending extra-curricular activities during the week of the inspection. Most parents think their children learn to respect others and to respect authority.

23. Behaviour in and around the school is good. The majority of pupils settles at the beginning of the lesson. They are good listeners and follow carefully teachers' instructions and directions. The older pupils set generally a good example to the younger ones. They all move around the school with appropriate self-discipline, through the narrow corridors and the passages when they change classrooms. The pupils contributed to the formulation of the home-school agreement that is widely displayed in the school. It provides a good reminder for those whose behaviour occasionally falls below the standard expected of all.
24. The pupils respect property and they are trusted with the school's equipment. The music rooms are always open and the pupils work there sensibly, often with a minimum of supervision. A few pupils are, however, immature for their age and have not learnt the social skills to conduct themselves in the same manner and the behavior of a small group of pupils is not satisfactory. The school aims to minimise exclusions. It employs other means if at all possible. The exclusion rate is similar to other schools nationally and it is decreasing compared to the previous year.
25. Relationships in the school are good. There is a clear empathy between teachers and pupils and between pupils of all ages. They talk to each other and to their teachers with mutual respect in and out of the classroom. The minority of ethnic pupils is well integrated and they feel free to express their cultural heritage, for example in their artwork. Conversations between pupils outside lessons are characterised by good-natured banter. They talk to their teachers with confidence knowing they can express their points of view. The pupils are courteous to visitors and engage in conversation easily. The school is confident enough to allow pupils to show visitors around. When the school holds interviews for new teachers boys have a discussion with all the candidates.
26. The pupils are sympathetic to other people's feelings, values and predicaments. They listened intently to and asked wide ranging questions of a speaker from a hospice who works with children who have had a death in the family. They organise collections and contribute to charities well.
27. In the sixth form, students respond positively to the good provision. They are well prepared, work purposefully and approach appropriate tasks with confidence. They articulate their views well, and reflect on and evaluate what they have done. In some lessons in which there is less challenge, students are reticent, although they are more willing to express their views in smaller groups than in the whole class. The teaching does not always provide them with opportunities for taking initiatives.
28. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into classroom work and in the playing fields and receive good support from their peers. Older pupils help the younger ones, for example by improving the reading competency of the younger ones through paired reading. Most pupils display positive attitudes to those who require support in lessons or withdrawal sessions – this adds well to their sense of inclusion in the school. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) concentrate effectively to make progress. In a one-to-one withdrawal session there was a positive learning atmosphere and

the Year 7 pupil observed was on task and concentrating throughout – this enabled the boy to make good progress. In some classes, with a number of boys with emotional and behavioural needs, the attitudes and behaviour of some are challenging and this has a negative impact on the learning and progress of both themselves and others.

29. The school does not tolerate oppressive behaviour. The pupils understand the harm bullying or racism in any form causes to a person. They know how to deal with it if they are subjected to it and particularly the younger pupils would rely on help from the staff. Older pupils listen to each other and contribute openly when they talk about their fears and problems as in a personal and social education lesson.
30. The pupils take on responsibilities offered to them well, such as dinner monitors, house and team captains. However, they do not use their initiative to the same extent to researching and extending their academic work. The sixth form students are good role models and are helpful but their involvement in the life of the school is at a relatively modest level.
31. The attendance rate of the pupils is satisfactory. It is similar to that of schools nationally and it has been at a similar level for the last few years. It is better than the Birmingham LEA average. The attendance rate of the lower school pupils is good. However, a small group of Year 11 pupils has very poor attendance and the final grade of some of these pupils will be adversely affected as they do not keep up with the work, for example in art.
32. The punctuality of the pupils to school and to lessons is good. There are few latecomers and the teachers ask for an explanation when they are late. The registers are completed efficiently. The school has good records of absentees and latecomers for the pupils in the school but the information on the 'on site presence' of the students in the sixth form is unreliable. The senior staff and the teachers monitor the records well informally but they do not do formal analysis, for example by ethnicity or any other way. The school co-operates well with the education welfare officer and the parents in its efforts to encourage attendance. It receives good support from them.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. The quality of teaching is good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In 94 per cent of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better: it was good in 36 per cent, very good in 17 per cent and excellent in one per cent. The predominance of good, very good and excellent lessons contributed significantly to pupils' learning and enabled them to make rapid progress in German and music in Key Stage 3, in English, science, design and technology and physical education in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in business, design and technology, music and physical education in the sixth form. Teaching in art and history is consistently good. A small number of ineffective lessons was seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 where it affected adversely pupils' learning and their progress was impeded as a result.

34. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and make good use of this to plan their lessons. In design and technology, for example, teachers give skilful demonstrations, which increase pupils' understanding and enable them to develop their own skills. Pupils are challenged intellectually to analyse music and make suitable arrangements for performances which facilitate better understanding of music. In French and German teachers conduct lessons in the languages being learned and this is very effective in developing pupils' listening skills and challenging higher attaining pupils. Effective planning and shared learning objectives in a Year 12 A-level business studies lesson enabled students to evaluate their own progress and see their own progress. Detailed planning in history and English is effective in providing a good variety of activities which stimulate pupils' interest but in some lessons where teacher-led activities are lengthy pupils lose interest and concentration. In geography probing, open and challenging questions are used to extend pupils' understanding of concepts. Effective group discussions in religious education lessons allow pupils to contribute their own ideas and listen to the views of others.
35. In some effective lessons teachers share lesson objectives and encourage the development of basic skills, to practise new techniques and to acquire knowledge and understanding of concepts and ideas. In history in both key stages, considerable attention is given to the teaching of literacy skills which pupils use effectively to gather and evaluate evidence and consolidate their learning. Most teachers in mathematics encourage pupils' language development. For example in a Year 11 class, good oral work helped pupils to understand the literal meaning of the 'included angle.' In science basic skills are taught effectively through structured activities based on a commercial scheme. However, in some science lessons opportunities are missed to develop pupils' investigative skills as pupils are given the expected results before they are allowed to undertake practical work. In art tasks are organised to match the needs of most pupils and effective teachers' demonstrations provide guidance to develop pupils' artistic skills.
36. Teachers manage pupils well in most lessons so that pupils know what is demanded of them. Pupils show interest in these lessons, concentrate well on activities and gain confidence as independent learners. A brisk pace, high expectations and good use of resources to support learning, in history, enable pupils to make rapid progress. In practical subjects such as science, design and technology and physical education, there is appropriate attention to health and safety aspects. The management in a small number of science and mathematics lessons led to some unacceptable behaviour which hampered progress and slowed learning for the pupils involved and their peers.
37. In some very successful lessons in English, art, design and technology, history, music and physical education, teachers used a variety of activities to stimulate interest and challenge pupils thinking. Skilful use of discussion and group work in media studies in the sixth form and effective questioning in geography helped to develop students' understanding effectively. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' work in physical education and art and in design technology in the sixth form students are given clear guidance about how to improve the quality of their projects. However assessment in many

subjects is not used to enable pupils to understand how they can improve or to enable teachers to plan effectively to meet the needs of all pupils and this aspect of teaching could be further developed to improve standards. In design and technology, commercial applications provide the context to develop better understanding of appropriate designs. In a few unsatisfactory lessons teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are low and as a result activities provided are not challenging for some or all of the pupils and planning is not focused on learning outcomes. In some unsatisfactory and poor lessons management of pupils is ineffective, mundane and inappropriate tasks fail to capture pupils' interest.

38. Homework is set in most subjects but the quality and nature of assignments vary. There are not enough examples of challenging and imaginative tasks to promote and consolidate learning. Some good examples of homework tasks to extend learning were seen in science, art, history and design and technology. More often, pupils are requested to complete for homework, the topics on which they are working in class, which means that those who have made less progress in the lesson have a higher work load than their quicker peers.
39. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In Year 7, teaching is well supported by learning support assistants, and is effective in facilitating understanding of ideas and consolidation of learning. In Year 7 history lessons, for example, detailed planning ensures that activities are well matched to pupils' needs. Individual targeted support is equally effective. In a one-to-one support lesson, a Year 7 pupil was enabled to make good progress in developing his reading and writing in an 'ARROW' session. Teachers are all provided with an appropriate list of the pupils' targets in order to help them plan their work in lessons. In a Year 10 GCSE practical lesson groups were organised by practical ability and tasks set to enable all pupils to make progress in line with their physical capabilities. More generally individual education plans are not used sufficiently to allow these pupils to reach their potential. As a result some resources and tasks are not matched adequately to their needs and although teachers react quickly and effectively to requests for help, support for these pupils is not always focused or planned adequately.
40. Since the last inspection, there has been some monitoring of teaching within departments but this has been neither consistent nor systematic across the curriculum and there is still considerable scope to improve teaching through the sharing of ideas and good practice within and across departments.

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

41. The school's planned curriculum aims to provide all pupils with opportunities to learn, to experience achievement and success, and to encourage them to attain the highest standards.
42. At Key Stage 3, the school provides a broad and carefully considered relevant curriculum. However, although all subjects of the National Curriculum together with religious education and personal and social education are taught, the cross curricular approach to information technology does not ensure the full

delivery of the Programmes of Study. Information technology is not fully delivered in the areas of modelling and measurement so that the Key Stage 3 curriculum does not fulfil its statutory obligations. Other weaknesses in the balance of this curriculum include the low time given to performing arts. Music has only eight hours of the curriculum time while provision for drama, which is integrated into the English curriculum, is very limited. The low music time in Years 7 and 8 is offset to some extent by the strength of the extra curricular activity provided.

43. At Key Stage 4, all pupils study an extended core of English, mathematics, science, design and technology and French to external examination standard. Physical education, personal and social education, careers and religious education are also compulsory. Boys choose two further subjects from the option blocks which now include drama. There are additional opportunities for pupils to take a GCSE short course in religious education. The curriculum is further enriched by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) initial Awards courses in sport and leisure, food technology, environmental science, office skills and computer graphics. The school aims to implement part 1 GNVQ courses when these become available. At the last inspection, the length of the school day was shorter than the recommended guidelines. This is still a weakness of the present provision.
44. The breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum provision is strengthened by the effective and successful collaboration with the neighbouring girls' school (Kings Norton Girls). The range of options of twenty-three A-levels is now wide enough to provide appropriate combinations of subjects. . A GNVQ (intermediate) course in health and social care is also available at the girls' school. In the interest of economy and efficiency some subjects are taught in mixed-age groups, for example Year 12 and Year 13 are taught together for music technology A level and Years 12 and 13 Design and Technology are taught together for half the week. There is also satisfactory provision for those pupils studying unusual combinations such as A level music as well as A level music technology. An insufficient attempt is made to monitor the curricular balance of individual students. Most students begin to study three A-level subjects but the drop out rate, 30 per cent in Year 13, is high and these students end up studying two A-level courses. Although some students do study GCSE courses to resit the examinations, there is no planned curriculum time offered to them. The sixth form curriculum is further enriched by library periods, supervised private study, general studies and religious education. However the time allocated to religious education is still below that recommended.
45. Pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum throughout the school. The overall provision for pupils identified, as having special educational needs is good – it is good at Key Stage 4 and post-16 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Support outside normal curriculum time, in for example the homework club, ensures that individual pupils are able to seek any extra help they might need. Where appropriate the special needs department organises special arrangements in examinations to help these pupils achieve success. There is a good range of other accredited courses that pupils can take in Key Stage 4. This enhances the breadth of

their learning experiences and enables them to gain other accreditation as well as GCSEs.

46. The provision for personal and social education has been revised extensively and is now good. The well-planned programme, aimed at encouraging the pupils' personal development, provides for sex education, health education, including drugs awareness, and careers education. It also satisfactorily pre-empted the pupils' statutory entitlement to education for citizenship.
47. Recently the school organised an in-service training day on literacy across curriculum, as a result of which satisfactory and effective strategies have been further developed to encourage consistent approaches to reading, writing and speaking. Most pupils have satisfactory literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read aloud. In English, increasing resources, discussions and reading material are used to encourage good reading habits and develop pupils' literacy skills. The majority of pupils speaks fluently and takes part in question and answer sessions. Most teachers in mathematics and science encourage the pupils' language development and their command of subject specific vocabulary is good. In sixth form art lessons, students are encouraged to carry out independent research into artists and their work. A literacy policy is not yet in place and in some subjects effective strategies to consolidate pupils' literacy skills are not developed sufficiently. In a few lessons, lengthy expositions by the teachers and printed and dictated notes impede development of these skills.
48. Although, within the mathematics curriculum there are increasingly effective strategies to raise standards in numeracy, particularly in Key Stage 3, there is little other satisfactory provision across the curriculum. An audit of the practice in all departments has taken place but there is as yet no planned policy for numeracy across the curriculum. There is limited use of pupils' numeracy skills in a few subjects such as science, design and technology and geography, but there is no considered use of opportunities to enhance numeracy across all curriculum areas.
49. The school has established good links with the local community, particularly through the personal and social education programme. Visitors to the school include both the police and the British Transport police. The health education department and the school nurse provide effective help in the programme. The Loud Mouth Theatre Company has made a positive contribution to the planned sex education programme. Other links actively involve the boys in charity events such as raising money for local children's charities. A number of businesses sponsored the technology department's vehicle in the Shell mileage challenge and both the art and music departments participate in many local events. Further opportunities are offered through the Internet where the school now has its own web site. Parents are actively supportive in staffing the library.
50. The school has very good links with the local girls' school. There is a common timetable and shared provision in the sixth form. The school makes satisfactory links with the main primary feeder schools on an annual basis. However curricular links with the core subjects of English, mathematics and

science, are not strong. The school participates well in partnership schemes for Initial Teacher Training with local Higher Education Institutions. It regularly hosts trainees on pre-course placements as well as providing placements for the full school experience.

51. Since the last inspection, the school has made unsatisfactory provision for extending the school day to the recommended length. There is still unsatisfactory provision for information technology at Key Stage 3. The length of time devoted to religious education in the sixth form is still low. However, the provision for personal and social education has improved and there is now a formal curriculum statement approved by the governors.
52. The range of extra-curricular activities offered to boys continues to be good. With limited accommodation the physical education department offers a number of team sports which together with club and recreational activities attract the enthusiastic support of about forty percent of the boys. The range of outdoor pursuits is a strength of the school. During a residential week in July most of Year 7 pupils are introduced to activities such as snorkelling and rock climbing. Further day and residential adventures are on offer throughout the rest of the school. About 35 boys at present are gaining recognition for their achievements by taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The music department caters for musicians who play instruments through brass and wind ensembles and the orchestra which is held jointly with Kings Norton Girls' School. By joining with the girls for a Gospel Choir boys are given the chance to experience mixed voice singing. Year 10 pupils attend a Gamelan workshop every year at the Birmingham Conservatories, which deepens their understanding of world music begun in class. Mathematics and science departments provide extra study outside school hours by encouraging the more able and the taking of single sciences at GCSE. Apart from formal and organised activities the school is open for pupils to work on computers, play chess, badminton and table tennis and to continue study in the library and music room.
53. The programme of careers' education in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is well planned. There are detailed lessons delivered in Year 9 by form tutors and in Years 10 and 11 by two teachers, one of whom has the specialist background experience. The pupils are well motivated both by the Industry Week in which they both visit and are visited by industrialists and business people. In the writing of their curriculum vitae and application forms for the work experience fortnight in Key Stage 4 they improve their wider literacy skills as well as extend their knowledge of the wider world through first hand evidence. The resulting attainment adds to the value of their Records of Achievement. The careers' library is adequate for their needs and has improved with the addition of CD ROMs to give good scope for their retrieval skills as well as being valuable for obtaining information. All of this information and experience in both key stages allows pupils to make informed decisions about their immediate future in choosing options and helping to form ideas for their future.
54. The school provides an environment in which, although there is some variation, the overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is satisfactory. Provision for social and moral development is good and cultural

development satisfactory, but the provision for spiritual development is still unsatisfactory as reported in the last report. Assemblies organised for pupils' on three days during the week offer a positive medium for reflection and consideration of some social and moral issues, but most lack a spiritual dimension and pupils rarely have the opportunity for prayer. Although there is a theme for the week, tutor times do not consistently provide opportunities for spiritual development. Therefore, the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils is not met.

55. The provision for the pupil's spiritual development within the curriculum is the responsibility of the individual departments and because of this it is very variable and often unsatisfactory. In some subjects, such as religious education, English, and art there is a range of opportunities for considering the spiritual dimension. In religious education pupils often consider their own spiritual beliefs and those of others and reflect on the impact the beliefs have on everyday life in the way the world around them is viewed. In English feelings are considered when studying literature and poetry and in most years pupils have the opportunity to write their own poems and this reveals some sense of appreciation and awareness of the spiritual. In art pupils often analyse and interpret symbols and consider how images can relate to spiritual feelings and ideas. In other subject areas there are various occasional opportunities when the spiritual dimension is included; such as when studying volcanoes and earthquakes in geography, a sense of excitement when pupils experience success in the understanding of another language and an experience of empathy when studying the holocaust. Although it is implicit in listening and performing music a lack of time means that this element is rarely developed. The limited experience of this within the curriculum means the pupils are not having the opportunity to experience the process of personal reflection and a sense of awe of the world.
56. The provision for moral development is good. Pupils are expected to behave well and care for others. The school mission statement is that of 'a happy and caring learning environment' and the school offers a strong moral framework to help distinguish between right and wrong. Moral issues are discussed effectively in the personal and social education programme, in assemblies and in the day-to-day work in the classroom. The school makes efforts to make pupils aware of the need to take care of the environment and respect each other and property. Moral themes, such as drug abuse are taught systematically through the personal and social education programme. In religious education moral issues such as war, aggression, euthanasia, abortion and sexual relationships, are discussed sensitively. In music, care is taken to be true to the composers intention of the music. In English Year 7 pupils consider moral issues associated with different burial customs and the concept of fair play is highlighted in the physical education course. All of these opportunities enable the pupils to understand both the explicit and the complex moral decisions that people have to make. The school is a caring community where staff and other adults within the school provide good role models for the pupils. Ninety percent of the parents confirm these judgements. They think that the school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children.

57. Provision for pupils' social development is also good. There are many opportunities within lessons where pupils are able to work collaboratively, in pairs and in small groups and these involve a range of activities. A wide range of extra curricular activities provides pupils with opportunities to mix with those of other age groups. Aspects of citizenship are discussed effectively in the personal and social education programme and satisfactory opportunities are provided for the pupils to take responsibility. The sixth form students have their own committee and also help in physical education lessons, informally in the music department and help pupils in Year 9 with the paired reading scheme. The prefect and house system provides opportunities for various responsibilities. There are a number of events organised within school that aid social development such as participation in the Christmas concert and the school play. Social interaction is provided for many pupils as a member of a team representing the school in a number of activities including sport, quizzes and design and technology competitions. Opportunities to show social responsibility within the local and global community can be seen in the orchestra playing at a variety of events and the 'Operation Christmas Child' appeal to send gifts to Eastern Europe.
58. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate their own culture and cultural traditions. A variety of English literature texts extends pupils' insight in to everyday life and the 'Elizabeth Knights' production considered not only the drama of that period but also provided an insight in to the life of children at that time. History and art also provide an extensive understanding of western culture. The music department makes a strong contribution to include music from a wide variety of cultures. Jazz, pop, Caribbean, South American are embedded effectively into the music curriculum. A Gamelan workshop at the Birmingham Conservatoire was attended by a number of pupils and the tabla is available as an instrumental option. Cultural issues are considered in religious education when looking at celebrations, customs such as rites of passage and places of worship including visits. Art uses a variety of materials from other cultures as stimuli for the work. A number of well-planned overseas trips are organised to enrich pupils' experience of other cultures, although these are not necessarily linked to the curriculum.
59. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory progress in some areas. The personal and social education programme has been totally revised and now offers a more positive experience to most pupils. There has been some development in the provision of cultural development but the spiritual still requires more development, both in the provision of a daily act of collective worship and in the contribution made by subjects of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. The school's pastoral system ensures effective care for the pupils' physical and personal well-being but there are significant weakness in assessing pupils' attainment and progress and in the use of this information to support learning and future planning. The parents are pleased that their children like the school and make good progress. They also believe that their children are helped by

the school to become more mature and responsible. The pastoral teams of tutors and year coordinators carry out both academic and pastoral monitoring satisfactorily.

61. The school is a safe environment. The school implements the procedures advised by the Area Child Protection Committee and the staff are aware of their child protection responsibilities. Raising awareness is part of the induction for teachers new to the school and they are included in the staff meeting agenda. The health and safety rules are observed but risk assessment is not yet finalised.
62. Good attendance is given a high priority. The recording and follow-up systems are very good though the management team is not yet making full use of the analytical techniques available to them. The education welfare officer provides help with strategies for individuals and home visits. The school is focusing appropriately its attention on pupils with poor attendance and a proportion of the newly appointed Assistant Learning Mentor's time is spent on finding out how to improve their perception of school and to improve their attendance. The school is beginning to use regular work experience and alternative college courses for a few of its pupils if these are more suitable for their needs.
63. The staff reward good behaviour, good work and effort with a good level of consistency. The pupils of the lower school appreciate the graded merit system and when they qualify for badges they wear them proudly. The older pupils have more appropriate awards. Pupils know very well the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The teachers have good behaviour management strategies but if a pupil misbehaves consistently in the classroom the class teachers may use the "remove" option in order to maintain the concentration and learning of the others. It leads to sanctions and the parents are notified. The parents are generally very supportive of the school's actions. In order to reduce the rate of exclusions the Headmaster's Censure has been introduced as a strong warning. For serious offences such as bullying, violence, theft or harassment of any kind, exclusion remains as the ultimate sanction. A behaviour specialist visits regularly and reviews progress or alternative action with a few individuals.
64. The school has efficient systems in place to collect Key Stage 2 data and other standardised results about pupils' attainment on entry to the school and at the end of the key stages. Further school procedures at the half-termly check points and at the end of year examinations complement this information. At Key Stage 3, base line data is used to inform banding but is not well used to monitor pupils' progress across the curriculum. The checkpoints, which are closely related to the interim reports, do not assess attainment satisfactorily in relation to national curriculum levels. Rather, they consider progress and effort but not in relation to objective prior attainment. There is no target setting at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, however, National Curriculum test results and other standardised data are used systematically to challenge underachievement, to inform target setting and to monitor pupils' achievements across the curriculum. For sixth form students, Advanced Level Information System data are available but is not fully used as a basis for target setting nor is it well used by subjects to monitor and track the pupils' progress.

65. The school has a clear and agreed policy which delegates responsibility for assessment and recording procedures and practice to the departments. Departmental practice is monitored directly by heads of department with only limited monitoring by line managers through attendance at departmental meetings. There are still inconsistencies between and within departments with assessments not always regularly or clearly related to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. In most departments, assessment practice is more consistent and coherent at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. History has established good practice in Year 9 with five common assessments but in Years 7 and 8 there are no recorded National Curriculum levels. Similarly in mathematics at Key Stage 3 recording is inconsistent across the department and not related to National Curriculum levels. Teachers' assessments in design and technology at Key Stage 3 are inaccurate and very high when compared to national expectations. For information technology, cross-curricular assessment procedures are not well established. There is no system that provides for careful and informed monitoring across the contributory subjects. At Key Stage 4, teachers mark and grade work systematically in art, keeping full and careful records of pupils' attainment and progress. In geography, there are meticulous records at Key Stage 4, which are closely related to examination requirements, as are those in GCSE physical education.
66. There is no agreed whole school marking policy. Day to day marking is again variable across and within curriculum areas. The best practice occurs in English where marking of pupils' work follows a departmental policy. Teachers provide good written feedback, indicating pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In Key Stage 3, samples of pupils' best work are kept in a portfolio so that they can see evidence of their own progress. At Key Stage 4, results in terms of GCSE grades, are shared with pupils. A-level work is marked well in mathematics with many diagnostic comments but in both Key Stages 3 and 4 marking is irregular and inconsistent, with few comments from most teachers to help pupils make progress. The use of assessment to inform the planning of lessons is not well used in areas such as design and technology, science, information technology and mathematics. In art, teachers assess competently pupils' strengths and weaknesses and use this information satisfactorily in their lesson planning.
67. The school fulfils its statutory requirements for recording National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The school fulfils satisfactorily its obligation of reporting to parents and of completing National Records of Achievement for all pupils.
68. Assessment and identification procedures for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils with initial cause for concern are well established and effective and meet fully the requirements of the Code of Practice. An appropriate range of reading tests in Key Stage 3 enables the learning support department to identify and publish strengths and weaknesses in terms of special learning needs. The annual reviews draw upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and the pupil. Transitional reviews are also well planned to take place and individual education plans are also reviewed and updated on a regular basis and targets

modified, changed or reinstated to measure pupils' progress. Targets set, however, lack consistent quality. They sometimes lack specificity, are thus not easily attainable, and are therefore unclear as to what pupils need to do to meet them. The learning support department has very good links and effective relationships with outside specialist agencies. Appropriate arrangements are in place for those pupils who need special medication during the school day. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs who are identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties are well supported through the pastoral system. They are set individual behaviour plans that are reviewed regularly.

69. Assessment, recording and reporting was a key issue at the last inspection. Since the last inspection the school has made progress in reaching a consensus on the present policy. However the clear guidelines are not sufficiently prescriptive to ensure consistency of practice within departments. There is still no whole school marking policy. Base line data are not well used at Key Stage 3 to inform the monitoring of pupils' progress. Assessments across the curriculum are not closely related to National Curriculum levels. The school has made progress on the format of reports although these do not always inform parents of what pupils actually know and can do. Overall, the school has made unsatisfactory progress on assessment, particularly at Key Stage 3.
70. The awareness of staff of the pupils' personal strengths and weaknesses is good. In general the personal and social education programme is now well established and it matches the pupils needs. The form tutors teach it and it provides a platform to get to know each pupil well. Though they are not specialists they get extra help, for example from the school nurse, if they need it. The services of outside agencies are also employed to reinforce some of the messages about a healthy life-style. The Loudmouth Theatre Company is a regular visitor and works with Year 9 pupils. Through drama the Company concentrates on the importance of making sensible choices, for example about contraception and the pupils respond very positively to the message. The personal files of the pupils are comprehensive and well maintained for tracking the individuals. It contains the basic information for providing help for pupils through a special educational needs programme or referral to the Assistant Learning Mentor. The pupils have opportunities to test their own personal development through the many extra-curricular outward-bound activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the residential week at Atlantic College.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. The school aims to be approachable and easily accessible to parents and to work in partnership with them in supporting their children's education. In the questionnaire and at the meeting with inspectors, parents said that they feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. Nine out of ten parents also think that the school is helping their children to work hard and achieve their best and to become mature and responsible. However, many felt that homework was not sufficient, not motivating or challenging enough. A significant minority wants better information about their children's progress and

closer working relationships with the school. Many written comments praised the efforts staff make in organising an interesting range of activities outside lessons. A few have commented that the lower ability pupils are not challenged and supported sufficiently.

72. The school's links with parents are generally effective and enable pupils to profit fully from the educational opportunities that are open to them. Most parents have confidence that staff respect pupils' individuality and will act in their best interest. The school informs parents both when their children are achieving well and when they are causing concern. The pupils like the school; consequently they attend regularly which helps the pupils' personal development, maturity and attitude to learning. The teachers are approachable and the school provides an interesting range of activities outside the lessons. However, good quality homework is not set consistently to extend pupils' knowledge and strengthen their initiative to research for their studies. The inspection evidence also indicates that in some lessons the lower attaining pupils are not extended sufficiently.
73. Overall quality of information for parents is good and the school has maintained successfully the good provision reported at the time of the previous inspection. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents give a clear overview of the life of the school. Parents ask searching questions about the quality of education and standards being achieved relative to other neighbouring schools. Newsletters and notices are sent out regularly to keep parents well informed about events in the life of the school. All parents are given good opportunities to discuss their children's progress, consultation evenings are well attended and many parents find them useful. Staff follow those who do not attend in order to maintain effective lines of communication. The school holds information evenings to acquaint parents with what is taught. The student organiser provides a good channel of communication between the parents and the teachers in the school. Parents support their children's work through the interest they take in pupils' homework and through their willingness to talk with staff during the year should there be any concerns. Although the end of year written report provides much useful information, it does not always tell them what needs further improvement and how the parents can help.
74. Parents are involved fully in the annual and transitional reviews of pupils who have statements of special educational needs. The latest annual governors' report to parents includes good quality information on the school's policy and provision for special educational needs. The school prospectus provides much useful information about the school's policy for providing for pupils identified as having special educational needs.
75. Partnership with the parents is satisfactory. Through the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) the school aims to involve parents in the life of the school. The PTA arranges social events, such as the Quiz Night to forge closer links between the home and the school. It raises funds to support educational initiatives and recently purchased a kiln, public address system for the school hall and made a significant contribution towards the mini bus. Parents were consulted appropriately about the contents of the home-school agreement. The PTA works closely with the school and discusses priorities but there is

scope for greater consultation on the school's curricular and spending decisions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. Overall the management of the school is good. The headteacher provides thoughtful, effective, and purposeful leadership which is having a significant effect on the work and ethos of the school. Based on current national initiatives, he has a clear vision for the future development of the school. He enjoys the full confidence of the governing body and manages the staff effectively. He knows their strengths and weaknesses and has been successful in creating an environment in which staff and pupils can achieve. The headteacher's performance has been evaluated systematically by external assessors. He is supported ably by a small senior management team, consisting of two deputy heads, who participate in all major decisions. The impetus for improvement in standards is provided through extensive analysis of pupils' performance and reviews of standards in individual departments. Detailed scrutiny of performance data, bench-marking, standardised reading scores and NFER Cognitive Assessment Test scores are used to track pupils' progress through school and determine the relative performance of subjects.
77. At the time of the last inspection, there were weaknesses in whole-school strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation procedures were at an early stage of development. The leadership is accountable and securely based in the school's mission statement and detailed objectives. Clear job descriptions of senior managers and middle managers include a specific commitment to strive for the highest standards and to develop the potential of staff and pupils. The head appraised the two deputy headteachers who have assessed the work of heads of subject departments for which they have responsibility. Both deputy heads have a substantial teaching commitment and work hard to promote consistency of good practice but have not yet participated with staff in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, standards and aspects of other provision.
78. The school's mission statement and aims make a strong commitment, "to develop the full potential of pupils and to encourage the highest possible standards of personal achievement." To a very large degree the school achieves these aims. The school has a commitment to provide pupils with equality of opportunity which enables them to develop to their full potential. The ethos in the school is very good and relationships are very good at all levels. The pastoral team is very effective in providing good support and care. Pupils' attendance rates have remained in line with the national average. Staff and pupils alike are aware of the increasing expectation of academic success. Pupils' performance was better at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Over the last four years the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. The average A level point score per candidate taking two A-levels improved from 10.2 at the time of the last inspection to 16.1. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C is in line with the national average.

79. There are sound and effective strategies for consultation, planning and review. Parents and staff were consulted and the governing body's forward planning committee was involved actively in drawing up short and long-term strategies for development. Appropriate priorities and tasks focus sharply on standards, teaching, learning, management and learning resources. Whole-school measurable targets are communicated through the annual governors' report to parents. Departmental plans are of variable quality and do not include specific quantifiable targets to determine value-added achievements in the subjects.
80. Heads of subject departments provide sound professional leadership. Most subjects are well organised and curricular planning is good. There are examples of effective leadership in history, English, design and technology, art and music. They have been effective in generating ideas, enthusiasm and support for staff. Most heads of department have responded positively to the issues identified in the last OFSTED report and have made considerable effort to develop departmental handbooks and schemes of work, which are having a positive impact on teaching and learning and in raising standards in their subjects. The best departments are beginning to scrutinise and analyse public examination results but in most departments aspects of monitoring and self-evaluation are not well developed. External advisory support from the neighbouring LEAs has provided in-service training to inform staff of the national initiatives and good practice in teaching and learning. Heads of subject departments and staff are well supported. The school has not sought external evaluation of subject departments.
81. The special needs coordinator provides effective leadership of the learning support department. Effective and efficient procedures are in place to manage provision for pupils with special educational needs. The learning support development plan focuses on areas for improvement and further development in the short term but there is no longer-term planning in place. Experienced and appropriately qualified learning support assistants have a positive impact on pupils' work, for example, in specialist 'ARROW' sessions to improve pupils' literacy skills. Special educational needs support staff are effectively deployed across the timetable to ensure that those pupils with statements of special educational needs receive the support they are entitled to. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately and resources are targeted appropriately to support the teaching and learning of these pupils. The use of extra funding has enabled the learning support department to target all pupils in Year 7. The school has recently employed, through external funding, an assistant learning mentor but the impact of this appointment will not be apparent for some time.
82. The governing body is very supportive, meets most of its statutory duties and is involved actively in overseeing the work of the school. The school does not ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement curriculum in information technology and to a lesser extent in music. The governing body responded to the challenge presented by the grant maintained status and more recently to become a foundation school. The governors' main interest is in the quality of education and some governors use their expertise in supporting and challenging existing provision in special educational needs, finances, curriculum and management. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist

between the governing body and the senior management team. The governing body allows the senior management team to attend governors' meetings and discuss key issues relating to curriculum, finance and staffing. Individual governors are involved closely with the work of assigned departments and participate actively in the annual review and evaluation. Through the governor of the month initiative, they monitor the quality of teaching, standards and other aspects of the school's work. They have taken difficult decisions in the interest of pupils and parents in challenging ineffective teachers. The headteacher keeps governors fully informed of all school's challenges and achievements, as well as possible. They readily question policies, procedures and practices, particularly in respect of curriculum, teaching and standards achieved by pupils. The annual report to parents is an excellent document, which includes much useful information and actions taken to address issues identified in the last OFSTED report. The governors provide well-informed responses to the questions sent by the parents.

83. Since the last inspection there has been substantial improvement in management and systems and procedures are now making a contribution to the quality of education and improving standards achieved by pupils. Lines of communication are clear and effective. Staff feel that their views are valued and the headteacher and senior staff are approachable.
84. The school has sufficient well-qualified staff who are deployed effectively to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and support the learning of pupils. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was noted that teachers of religious education were non-specialist in that subject. The deployment of the teaching staff is good. Staff have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities within the school. Most teachers are hard working and highly effective in using their skills and talents to motivate pupils. However, there are a few weak teachers who need professional support and training.
85. Learning support assistants are well qualified and make a good contribution to support pupils with special educational needs. This specialized support is insufficient to meet the needs of all pupils. The employment of an administrator is money well spent, since it frees senior staff from involvement in routine financial management. The school is generally well served by its non-teaching staff. The appointment of the technician as the network manager has ensured that the school makes effective use of information and communication technology facilities. Technicians facilitate pupils' learning through the effective practical support they provide in subjects such as science and design and technology. However there is no technician support in art. The new librarian is beginning to facilitate access to research and independent learning. The school office, care-taking and catering staff make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.
86. There are clear, well-documented and highly effective induction programmes for the four newly qualified teachers who are provided with good support at both departmental and school levels. They have access to support from both their colleagues within school and a specialised programme set up by the local authority. The school has operated a clear appraisal policy that has been implemented effectively and linked to school and teachers' developmental

needs. Staff are now offered an annual career development interview in order to negotiate agreed targets, priorities and action plan. Appraisal has been extended to include some members of the support staff. Arrangements for professional development are good and opportunities are provided for teachers to update their skills. A few teachers need in-service training on classroom management and teaching methodology. Professional training days are used to provide staff, including support staff, with training which supports the identified needs of the school. In 1998 the school obtained "Investors in People" accreditation.

87. Accommodation in the school is satisfactory overall and allows most of the curriculum to be taught effectively. There have been some significant improvements since the last inspection. The science laboratories have been refurbished and they provide adequate and effective facilities for subject teaching and learning. Improvements have also been made to the space available to laboratory technicians so that they are better able to support teachers. Minor building alterations have improved the space available for teaching music. Soundproofing has been fitted for practice rooms and there is now a recording studio and control room. Additional room for music has been found and used as a practice facility and this contributes to the subject being taught more effectively. An impressive new technology block has been built and is suitably fitted and fixed to replace the previous accommodation, which was judged to be extremely poor. Information and communications technology rooms are now of an adequate size for teaching larger sets. The art department accommodation has not improved but best use is being made of the available space to provide an organised and stimulating learning environment. There are no blackouts in art for the effective use of audio visual aids.
88. Other improvements to accommodation that enhance pupils' learning include a purpose built sixth form block to provide a well-appointed base for study and social activities. A new library has also been built. This is light and airy and provides study space and facilities for information and communication technology. The new facility encourages pupils to read and work as an extra curricular activity but their space for study is relatively small for the size of the school. Two new rooms for teaching religious education have resulted in improved study areas. The quality of other accommodation is variable. In physical education, the outdoor field area facilities are adequate for summer and winter games but the hard surface area provides insufficient space to be effective. Indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory, the quality and amount of space restricts specialist activities associated with GCSE and A level study. Limited indoor facilities also restrict access to extra curricular activities, particularly at lunchtimes. There is no suitable area for teaching Drama in the school. Eye-catching and informative displays, including pupils' work, are seen in subjects such as English, science, design and technology, physical education and art. Most school classrooms are well maintained and there is a rolling programme of decoration and refurbishment. The school is committed to providing an adequate and effective learning environment.
89. Resources for learning are sufficient, easily accessible to staff and pupils and generally used efficiently to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The

information technology resources are much improved, with modern specifications and networked, and are used efficiently to support work in some subjects. Within design and technology, pupils acquire good skills in graphics applications and are introduced to computer control. Other subjects, including English, mathematics and geography, enable some gains to be made in communicating information using word processing and desktop publishing, but their use is under-developed in other subjects. Internet facilities are now developing as a part of the Birmingham Grid for Learning. Some subjects such as art and science with only one workstation, have limited access to these machines and their applications are not exploited. The network manager is a skilled technician enabling the resources to be used effectively. He is starting to develop Internet and other applications. The design and technology facilities in the four refurbished and newly built workshops are well resourced and well used. Resources in art are good and a wide range of materials and visual aids are provided for the themes that are set and to motivate and inspire pupils.

90. In English, the provision of textbooks and other resources is good, with a full range of poetry, novels and plays available for all parts of the curriculum and used efficiently to extend pupils' literacy skills. In history, textbooks and other resources are used effectively to support pupils at varying levels of attainment. The school's funding for the special needs department has generated a good stock of appropriate resources and materials to develop phonic and word attack skills, such as the ARROW scheme. Resources are used efficiently and special needs pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding. The library has been refurbished but the book stock is inadequate, particularly in its range of fiction and books for the sixth form courses and it does not play the part it could in fostering the habit of reading or aiding research through books. The subject departments do not promote its day-to-day use effectively.
91. The school manages its resources efficiently and effectively. The quality of financial planning is good and is an integral part of Educational improvement and is linked to the school development plan, which sets realistic targets, is costed and sufficiently flexible to allow the school to re-focus and is the primary vehicle for informing budgetary decisions. The school has improved its planning procedures since the last inspection. The special grants for special needs and Excellence in Cities are used effectively and efficiently, ensuring that resources are used as planned and that value for money is obtained.
92. The school's governors exercise responsible oversight of the school's income and expenditure and this is reflected in the work of the finance committee. They are actively involved in scrutinising and agreeing the budget allocations. Well supported by the administrator/bursar, they managed competently and applied most effectively the principles of compare, challenge, consult and compete to ensure good value for money. For example, in response to popular demand they decided successfully to become a four-form entry school. They took up a loan to build a new sixth form and history block to replace poor quality worn out huts. This is paying dividends in attracting substantial numbers of students from other secondary schools. Through prudence and appropriate economies they have accumulated a large enough surplus to pay back all debts before the agreed deadlines. To ensure good value for money governors buy different services from a number of LEAs. For example, the

school uses Catering, Health Education and Community Education, and Careers and Education Business Partnership services from one LEA, buys in pay roll and personnel from another LEA and professional and advisory support from a number of LEAs. There are a number of examples of effective planning such as spending on computers and refurbishment of design and technology, information technology, science laboratories and the library. Through their links with the departments, they are beginning to evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives and expenditure on the quality of learning and pupils' attainment. Effective and efficient procedures and systems are in now place to ensure that financial decisions on spending are informed by the school's development needs.

93. Financial control is very good and plays a major part in making sure that resources are used as planned. There are exemplary arrangements for ordering and checking purchases. Departmental bidding for annual funding is well managed. The allocation of funds to departments is open, fair and equitable. An effective vetting procedure at senior management level for departmental plans and requests for funding, ensure that judgements on the use of resources are soundly based. The school accounts are audited regularly. The recent audit report commented favourably on the financial statement prepared by the governors, proper accounting records and effective internal controls in respect of grants made by the Funding Agency for Schools and funds from other sources. It acknowledged all the major developments and educational performance at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. The report was on the whole complimentary and did not contain even one recommendation.
94. In relation to income and the nature of pupil intake, the school gives satisfactory value for money in terms of educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. In order to sustain and continue to develop the good work of the school, the governors and senior management of King's Norton Boys' School should give attention to the following issues:
- **Ensure that statutory requirements in respect of information technology and music are met and increase the time given to the school's curriculum by:**
 - ensuring that all pupils receive their curriculum entitlement in information and communication technology and music.
 - monitoring pupils' information technology skills and ensuring effective applications across curriculum.
 - reorganising the timetable in Years 7 and 8 and increasing the time given to the teaching of music.
 - increasing the length of the school day.
 - (Paragraphs: 42,43, 82, 89, 120, 127,163-168)

- **Ensure consistent application of the school's and departmental assessment and marking policies and monitor the quality of homework by:**
 - setting targets for individual pupils.
 - using information to plan for the next stage of teaching and learning.
 - ensuring that the school's policy on homework is followed consistently.
 - ensuring that pupils' work is marked consistently and their strengths and weaknesses are identified to facilitate effective learning.
 - (Paragraphs:38, 64-66, 69,106, 118-120, 127, 134, 162, 168, 176, 184, 191, 193, 195)

- **Improve the quality of provision for pupils' spiritual development by:**
 - ensuring aspects of spiritual development are covered in subjects across the curriculum.
 - ensuring that tutor time is use effectively to reflect on the theme of the week.
 - (Paragraphs: 54-55)

- **Improve the effectiveness of the management by:**
 - setting subject specific measurable targets to determine value added achievement between key stages.
 - developing further senior and middle managers roles in monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching and standards in their subjects.
 - challenging ineffective teaching and providing further support for teachers.
 - targeting in-service training on effective teaching strategies, where needed.
 - developing and implementing the policy on numeracy across curriculum.
 - implementing subject specific recommendations in different parts of this report.
 - improving the library resources and ensuring that departments encourage its day-to-day use.
 - (Paragraphs: 9, 48, 77-80, 84, 88, 90, 108, 113,116,119,195)

- In addition paragraphs:
 - 24- behaviour; 30- independent research; 32- ethnic data; 33,37 - ineffective teaching; 44-time for religious education; 71,72-challenge for low attaining pupils and 102- sixth form issues, include weaknesses which have not formed the basis of `Key Issues' identified above; the school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Sixth Form

96. Inspectors' judgements on sixth form curriculum, the quality of teaching and standards achieved in subjects appear appropriately in different parts of this report.
97. Progress made since the last inspection is good. The new sixth form centre provides an appropriate academic environment for students. The school collaborates successfully with King's Norton Girls' School to offer a wide range of A-level and vocational courses. It maximise choices and makes the whole provision efficient, economical and effective. Male and female students register at the respective schools but in all other respects they have free access to the opportunities and facilities offered by both sites. These arrangements at Sixth Form work very well and bring about 50 girls into the school daily.
98. The governors and staff made an important strategic decision to become a 4-form-entry, which has only now worked its way to Year 13. Recruitment and marketing procedures are now more formalised for sifting through applications, interviewing and making offers. Well organised open evenings, planned visits to other institutions and effective communication strategies ensure recruitment of students from other local schools. The Sixth Form prospectus is now much more professionally produced. Selection procedures are now more vigorous, with clearly defined criteria for admission. Exchange visits are well organised to allow Year 11 students to see the facilities at the two schools. The school is reasonably successful in attracting students from other schools. It attracted 34 students from other 11-16/11-18 schools in the lower sixth and 15 in the upper sixth.
99. A well-planned personal and social education programme has been introduced. Tutors are well supported by a useful guide which clarifies the role of the form tutor in the sixth form. Arrangements for registration both for the lower and upper sixth form students are ad-hoc and unsatisfactory. Students come and go freely and are allowed to work (self-study lessons) at school or at home. Potentially this presents health and safety concerns as the school will find it difficult to account for all students, in case of a fire. An effective careers 'self-standing' element has been incorporated into Year 12. Every student in Years 12 and 13 is now offered the opportunity to complete a full Record of Achievement starting in Year 12. Procedures for work shadowing have now been more formalised. Work Shadowing is not compulsory, although most students do organise a placement in July or August.
100. Reporting and profiling arrangements have improved considerably. Interim reporting with student self evaluation provide useful information to both students and parents. Though some attempt has been made to involve students in self-evaluation practice is not fully developed. Often students confirm assessments made by their teachers. The full main reports have changed in format and provide much detailed assessment and evaluation of students' attainment and progress. Formalised tests in most subjects introduced into Year 12 prepare students effectively for the public examinations and have a beneficial impact on students' improved attainment at

A-level. Advanced Level Information System data and target setting, based on GCSE performances have not yet been introduced systematically.

101. The sixth form common room committee is effective in organising social events and other facilities. The organisation of social events, such as regular discos, games and quiz evenings has expanded in conjunction with King's Norton Girls' School. Students successfully organise a leavers' ball in June and a Christmas party for handicapped children. General studies trips continue to extend students' learning experiences. There is, however, no senior school council to harness the voice of the students and undertake constructive dialogue between mature and responsible students and the rest of the school. The process would be aided by more formal arrangements for incorporating students' perceptions into the review of courses and other provision.

102. The head of sixth form provides good and effective leadership. Since the last report, the quality of sixth form provision has improved considerably. It provides good opportunities for students of all abilities to pursue their studies with a high level of encouragement and support. They have good accommodation in their own new block, including social areas. In order to improve further the school should:
 - encourage subject departments to set challenging targets for A-level students.
 - consolidate and build on the self-evaluation opportunities offered to students.
 - review registration procedures.
 - establish a senior school council to harness students' ideas.
 - review arrangements for self-study.
 - provide more opportunities for the development of core skills and for independent learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	185
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	17	36	40	4	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	712	127
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	108	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	74	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	55

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	125	0	125

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	89	83
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	93	89	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 ([52)	71 (67)	66 (60)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (18)	46 (42)	30 (29)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	90	90
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	82	90	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (56)	72 (62)	72 (65])
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 ([61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (20)	42 (46)	29 (34)
	National	31(30)	37 (43)	28 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	118	0	118

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	52	108	116
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	52	108	116
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44.1 (48.2)	91.5 (93)	98.5 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (92.3)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.4 (36.3)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	NA
	National		NA

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	33	0

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.2	NA	16.2 (14)	NA	NA	NA
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.1)	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	NA	NA
	National		82.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	NA	NA
	National		NA

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	33
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	16
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	2
White	651
Any other minority ethnic group	19

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	32	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	349

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2087372
Total expenditure	2070157
Expenditure per pupil	2880
Balance brought forward from previous year	179030
Balance carried forward to next year	196245

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	747
Number of questionnaires returned	89

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	60	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	50	9	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	63	2	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	55	12	15	1
The teaching is good.	30	59	6	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	34	14	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	41	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	37	7	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	49	14	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	42	40	6	2	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	6	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	35	8	0	3

Many parents are happy with excellent encouragement, good progress and extra-curricular activities which boost pupils' confidence, fuel imagination and encourage a positive attitude to standards. Many parents feel homework is not sufficient, not motivating or challenging enough. Sensitive matters are dealt with very well. They think that behaviour and attendance and incidents of bullying are dealt with

effectively. Pupils' reports are reasonably accurate but lack consistency across subjects. Parents have noted a recent improvement in information technology and design and technology resources and a wider range of subject choices. Some commented on the lack of planned information technology lessons and the inequitable treatment of music and food technology. Parents value the support provided by the classroom assistants, especially in Year 7 and the experience gained by their children at Atlantic College. A few wrote that the lower ability pupils are not challenged and supported.

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

ENGLISH

103. Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national averages. In 1999, National Curriculum test results for fourteen-year-olds were above average for all pupils, significantly above average for boys' performance, and well above average for pupils in similar schools. In 1998 the school did not do so well, but when results are considered over a period of four years they are above national averages for boys. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, shown in the 1999 GCSE English results, for the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C, was above national averages for all pupils, significantly above national averages for boys and was well above average for boys in similar schools. The average results of the last three years in English are above national averages for boys. In English literature GCSE results are in line with national averages for boys. Attainment at GCE Advanced level in English and media studies in 1999 was below national averages in the higher grades but above national averages in the full range A – E, as all students passed the examination; the same was true for Advanced level English language, for media studies and for drama. There was no significant difference between the performances of boys from different ethnic backgrounds.
104. Inspection evidence indicates that at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils' attainment in English is above average but it is below average in the sixth form. Most pupils, including those with English as an additional language, achieve good standards in speaking and listening. There is frequent use of whole class discussion at all stages of the course in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils at all levels of attainment listen well to the teacher and to each other; their answers to questions are clearly expressed, and they expand on their points rather than limiting them to brief comments. In group work their discussion is well focused, and they negotiate efficiently to produce required outcomes – such as plot summaries to promote film extracts in a Year 8 media lesson. Groups of pupils who were interviewed by the inspectors were confident and articulate, particularly those from Year 11 and the sixth form. As they move through the school, higher and average attaining pupils become competent readers, able to respond appropriately to texts of different kinds, and to analyse literature. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, work in smaller groups and, although they do not all acquire sufficient skill to take the GCSE examination; they increase their basic competence significantly. Pupils with

English as an additional language achieve standards in line with their indigenous white peers.

105. Pupils cover a wide range of writing in Key Stages 3 and 4. From the start of Year 7 there is a strong emphasis on the acquisition and appropriate use of vocabulary and on the need for accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Pupils at all levels of attainment take a pride in their written work, and standards of presentation are good. By Year 9, higher attainers are writing at considerable length and in a range of styles, applying the language devices they learn about – such as the use of metaphor and simile - to their own writing. There is a strong component of information technology in the Key Stage 3 course, and through this pupils become competent in word processing and the use of different page formats, such as newspaper columns. The level of writing needed for Advanced level work in the sixth form presents problems for some students, but good progress is made during the two-year course, to develop the language appropriate to more academic analysis, in discussion as well as in writing.
106. Overall, the quality of teaching is good; it is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teaching in most lessons is satisfactory or better: more than half of it is good or very good; two lessons were ineffective. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding are used effectively to ensure that the teaching of Programmes of Study is thorough and coherent, covering all requirements of the National Curriculum and ensuring that all pupils have full access to all aspects. At the same time, teachers are imaginative and enthusiastic, putting their own stamp on the units of work. For instance, in a lesson with an upper band Year 11 class studying 'Animal Farm', the teacher mounted an oral assignment in which the class conducted a meeting as villagers debating the issue of collectivism. Planning of lessons is in most cases thorough, with due attention paid to use of time, variety of activity and appropriate resources, and this enables pupils to sustain interest and work hard throughout the seventy minute lessons. Teachers are realistically ambitious for their pupils at all levels, although there is a need, particularly in the mixed ability classes in Year 7, for a range of levels of work in order to challenge all pupils in the class. Management of behaviour is very skilled in most of the teaching, but in a small number of lessons for pupils in the lower band, behaviour of a minority of pupils is poor and this adversely affects the learning of the whole class. Homework is set regularly; it flows naturally from the work in class and is a necessary preparation for what is to come next. Most - but not all - teachers make a point of setting the tasks at a point in the lesson when pupils are concentrating well, and instructions are clear.
107. Pupils' learning is well supported by teachers' detailed, focused comments on their written work, and the developing system in Key Stage 3 of putting best work into an ongoing folder gives a good indication to teachers and pupils of the progress being made.
108. Under the vigorous and skilful management of the head of department and her deputy, issues raised in the last report have been satisfactorily addressed. There is now a full scheme of work in place and drama has been introduced successfully as a GCSE option. Provision of textbooks and other resources is

good, with a full range of poetry, novels and plays available for all parts of the curriculum, as well as plentiful audio-visual equipment and tapes. There is no dedicated space for the teaching of drama, but there is an after-school club run by one member of the department and through this pupils have experience of school productions. Lessons are now closely planned, in order to achieve pace and challenge for the pupils. Finally, although there is still a small number of classes in Key Stage 3, which are taught by two teachers at different times in the week, there is very good communication between the teachers concerned and this has no adverse effect on the pupils' learning. The department should now :

- share good practice across all members of the team, particularly with regard to management of behaviour in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Literacy

109. The standard of pupils' English when they enter the school is in line with national averages. They are confident speakers, able to express ideas fluently and clearly. There are many opportunities to develop oral skills, not only in English, but also in a range of subjects in the school curriculum. In music and science, for instance, pupils collaborate in groups to prepare presentations or work out experiments, and in subjects such as history and religious education they are frequently required to discuss ideas in pairs. Average reading levels on entry are just below expectations for age, and there is a wide range of competence, including a substantial minority of pupils whose skills are undeveloped. At present the library stock is inadequate, particularly in its range of fiction, and it does not play the part it could in fostering the habit of reading or aiding research through books. However, the school works hard and successfully to raise the lowest reading levels. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for short periods for intensive and systematic individual help with their reading. Trained older pupils read with selected Year 7 pupils before school in the morning. Generally in all subjects where reading is an integral part of the course, teachers consciously work to extend reading skills. All subjects take responsibility for teaching the use and spelling of appropriate vocabulary, using word lists in their displays and emphasising the need for accurate expression in written work. Although some pupils continue to have difficulties in expressing themselves, standards of accuracy and presentation of writing of the majority are good at all stages in the school.

MATHEMATICS

110. On entry to the school attainment in mathematics is broadly average. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 has been in line with national averages over several years. In 1999, however, attainment was well above both national and boys' averages, with 74 per cent achieving level 5 or above, against the national figure of 62 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 and above was 47 per cent against the national average of 23 per cent. Results are also very high when compared to similar schools. According to the information provided by the school, the present Year 10 pupils are exceptionally higher attaining and teachers'

assessments mainly confirm these findings. Mathematics results compare favourably with those in science and English. There is no significant difference in the attainment of pupils from various ethnic groups or for those for whom English is an additional language. At Key Stage 3, the school's upward trend in results is faster than that of the national trend.

111. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1999 is below both the national average and below that for boys at grades A*-C. Results have fluctuated over the last three years, partly as a result of prior attainment on entry, but also because of other factors such as the deployment of staff. However, there has been a sustained improvement over 1998 and 1999 in the percentage of the Year 11 cohorts entered and in those attaining A*-G. Results in GCSE mathematics are in line with the average for similar schools in 1999. As in Key Stage 3, there is no significant difference in the attainment of pupils from ethnic groups or in that of those who have English as an additional language. Although mathematics results are below average for the school, these results again compare favourably with those of science but less well with those of English.
112. Attainment in mathematics at the end of A-level courses is below average when compared with those expected nationally from comprehensive schools. There were no higher grades in 1999. Of the four candidates taking the examinations in 1999, two obtained grade D and two grade U. These results mainly reflect the attainment of the students on beginning the course.
113. At Key Stage 3, the standards observed in lessons and work seen are in line with setting and are satisfactory overall. Higher attaining students in Year 9, show good recall of work previously covered such as work on angles and simple equations. They show improving algebraic skills as in the lesson where they were proficient in collecting like terms. Those of average attainment are able to work with directed numbers in a practical context such as temperature. They are beginning to explore patterns and notice generalisations which they can express in words. However, although they are able to show satisfactory written skills in number and measurement, they are unable to explain why and where they might use these skills, as in their work on upper and lower limits in measurement. Students of below average attainment, including those with special educational needs, can work with addition and subtraction of money to amounts exceeding whole numbers of pounds. With help they can use mental methods to find simple percentages. However, they do have difficulty interpreting written questions and in identifying which operations to use.
114. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory and just above that reflected in the GCSE results of 1999. This is partly because of the better than average attainment shown by the present Year 10 which reflects their higher than average Key Stage 3 results. In one such lesson pupils were well able to relate enlargements to similar triangles, to work out associated problems and to discuss invariant properties. Their investigative tasks also show an above average standard in the doing and communicating strands although their ability to explain what is happening is less well developed. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 work well with trigonometric ratios and can apply these to finding areas of triangles as in the lesson involving two dimensional

and three dimensional shapes and solids. However, the standards seen in several pieces of coursework for GCSE are unsatisfactory and below that appropriate for the highest tier of entry. One candidate for whom English is an additional language shows above average competence in coursework. For those candidates of average attainment in Year 11, the standards achieved in work seen and lessons observed are unsatisfactory. There is much incomplete work in pupils' books. They struggle with algebraic techniques as in the lesson on changing the subject of the formula. Others have difficulty in applying Pythagoras' theorem to finding sides other than the hypotenuse. They show confusion over metric and imperial measures and are uncertain when dealing with probability questions. Pupils of below average attainment, and those with special educational needs, still have weak numeracy skills at the end of Key Stage 4. Their difficulties in recognising simple common factors hindered their progress in the lesson on ratio.

115. Students in Year 12 build on their data handling skills from GCSE. They are competent in handling measures of spread for particular distributions. In pure mathematics lessons, they can find the sum of an arithmetic sequence. Year 13 are able to apply their trigonometric and algebraic skills to solving problems on the conservation of momentum. When prompted they are able to reflect on the problems presented and use diagrams to model the situation. Although in both Years 12 and 13 the work seen is appropriate for the modules studied, there is little evidence of a deeper understanding beyond that of routine skills.
116. Pupils make some use of their numeracy skills in a few subjects apart from mathematics. In physical education they use mental arithmetic skills satisfactorily to work out fitness levels and count pulse rates. They can interpret data for fitness profiles when it is displayed graphically. In science, pupils use numeracy skills to measure lengths in metric units in Key Stage 3. However, they use graphical representation more rarely than could be expected. Accuracy in measurement is enhanced in design and technology. Music uses numeracy well to enhance pupils' understanding of octaves as in a Year 9 lesson where boys' interest was caught through hearing that Pythagoras was aware of the relative frequencies of notes. There is, however, insufficient support for numeracy from many subjects across the curriculum.
117. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is satisfactory overall. However, although half of all lessons seen were good, there is also some unsatisfactory teaching. In the small sample of sixth form lessons seen teaching is also satisfactory. All teachers of mathematics have very good subject knowledge which ensures that pupils at each key stage have access to the mathematical skills required for the examinations. Relationships are good in most lessons and this not only encourages pupils' cooperation and concentration, but also increases their confidence in asking questions to clarify their understanding. Most teachers actively encourage the pupils' language development as in the Year 8 lesson where good oral work helped pupils to distinguish 'of' and 'off'. In a Year 11 lesson, the emphasis on the literal meaning of the 'included angle' helped pupils to recognise patterns. Consideration of 'energy' in real situations encouraged understanding in a Year 13 mechanics lesson.

118. At each key stage, however, in many lessons, teachers confuse activities for pupils with what pupils actually learn. Across the department teachers pay insufficient attention to the assessment of what pupils actually learn in a lesson. The recording and monitoring of their progress is not rigorous and misunderstandings are missed as seen in the Year 11 mock examination papers. Marking is inconsistent across the department. It is not clearly related to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, nor are there many supportive comments to help pupils make progress. Pupils are not regularly involved in their own assessment, particularly at Key Stage 3. Most teachers plan well for content but some lessons, particularly for average and below average pupils, are insufficiently structured or varied in activities for learning to ensure a good pace and to hold the pupils' concentration as in the Year 7 lesson on making algebraic sentences from word sentences and in the Year 11 lesson on changing the subject of the formula. Sixth form lessons depend heavily on the textbooks in use and do not broaden the students' horizons. Homework is set consistently but tasks are not always challenging to extend pupils' learning.
119. Although the management of the department has successfully improved attainment at Key Stage 3 through the new scheme of work and the established good teamwork within the department, there are other significant factors affecting adversely pupils' attainment in mathematics. These include the deployment of staff, the too infrequent monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work and the insufficiently structured scheme of work at Key Stage 4 which gives inadequate guidance to teachers. Additionally, the library is poorly used to assist pupils' independent learning. Procedures for managing pupils' coursework for GCSE are also not well coordinated.
120. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress in raising attainment at Key Stage 3. There has been an improvement in the use of information technology to enhance the teaching of mathematics as well as in the provision for pupils with special educational needs through the targeting of provision in Year 7. Other issues, however, still remain and have not been attended to satisfactorily. These include the raising of attainment in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4, the need for a more coherent system of monitoring and moderating assessments and the need to review strategies for teaching and learning. In order to raise attainment further the department must:
- review its assessment practice within lessons to relate intended lesson objectives to what pupils have actually learned.
 - monitor and review the marking and recording of pupils' work.
 - restructure the scheme of work at Key Stage 4 to support teachers more fully.
 - review coursework procedures to assist in raising attainment at Key Stage 4.
 - further develop the use of information technology in mathematics.
 - review the required entry levels for A-level mathematics.
 - develop and implement a policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

121. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests was well above the national average, with 66 per cent achieving level 5 or above, in comparison with a national figure of 54 per cent. It shows an improvement over previous years when the results were in line with the national average. These results are similar to the results for mathematics and over the years, better than those for English. Pupils' performance in science tests at Key Stage 3 was well above the average for similar schools. They also show an improvement since the last inspection. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment of pupils during Key Stage 3 is above the national expectations. Scrutiny of pupils' written work shows attainment is also above the national average by the end of the key stage, in line with the test results. Most pupils of average and above average attainment show broad and accurate knowledge and understanding of all attainment targets. They show good knowledge of ideas such as force, light energy, simple chemical reactions and functions of different parts of the human body. Pupils in Years 7-9 show confidence to set up experiments, making accurate observations and recording. This indicates good progress through the Years 7 to 9. In a Year 9 lesson, most pupils have the manipulative skills to weigh out salt to one hundredth of a gram and heat solutions to different temperatures. They were familiar with the equipment, were able to describe the purpose of the investigation and explain their predictions of solubility. In another lesson Year 9 pupils showed good understanding of dispersion and formation of the spectrum, though some were insecure in explaining the reasons for the path taken by the ray of light.
122. The GCSE double-award science results for 1999 are in line with the national average though there are fewer A or A* grades: there were three 'A's but none achieved an A* grade this year. These results are lower than those achieved in 1998 and 1997. GCSE results in 1997 and 1998 were both above the national average. Uptake of double award science is good. More than four fifths of the pupils were entered for the 1999 GCSE examination and almost all students gained a grade A*-G. The results are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. A few pupils taking the separate sciences in GCSE biology, chemistry and physics all gained grades B or above with an A* being gained in physics and an A grade in chemistry. Provision is made for less able pupils to study a single-award science course. A few students were entered for this examination in 1999 but their results were well below the national average. There are no significant differences in the performance of pupils from various ethnic backgrounds. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Year 10 pupils demonstrate a higher achievement and are able to perform complex calculations of energy and efficiency with confidence and understanding. In contrast a few high attaining pupils in a Year 11 class had difficulty in writing the units of area. Most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of properties of materials, physical processes and simple biological concepts. Most pupils in a Year 11 class demonstrated their knowledge of pressure and were able to explain the relationship between pressure and force and area. Most pupils make plausible predictions and perform experimental work competently and safely. They are able to draw graphs to represent experimental data but they often lack precision and clarity whilst hypothesizing and interpreting results. They rarely use information technology to analyse experimental data or to simulate

experiments. In a lesson about reproduction in plants many pupils were able to explain the terms asexual, mitosis and meiosis. They also understood how the process of cloning had produced 'Dolly' the sheep. In a special 'after school' lesson for high attaining pupils learning was particularly effective and pupils had a very good understanding of chemical equations, ions and chemical reactions. Pupils with special educational needs, in all key stages, make satisfactory progress, particularly when assisted by support teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language make as good a progress as their indigenous white peers.

123. Sixth form A-level results in 1999 were below the national average in the three subjects, biology, chemistry and physics although a few biology students gained some higher grades. Most students gained passes in these subjects. These results are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection although physics then gained the higher grades. Students who enter the A-level subjects with the required GCSE grades make good progress. Observation of work and discussion with sixth form students showed that achievement was below expectations in some lessons. There is also too little evidence of planned opportunities for structured practical work. Some student files are organised poorly and work is generally incomplete with the exception of biology. Students in a Year 13 class had a very good understanding of the progressive conditions required for the germination of seeds. Some were able to use a complex nomograph to make predictions about temperature, moisture content, storage period and final viability. When learning about radioactivity, Year 12 students showed sound knowledge from previous Key Stage 4 work when they were able to explain the properties of alpha, beta and gamma emissions.
124. Most students show good attitudes to science lessons and enjoy the subject. They appreciate an intellectual challenge such as when a Year 7 class was learning about variables and values. Pupils' behaviour is generally dependent on their respect for the teachers' organisation and ability to create interest. For example, attitudes were good when a Year 11 class was studying tropism in a biology lesson. Pupils watched the demonstrations with interest whilst feeling confident to make observations. Science makes an effective contribution to the spiritual development of pupils, for example in lessons on astronomy the teachers discuss with younger pupils the appropriate spiritual dimensions. Social issues, such as drugs and evolution in biology, are discussed with sensitivity.
125. Teaching during Key Stage 3 is sound or better in all lessons. Teaching is good or very good in about one third of the lessons. During Key Stage 4 teaching is sound or better in most lessons and is good in about one third of the lessons. In both key stages teachers use their knowledge and understanding of their subject to plan appropriate strategies, question and consolidate pupils' understanding. However, there were some ineffective lessons in which poor management and ineffective teaching strategies contributed to poor learning. Where lesson plans are structured carefully, pace is good and time is used effectively and efficiently to test pupils' understanding of the Programmes of Study taught. In several lessons a short test is given at the end of the session to assess pupils' learning and achievement. Basic skills are taught effectively

through the structured activities provided in the 'Science Now' scheme. This course with its activity sheets addresses appropriately the targets of the National Curriculum. However, as reported at the time of the last inspection, opportunities for using an investigative approach are often overlooked. For example during a lesson where Year 9 pupils were observing the colours of a spectrum, they were told the colours at the beginning of the lesson and had no opportunity to find out for themselves. Class investigations are now arranged at intervals and meet the course work assessment requirements. Teacher expectations are high during Key Stage 3 but could be higher during Key Stage 4 so that average attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory though in some lessons expectations of sixth form students could be higher. Homework is set for all classes on a regular basis to increase learning opportunities.

126. Lesson plans often include worthwhile tasks to match pupils' prior attainment. In many cases extension tasks are provided to challenge the high attaining pupils. Years 10 and 11 pupils with high attainment in science are offered extra lessons after school to give them increased opportunities to gain the best possible grade in the GCSE examination. This is valuable in increasing their knowledge and understanding, consolidating relationships and improving examination grades at higher GCSE grades. More attention is now needed to challenge and support average and below average attaining pupils. Special needs pupils are sometimes supported by a learning support assistant, to facilitate access to the curriculum. Positive teaching with a class of Year 9 pupils having learning difficulties produced very effective learning when they used burettes successfully to neutralise solutions and produce salt. Most pupils could explain the significance of the indicator that changed from red to blue.
127. The department is led by a co-ordinator who encourages effective teaching in order to raise attainment and maximise progress. The policies are in place but could usefully include an overview of the science curriculum structure so that teachers are aware of the sections being covered by other staff at the same time. Schemes of work need details of methodology and strategies for effective learning to ensure that the Programme of Study is fully covered. The statutory curriculum is in place but there is little evidence of the applications of information technology to collect, handle and investigate scientific information. The department needs more than the one computer presently available in the laboratories. An assessment system is in place for Key Stage 3. Marks are recorded for attainment and effort although this is not consistent across the department. The results of scientific investigations need to be included. A wider range of assessment results needs to be recorded and analysed to provide information to inform teaching and assess learning in both key stages. The use of national curriculum levels at regular intervals could provide pupils with a progressive indication of their progress and provide additional motivation as they increase their grade level. Some additional support and in-service training in classroom management is needed by one of the science teachers. Two permanent technicians provide a very effective service and are fully included during departmental meetings. In order to improve further, the department should:
- develop strategies to challenge average and low attaining pupils.

- improve the scheme of work to give details of methodology and strategies for effective learning.
- provide more opportunities for class investigations to consolidate learning.
- use assessment results to plan lessons and support learning.
- ensure effective support and training for weaker teachers.
- Increase the number of computers in the laboratories.

ART

128. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art are above national expectations. In 1999, teachers' assessment shows that most pupils' attainment is above the national expectations and that there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys from different ethnic groups. At Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement in lessons and in the work seen is also above national expectations. Pupils are inventive when they experiment with visual images in their sketchbooks and they development ideas for different purposes. Lower attaining pupils used a narrow range of ideas. Pupils communicate and express ideas effectively in a range of two and three-dimensional media such drawing collage, printmaking, ceramics and information and communication technology. They recognise art from different times, places and cultures such as 'Expressionism' and the art and craft of the Aztecs. By the end Key Stage 3, pupils develop the confidence to express considered opinions about their own and other artists' work. All pupils, including those on the special educational needs register, use technical terms and phrases when they talk about art. Higher attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 are acquiring the skills needed to write careful evaluations, to reflect on what they make and how to adapt and improve their practical work.
129. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in art are above average. In 1999, 56.6 per cent of pupils entered for the GCSE art examination gained A*-C grades compared a national boys' average of 50.5 but below the national average for all schools of 61.2 per cent. The school art results were above the average for similar schools. There was no significant difference between the performances of boys from different ethnic groups. GCSE art results have fluctuated over the last three years but they have remained consistently in line with or above the national average for boys' schools. In 1998, the school achieved 80.8 per cent GCSE Grades A*- C compared with the national average of 59.4 per cent. At Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement in lessons and in the work seen is above the national average. Pupils make lively and colourful designs in their sketchbooks. Thorough preparatory studies are based on images and artefacts from a range of different cultures. Pupils plan their work and ideas to exploit the expressive characteristics of media and make rapid progress, learning how to use graphic, printmaking and ceramic techniques.
130. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 show increasing independence when they express a personal response to a theme or use their own cultural background to influence their work. A Year 11 pupil made a large ceramic form and incorporated the use of Islamic design to decorate his work. All pupils develop a capacity to adapt and refine their work, including special educational needs pupils. Average and higher attaining pupils explain the purpose and

meaning of their work. In 1999, A-level art results were above average compared with other boys' schools and similar schools. In the sixth form, students' sketchbooks and finished work shows bold and intricate technically accomplished images. Practical and theoretical work is enriched by visits to galleries and places of local interest. Year 12 students base their striking images of natural forms on a visit to a botanical garden and the study of artists such as Morris and O'Keefe. Written work shows knowledge of art and its styles and is used to extend students' thinking and practice.

131. Teaching and learning in art is good throughout the school. At Key Stage 3, teachers manage relatively large groups effectively by setting clear targets and using focussed questions to check that pupils understand what is expected of them. Tasks are organised in groups to match the needs of most pupils and practical demonstrations are skilful, providing guidance about the steps needed to be successful. Pupils are motivated when they see demonstrations and when they are shown examples of other pupils' and artists' work. In some lessons, extended tasks are provided for the more able pupils and they experiment with different ways of presenting visual ideas. In most lessons pupils are shown examples of work to set expectations about the standards they should strive to achieve. This helps them to review their progress to work productively and with a sense of purpose. Homework in art is set and marked regularly to support class work.
132. At Key Stage 4, pupils are provided with a GCSE art checklist and they are helped to plan and organise their own work as it progresses. Teachers explain the purpose of the work they set, helping most pupils consider how they might respond to a theme. Lower attaining pupils make better progress when they are taught ways of making a personal response. Efficient use is made of lesson time to manage a good balance for the support of groups and individual pupils. Intervention is well judged and good use is made of praise and challenge, pupils' interest and concentration is maintained and they make noticeable improvements to their work. Teachers use examples of their own and other artists' work to inspire pupils. In the sixth form, course units are designed skilfully to encourage students to explore the limits of their research and technical skills. Good use is made of tutorials and students are prompted to be rigorous about the way they develop and complete theoretical and practical work. Homework in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is set and marked regularly to support and extend class work.
133. The head of department provides good leadership. Staff work well together as a team and are dedicated to promoting the status of the subject and to raising standards. Medium term planning is good and provides a firm foundation for developing the art curriculum. Long term planning within, and across key stages, is being developed and will need to provide greater clarity about how continuity and progression is achieved in art. Teachers know the subject strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and students. However, insufficient use is made of assessment information for agreeing targets to improve standards or to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the subject in the school. Line management arrangements are at an early stage of development. The technician time is inadequate for the number of staff, rooms and courses

for art. Resources are good and a wide range of materials and visual aids are provided for the themes that are set and to motivate and inspire pupils.

134. Improvements since the last inspection include standards to be above, or well above, national averages for boys' schools. Teaching in art is now good throughout the school. The National Curriculum for art is now in place, including provision for information and communication technology. Progress has been made on establishing adequate assessment procedures but the use of assessment information needs to be further developed. Overall, this subject has made good progress since the last inspection. In order to continue to raise standards the department should:
- Improve long term planning to further clarify how continuity and progression is achieved in art.
 - Use assessment information to set targets to raise standards and to monitor more closely pupils' progress and attainment.
 - Establish a system to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the subject, to judge the value that art adds to standards and achievement in the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. Pupils enter the school with variable practical making skills and make sufficient progress to reach standards in line with national average at the end of Year Key Stage 3. Progress in Key Stage 3 is good with pupils achieving above average standards in practical making skills, particularly in timber and plastic, where they are able to measure, cut, shape and join materials with some accuracy. Knowledge and skills are also secure in the use of graphics where they are able to make effective use of information technology, for example, in producing logos for promotional packaging. Less developed design awareness and more limited understanding of systems and control balance these strengths in part.
136. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average. GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are at least as high as those for boys and girls in comprehensive schools with 53 per cent achieving grades A*-C compared with 49 per cent nationally. Furthermore, in 1999, all pupils were entered for the GCSE and achieved graded results. When compared with boys in all schools, those in Kings Norton achieve significantly better. These standards reflect considerable progress since the last inspection report. Pupils make good progress in both GCSE design and technology courses as well as in a further option course leading to a foundation award in food technology. Higher attaining pupils taking graphic products, demonstrate greater strengths in research and understanding of industrial contexts and processes. Overall standards in the current graphic products course are above national average and this is reflected in secure graphical and information technology skills in what is mostly well presented folder work. The resistant materials course has a higher proportion of lower attaining and special educational needs pupils who are reaching standards comparable to boys in similar schools. Though more limited in their range of design ideas, the pupils show continued good progress

in their making skills, predominantly in timber. Although the school has very little provision for food technology, a number of pupils, some with special educational needs, gain considerably in terms of personal confidence and practical skills.

137. GCE Advanced level results have improved though in 1999 are still below the national average with 75 per cent gaining passes compared with 87 per cent nationally. Current students make good progress and achieve standards more in line with the national averages reflected in a variety of projects that include furniture manufacture.
138. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is good in 80 per cent of lessons and is always at least satisfactory contributing to effective learning in most lessons. Staff have strong knowledge and understanding of those areas emphasised in the school provision, particularly at GCE Advanced level and GCSE levels. For example, in a Year 10 graphic products lesson the teacher 's focus on commercial contexts enabled pupils to develop a clear understanding of large and small batch production. All staff make effective use of information technology. This was evident in a Year 7 project on box nets that helped pupils learn how to import and resize clipart. Special educational needs pupils are able to learn effectively with the class teacher's help though in this particular lesson the classroom assistant made a valuable contribution. Staff have firm expectations about standards required in terms of practical class work and folder work, including homework, and this results in pupils showing greater care and accuracy in their work. The class management of most staff is very secure with the best practice combining firmness with positive encouragement. Most activities are well chosen in that they involve the pupils who like the subject and behave well in the workshops. However, in the efforts to establish a successful provision, the teachers have placed insufficient emphasis on developing pupil awareness of the design process. Furthermore, the schemes of work lack some breadth in terms of the range and challenge of materials and processes covered. Similarly, though staff assess regularly, pupils in Years 7-9 are unaware of the National Curriculum levels they are working towards or what they need to do to improve.
139. The previous inspection was critical of the standards achieved and the overall quality of teaching and resources. Since then, the subject leader has been very good in planning and implementing significant improvements in provision and in developing an increasingly effective team that includes recently qualified staff. Teaching has improved to be consistently good and has contributed to improved pupil attitudes and rates of learning, while accommodation and resources have improved substantially to create a more attractive popular area of the school. All of this has contributed to the improvement in standards, most notably at GCSE level.
140. The department now needs to build on these strengths by providing:
 - a broader coverage of the Key Stage 3 curriculum that explicitly includes compliant materials and/or food technology.

- monitoring and assessment practice more closely related to National Curriculum criteria.
- matching learning activities to national levels of attainment to ensure they provide a sufficient range to meet the needs of all pupils.

BUSINESS STUDIES

141. Pupils taking business studies achieve GCSE standards in line with the national average with 52 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C. These standards are broadly reflected in lessons with pupils able to apply their knowledge in classroom activities and discussions. Higher attaining pupils have a stronger conceptual understanding of concepts such as business partnerships, franchises, cooperatives and higher attaining pupils are able to apply previously learned ideas to discuss tactical and operational strategies and their short-term and long-term impact on decision making.
142. In GCE Advanced level business studies, results are in line with the national average with 90 per cent of students achieving A-E grades passes. The proportion of higher grades varies from year to year though is usually at least in line with national levels. Students in Year 12 made very good gains in knowledge and understanding relating to finance and accounting, and in-group work and presentation skills.
143. Teaching in business studies is consistently good and in half of lessons, very good. A main strength of the teaching is in the teacher's knowledge that is used effectively to develop and challenge students' understanding. Good use is made of active learning techniques including role-play, presentation and group discussion that engage the interest of the students and provide opportunities to apply ideas. Pupils respond to effective and varied approaches, clear and shared objectives, interactive questioning and appropriate expectations which are reflected in detailed feedback and in the good quality homework assignments.
144. The specialist business studies room is attractively laid out and includes a small suite of networked computers and there is some evidence of effective use for word processing and spreadsheets. The business studies area has been effective in sustaining appropriate standards but could make a more significant contribution to the development of information technology in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

GEOGRAPHY

145. In the GCSE results in the past three years, pupils have attained grades A* - C at above the national averages and well above in relation to boys of this age. Trends are slightly upward, though not at the same rate as nationally. The grades attained are predominantly at B and C. No pupil has achieved A* grade in the years 1997 to 1999. Results at A-level are variable, as are the numbers

in the classes from year to year. They are, overall, in line with national levels for pupils of their age. There are no variations relating to ethnic differences.

146. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. The significant minority of pupils who were noted in the last report as not reaching the level has diminished greatly. Pupils with special educational needs achieve the targets set for them. By the end of the key stage most pupils can use necessary geographical skills, for example graphic construction of climatic data when studying Equatorial climates, and can use such data when presented to them. The great majority can use maps of different scales and make reasoned descriptions of differing social and economic conditions in various parts of the world. More extended work, on topics such as the Kobe earthquake, shows not only a good grasp of the location, effects and causes of this disaster but also demonstrates a good level of skill in the use of information technology in the work on presentation and research.
147. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is above the national average and well above the national levels for boys. Pupils show skills, knowledge and understanding at levels that are in line with the external examination results. There is evidence among the work seen in scrutiny, that the strategy adopted recently by the department to challenge pupils with more demanding questions is bringing out better response, good understanding of geography concepts and higher levels of achievement. In class the understanding of industrial location factors, for example the siting of the Toyota factory at Burnaston, shows a maturity of understanding of the plus and minus factors involved in economic decision-making. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and most are following an examination course of study that is valuable and suited to their needs, with emphasis on description and simple analysis. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the department encourages a variety of writing, including reports, descriptions and longer pieces, as well as ensuring a lively and accurate vocabulary in geographical terms. In geography, pupils make good use of mathematics to draw graphs and interpret geographical data.
148. At A-level most students following the higher-level course, attain in line with their prior attainment. Students come from many other schools, including some who have not studied the subject before, and have successful experiences alongside the school's homegrown population. By the end of the course, the best students demonstrate good understanding of the complex nature of the physical forces at work in the world; for example the factors that affect the rates of run off of surface water and the consequences on people of these different rates. Most can make sense of the planning needs of places such as Glasgow in forming judgements about urban redevelopment. In all examination courses there is equality of access for students of all backgrounds and no difference apparent in the outcomes.
149. All pupils display positive attitudes towards work in geography and behaviour is good. Most pupils are motivated by their studies and are attentive, remain on task, concentrate and respond well. As a result, pupils consolidate learning and understanding and make good progress. They are aware of the rules of

the school, respect them, and as a result are well aware of the differences between right and wrong. There is a harmony among pupils of all backgrounds that is impressive and is a strong part of the positive learning ethos of the school.

150. Overall, the quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is satisfactory though in a small number of lessons observed, it was good. Sound planning of the course and detailed planning of lessons give a secure base for good use of teaching skills such as question and answer sessions. In most lessons, teachers make effective use of a variety of probing, open, challenging, reflective and leading questions to facilitate understanding and good learning. The pace at which these are used ensures an alert attention to the class teacher. Response is keen and shows an interest in the subject. As a result, pupils are involved in acquiring knowledge and skills and putting them into practise in writing and orally, to demonstrate what they have learned both to the teacher and their classmates. All teachers are enthusiastic about helping pupils progress from, for example, describing different kinds of farming, to analysing the factors that enable them to make judgements about the economic development of countries across the world. This is evident in the high standard of work produced.
151. The department is managed satisfactorily. Good planning, with a scheme of work that fulfils the needs of the National Curriculum is underpinned by close co-operation among the team of teachers. Thorough planning and regular meetings ensure effective coverage of all Programmes of Study, though the lack of detailed tracking of progress, and monitoring of teaching inhibit better quality management.
152. The department maintains the many good points from the last inspection, relating to standards, teaching and resources. In order to sustain good practice and improve further the department needs to:
 - continue the newly established progress charting and challenging approaches, particularly in Key Stage 4.
 - incorporate regular and frequent monitoring of teaching practice and standards.

HISTORY

153. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, based on assessments made by teachers was above the national attainment for pupils of this age, with the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels also above what is found nationally. Standards of attainment have shown improvement over the past three years. Achievement seen during the course of the inspection is also above what is seen nationally.
154. Pupils have a generally sound grasp of a good range of historical facts, situations and figures and can recall these in future lessons in order to reflect on what they have already learned. They develop the skills of selecting and evaluating information in order to illustrate their ideas and make their written

work more informative, for example pupils writing about the death of Thomas à Becket were able to research and include some additional facts which they had discovered themselves. All pupils, including most of the lower attaining pupils, have reading and writing skills, which enable them to cope with the demands of their work. Pupils use discussion as a valuable learning tool through which they are able to benefit from hearing the ideas expressed by others.

155. The 1999 GCSE results in history showed a very considerable improvement, with 80.9 percent gaining grades A*-C compared with the national average of 56.2 per cent. These results were well above the national average for all schools and for boys' schools. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-G grades is in line with the national average. Although GCSE results have fluctuated over the previous three years, there have been, overall, significant improvements and pupils who are due to take their examination in 2000 are on course to achieve results which are above the national average for 1999. There is no difference in the results achieved by boys of different ethnic origins. Achievement based on evidence seen during the course of the inspection is also above the national average.
156. Pupils have secure knowledge of a wide range of historical facts and situations and use these effectively to illustrate and justify their arguments. They use a wide range of evidence, including that derived from cartoons and written sources produced at the time, for example pupils who were able to interpret a cartoon depicting the Nazi takeover of Austria. Most pupils can make clear links between cause and effect and can understand why historical events happened in the way they did. All students develop the demanding skills of note-making and the organisation of their extended writing, although lower attaining pupils find this difficult and tend to fail to include the full range of facts. Pupils acquire a range of historical vocabulary and use this with developing confidence, despite the fact that much of this is unusual and unfamiliar to them.
157. In the sixth form standards of attainment are in line with the students' levels of ability. In 1999 in history the percentage of pupils attaining the two highest grades was in line with what is found nationally and all pupils achieved a pass grade. In government and politics all pupils achieved a pass grade although no higher grades were awarded. In both these subjects pupils read a wide range of historical sources and commentary and they select and evaluate these well. They use a wide range of complex detail effectively and show clear understanding of constitutional and political complexities, often drawing upon contemporary parallels to illustrate their views.
158. Pupils behave well in lessons and are attentive and courteous to others. They respond well to the many opportunities they are given to work collaboratively with other pupils, by listening carefully to the ideas of others and using these to refine their own thinking.
159. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory and nearly all was at least good, with some very good and excellent teaching. The very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is planned in considerable detail to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers use a wide variety of activities, tasks and resources to support pupils and make the work accessible to all. In

both Key Stages 3 and 4 considerable attention is given to the teaching and encouragement of literacy skills. All teachers show thorough understanding of how to develop these skills in boys and apply appropriate strategies consistently. Pupils respond well to the support they are given by making good progress in reading and writing. Teachers make very effective use of a range of strategies to raise pupils' aspirations and attainments. Good use is made of questioning and discussion to make pupils think and extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers set a very brisk pace in lessons and not a moment is wasted. Pupils respond very positively to teachers' expectations and work hard, showing enthusiasm, good concentration and the will to succeed. Good progress is made in lessons. In sixth form lessons teachers take care to provide activities which are challenging and varied, offering support to students to develop their discursive and analytical skills.

160. The department is very well led, with a clear commitment to raising pupils' aspirations and standards of achievement. There are schemes of work and other documentation which provide useful guidance to teachers, especially that relating to the raising of attainment. Several departmental initiatives are in place to assist pupils to maximise their potential, for example the lunch time "master classes" for GCSE pupils. There is an adequate range of textbooks and this is supplemented by additional books and other materials which pupils are encouraged to select according to need. The department produces much of its own supplementary material which is designed to support pupils at varying levels of attainment.
161. The previous inspection report was favourable and some improvements have been made since then, notably in the 1999 GCSE results. It was noted in the previous report that the majority of "A" level students received "recognised" grades, a situation which was improved upon in 1999 when all students received such grades. A significant majority of teaching in this inspection was good, with some very good and excellent teaching, an improvement since the last inspection when all teaching seen was at least satisfactory.
162. In order to make further progress the department needs to consider making more strategic use of the full range of available information on assessment in order to:
 - measure pupils' progress.
 - predict achievement.
 - identify under achievement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

163. Pupils come to the school with variable information technology skills and standards continue to be low at the end of Key Stage 3. Although Key Stage 3 teacher assessments are reported to be above average this is not apparent from pupils' visible achievements. Despite the school's attempts for pupils to be taught knowledge and skills in the main applications within the different

subject areas, the majority does not receive sufficient opportunities to make satisfactory progress in information technology. Within design and technology, pupils acquire good skills in graphics applications and are introduced to computer control. Other subjects, including English and geography, enable some gains to be made in communicating information using word processing and desktop publishing, but even in these areas, individual experiences vary considerably, depending on teacher competence and readiness to use the resources. Pupils' skills in other areas are even more variable as some subjects, including mathematics and science have yet to put in place a consistent provision for all pupils. Most pupils gain some understanding of spreadsheets though this does not extend to their use for modelling and only some have the experience of using data logging equipment for measurement. Only a minority has more confident data handling and retrieval skills to make effective use of the developing CD-ROM and Internet facilities. Progress is difficult to identify because of a lack of monitoring within the different subjects, though overall achievement, despite some strengths, is below national average.

164. Overall, standards at the end of Key Stage 4, for pupils aged 16, are below average but mixed as they depend on the use they make of computers in GCSE courses. Although there are strengths in some areas, standards across the different applications are low compared with national average. Pupils come into Years 10 and 11, with varying confidence and skills and most make some progress in developing specific uses. Where pupils make use of information technology in GCSE course and project work, further gains are made in the use of spreadsheets for graphical presentation, word processing, graphics and desktop publishing. Higher attaining pupils can use other applications such as databases and spreadsheets for modeling, for example, in break-even analysis in business studies. However, for the majority of pupils, achievement is below standards reached in similar schools.
165. The low standard in the sixth form is a reflection of the limited prior experiences and the lack of use of information technology in GCE Advanced level courses, by the majority of students. As in Key Stage 4, the minority of students that pursue courses where information technology is often related, as in design and technology and business studies, makes better progress.
166. In the absence of specialist teaching, the information technology programme is delivered in other subject areas, particularly in design and technology and English where teaching is at least satisfactory and good in half of lessons. Those staff are mostly capable of demonstrating new applications and provide some support. In a Year 7 English class, the teacher used writing poetry as a stimulus for improving word processing skills including using different fonts and borders and pupils were successful in presenting their work in different styles. Good practice was also evident in a Year 9 design and technology lesson where pupils were helped in using a graphics program to successfully produce commercial logos with the higher attaining able to combine their graphics with text for their folders. The overall quality of teaching is inhibited by the lack of any schemes of work that enable pupils to steadily improve their knowledge and skills. Even the good teachers were giving introductory sessions, for example in using desk top publishing in Year 9, to pupils who had used such

applications earlier in other subjects. This in part reflected a lack of careful monitoring and recording of pupil progress in information technology.

167. Since the last inspection, resources have significantly improved with three good information technology rooms, including one in design and technology, as well as further networked facilities in the library and around the school. Internet facilities are now developing as part of the Birmingham Grid for Learning. The school further provides good technical support with an effective network manager. After a period of ineffectual management of information technology development, the current co-ordinator has been successful in starting the process of mapping the curriculum and identifying staff and resource needs. Some subjects have responded improving their contribution to information technology delivery.
168. However, the school still needs to provide sufficient coverage of the Key Stage 3 Programmes of Study in order to meet National Curriculum requirements and some subjects must fully meet the requirement for information technology within their own schemes of work. Although well intentioned, the current cross curricular provision does not provide sufficient time or structure to enable pupils to develop their skills to the expected levels, nor is there a system of monitoring and assessment in place. The school therefore needs to address these weaknesses through a more rigorously taught programme with clear ways of recognising and assessing progress.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

169. The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 in French and German is in line with national expectations. Pupils' attainment in lessons is below that indicated by teacher assessments. Most pupils can identify the main points and some detail from short texts and all pupils can match single words and short phrases to meaning. They understand and respond appropriately to routine instructions and questions in French and German with little need for repetition and can recognise familiar language from short extracts of speech. Higher attaining pupils have little need for repetition or prompting. Pupils describe events and express opinions simply and participate in short dialogues but their speaking skills are weak; many pupils lack confidence in speaking without recourse to prepared answers or written prompts and this dependence results in some poor pronunciation in French and a general lack of independence in using the languages for themselves. They copy and label items fairly accurately and most can construct simple sentences following a model, higher attainers from memory but most using word lists to help them. Higher and average attaining pupils in German and French identify and apply patterns in the languages successfully and these pupils have a good understanding of how the languages work.
170. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national averages in French but below national averages in German. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE in French is above national averages and well above national averages for boys in the subject and has risen significantly in the past three years. The number of pupils gaining A*-G grades is above

national averages. The number of pupils achieving A*-C grades in German in 1999 is below national averages and the number gaining A*-G grades is above national averages but numbers entered for examination are very low compared to national figures. In French and German pupils' reading and writing skills are of a high standard; they produce extended pieces of writing such as brochures and narrative accounts describing events in the past, present and future fairly accurately and in detail using a good range of vocabulary and structures. Lower attaining pupils write short texts following a model. Most pupils identify the main points from speech with some guidance and repetition, higher attaining pupils can interpret some unfamiliar language for others but many lack confidence in speaking at length or spontaneously.

171. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in both key stages. Seven out of eight lessons observed were satisfactory or better and one out of three was good or better and this contributed positively to standards achieved. Two ineffective lessons were seen. Teachers have a good command of the languages they teach and put their subject knowledge to good effect using the languages to conduct lessons, develop pupils' listening skills and reinforce learning. Teachers use resources such as the overhead projector and other visual aids to present new language; in a German lesson clear presentation and skilful questioning helped pupils make rapid progress in identifying and applying patterns in the language for themselves. Year 7 pupils were enthusiastic and displayed enjoyment when they used mime to reinforce their learning of adjectives. Well sequenced activities in most lessons enable pupils to build successfully on previous learning and increase their range of vocabulary and structures but there is insufficient attention paid to the effective development of skills for them to be able to put this gain in knowledge into practice in communicating independently. Planning is not sufficiently focused on outcomes for pupils of different attainment within teaching groups to progress at their own pace and resources are not always sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all pupils as a result. Activities such as practising model dialogues or completing worksheets do not excite pupils' enthusiasm or interest nor do they always provide an appropriate challenge. In the more effective lessons teachers have high expectations of behaviour and rates of work and conduct lessons at a brisk pace giving clear instructions and strict time limits for completing tasks. However in many lessons the teacher leads activities for lengthy periods decreasing the opportunities for pupils to participate and slowing the pace. In these situations some pupils lose concentration and interest and although pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally in pairs opportunities are missed to challenge and develop pupils' speaking and listening skills by requiring them to engage in activities where they have to find out information for themselves. Pupils usually behave well, listen attentively to the teacher and are concerned to do well. When they are given the opportunity to work in pairs they do so sensibly and concentrate on tasks set. However, when tasks fail to provide an appropriate challenge, when teacher led activities are lengthy, objectives are not clear or when resources present difficulties they lose interest and a small number of pupils are poorly behaved and disrupt lessons.
172. Overall leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Staff work well as a team sharing ideas and working together to produce resources.

Statutory requirements are met and schemes of work detail content but lack detail about expected outcomes for groups of differing attainment within teaching groups, Procedures for assessment are satisfactory but assessment is not used to best effect to inform pupils how to improve. Monitoring of teaching and learning is neither sufficiently rigorous nor systematic and there is insufficient support for inexperienced teachers. The distribution of lessons for German and the length of lessons for both German and French in Key Stage 3 slow progress over time. Since the last report standards at GCSE have improved in French. The use of information technology has been developed and accommodation improved. However there has been insufficient progress in raising the standards of pupils' speaking skills. In order to improve further:

- the planning needs to focus on learning outcomes.
- activities and tasks need to be more challenging for all pupils.
- encourage greater pupil participation.
- assessment information needs to inform teachers' planning and improve
- pupils' learning.

MUSIC

173. Music Technology was introduced at Advanced Level with the first student taking the examination in 1998. There are now 11 students in the combined sixth form group who are achieving in line with what can be expected of sixth form students. They are all competent musicians with a significant minority performing at a high level. Most are highly skilled in the processes of recording and sequencing, and use their musicianship to good effect when for instance editing a Schubert quartet.
174. Pupils' attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 4. Over the last two years' standards at GCSE were broadly in line with the national average and with boys nationally and most pupils had results at least as good in music as in other subjects. Most pupils make effective use of technology to assist them in composition. This is of particular benefit to lower attaining pupils who are able to express their ideas and develop and improve them unhindered by a lack of instrumental skill. Achievement in written work done in response to listening and appraising is, in most cases below what is expected because pupils do not listen analytically enough to give detailed answers. During one lesson seen in Year 11 persistent questioning by the teacher drew out the discerning answers needed to do well in the paper. They must now learn to do this for themselves. Pupils readily extend their work at lunchtime where the door is always open, and at home where a few pupils have compatible computer programmes.
175. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are well below the national average for 14 year olds with about a quarter of boys working at the expected level at the end of the key stage. Pupils perform less well in music than in other subjects, particularly the practical and creative. Pupils follow a structured course which enables them to build their musical skills progressively but the lack of time, and more significantly continuity, allocated to music in Years 7 and 8 seriously hamper achievement. The basic musical skills are well taught but pupils do not have enough time to consolidate and deepen their understanding and practical

application. Concepts of pitch, rhythm and timbre are understood and boys across the whole attainment range in Year 9 working on their own performance of 'My Girl' combine the elements in a convincing performance. With the exception of instrumentalists there is a low skill level in music impeded by the lack of time earlier in the key stage to improve motor skills and co-ordination. Of the portion of pupils taking music this term those in Year 7 do not settle to work readily. Concentration and self-discipline are not firm enough to keep them engaged, many preferring to explore the sound effects of the keyboard rather than practising the set task. By Year 9 motivation has improved and the opportunity to use supporting technology greatly enhances the boys' interest. Many can be seen in the music room at lunchtime continuing composition and performance practice begun in class. They gain encouragement from the sixth formers who are also there in pursuit of their own music making.

176. All teaching is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form with eight out of thirteen lessons good and one very good lesson. The quality of musicianship inspires pupils and gives them a good example to copy. The ability to analyse music and to make suitable arrangements for performance enables all pupils to understand better the nature of music and to take part in performances according to their ability in music. Relationships are good and younger boys are introduced to the regime of music making and the consequences of their actions. The needs of gifted and talented musicians are catered for with challenging tasks and a brisk pace. The inattention of small numbers of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is not always recognised. There are some good quality worksheets provided for written and practical tasks but they are not kept centred on activities, which involve the whole class. Boys are successful when the teacher gives individual help and encouragement in both Key Stages 3 and 4: a small number of boys in the lower band of Year 9 played the chord sequence of 'My Girl' fluently. The previous report commented on the lack of singing in performance. This is no longer the case and singing is built into most lessons both as a discrete performance activity and also as an aid to, and indication of, the internalising of sound by the pupils. The key and tessitura is not considered carefully for younger boys with unchanged voices to sing in a comfortable range, the result often being a lack of clarity in tuning and quality of tone.
177. The department is well led by an enthusiastic musician who provides many opportunities for pupils' music making in school, combining with the adjacent girls' school and in the immediate community. An extensive instrumental programme is very well managed giving around 80 pupils additional opportunity to witness at first hand the expertise of a range of 13 other musicians from a recording studio manager to a tabla player. The monitoring of visiting teachers is no further developed from the previous inspection but the aims and philosophy match that of the classroom teaching, which is to experience music in a practical way. A saxophonist in his fourth lesson improvised very effectively using a pentatonic scale, supported by his teacher who enables him to enjoy a high standard of music-making very early on in his playing career. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work at Key Stage 3 are not closely linked to national curriculum levels and not detailed enough for teachers and pupils to know how well they are doing and how much more they need to do to

improve. Pupils and students following examination courses have their own copies of marking schemes and can thus mark their progress.

178. Changes have been made to the accommodation to provide small rehearsal spaces and studios for technology. The additional equipment for the A-Level music technology course benefits younger pupils too because they can work with a sophisticated range of resources which they clearly find exciting. In order to improve the provision of music further the department needs to:
- increase the amount of time given to Key Stage 3 curriculum.
 - link arrangements for assessing pupils' work to the National Curriculum levels.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

179. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that all boys achieve at national expectations. This is significantly higher than the national proportions. In this respect standards at the time of the previous report have been improved. In lessons, the majority of fourteen year-olds attain at, or beyond, national expectations in the games and activities taught. All have a good understanding of health-related fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They lead aspects of their own warm-up and, for example, name the muscle groups being stretched. They understand the effects of exercise on the heart can take accurate pulse readings and apply the requisite amount of physical effort in order to work at their potential target zone. The limited amount of time for gymnastics means that in Year 8, for example, the majority of boys are still working toward age related expectations. There are no differences in terms of ethnicity.
180. There are no teacher assessment records of the proportions of boys reaching age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999. As at the time of the previous report this remains a weakness, as there was no reporting to parents as to the attainments of Year 11 in physical education. In lessons, the great majority of sixteen year-olds attain the national expectations in games such as basketball and football. Many boys have good individual skills and techniques and teamwork skills such as the ability to refine and adapt tactics and team play, when appropriate, in small-side games. There are no differences in terms of ethnicity.
181. Though no boys identified as having special educational needs were observed with additional help they are supported well and integrated in lessons and make progress in line with their capabilities.
182. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning provided by the subject specialist teachers is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form and has a positive impact on boys' learning and the progress they make. There are no differences between the key stages in the teaching of the course that all follow. In six out of ten lessons the quality of teaching is good or better and is an improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning in the examination groups is very good. One poor quality lesson was observed. This lesson, taken by a non-subject specialist, lacked focus and

structure, some of the boys were left unsupervised and it affected adversely their learning and progress.

183. The overall planning and structure of both practical and theory lessons is indicative of teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding. All lessons have a clear structure and focus and learning objectives are shared with boys at the start. The clarity of introductions ensures that they are aware of what is expected of them. In practical lessons skills are clearly demonstrated and effective and realistic skills drills are taught. In a Year 10 football lesson boys were involved in all aspects of planning, performing and evaluating as well as in peer coaching and evaluation.
184. Teachers pay due regard to safety and ensure that boys are warmed up before taking part in physical activity. Boys are encouraged to take responsibility for aspects of their own warm-up as well as being encouraged to name the muscle groups being stretched. This is effective at Key Stage 3 as it prepares well those boys who later opt to take the GCSE course in Key Stage 4. Effective questioning by teachers not only allows them to establish the extent of boys' knowledge and understanding, but also encourages their speaking and listening skills as well as their use of correct terminology.
185. All teachers successfully convey the expectation that all can have success in practical lessons thus boosting confidence and motivation. Good use is made of praise; encouragement and constructive criticism thus ensuring boys are becoming aware of their capabilities. Appropriate homework is set for those boys following the GCSE course and for those students following the GCE Advanced level course. There is good quality and consistent marking that offers useful comments and thus ensures students in Year 12 are aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. There is, however, not the same consistency in marking the work of the Year 10 GCSE boys.
186. Boys respect the ethos within which the subject is taught. For example, they work very well together in pairs and small groups and are supportive of one another. They also show respect for the capabilities of one another. Boys' positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons, together with their response to teachers' consistently high expectations of behaviour and discipline and their ability to work to their best, contributes very well to an effective learning atmosphere in all the lessons taught by specialist teachers.
187. The curriculum for the course that all pupils follow is generally broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is, however, some confusion and ambiguity as regards the balance of provision for Year 11 boys in the course that all follow and some Year 10 boys who follow the GCSE course lose part of their time allocated for the course that all follow. The overall provision is now enhanced by the provision of both GCSE physical education at Key Stage 4 and GCE Advanced physical education as well as recreational provision at post-16. Opportunities for boys to be involved in a range of outdoor and adventurous activities, as part of the course that all follow, continue to be strength of provision. However, no use is made of assessment in the national association accreditation boys achieve for their end of key stage assessments in physical education. There is, overall, provision of a very good range of extra-curricular activities that further enhances pupils'

learning experiences. This includes recreational as well as a range of competitive opportunities. As a result of the continuing dedication and enthusiasm of staff in supporting extra-curricular activities individuals are representing district teams in football and some older boys represent Birmingham schools at basketball and rugby. There has been team success in football at district level and individuals and teams have had success in the Birmingham schools' regatta.

188. Though the school has playing fields, all weather hard court areas and indoor accommodation are unsatisfactory and despite the efforts of the school have not been improved since the previous inspection. The quality and quantity of on-site indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory for the numbers of pupils and the curriculum offered, especially for racquets and other games for GCSE boys and GCE Advanced level students. Because of this, the limited experiences of racquets throughout Key Stage 3 means that pupils are effectively starting from scratch in Year 10. It is only through the dedication and enthusiasm of staff that the department is able to arrange access to off-site facilities thus enhancing pupils' learning experiences and enabling them to make appropriate progress. This does mean, however, that many pupils have to arrive very early at school in order to travel to these facilities.
189. Since the previous inspection, the head of department has ensured that most of the issues raised have been addressed. However, assessment procedures for the course that all boys follow remain a weakness still and little thought has yet been given to the impending national changes in both curriculum provision as well as changes in assessment procedures. There is also insufficient evaluation and development of teaching practices in the department particularly of those non-specialists who teach at Key Stage 4. The department has still yet to consider the staffing implications of introducing both GCSE and Advanced level physical education to the curriculum this year as well as the issue of curriculum balance, particularly for Year 11 boys. Areas for development are:
- the introduction of effective procedures for assessing boys' attainment and progress in the Key Stage 4 course that all follow.
 - the use of this assessment to guide curriculum planning.
 - the ambiguity and appropriateness of the Year 11 curriculum in the course that all boys follow.
 - the issue of on-site indoor accommodation and all weather surface areas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

190. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with expectations as outlined in the Birmingham Local Authority Agreed Syllabus for religious education which the school uses. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. The number of pupils following a full GCSE course is small but in 1999 50 per cent of those entered obtained grades A* to C, which is below the national average of 64 per cent for all schools but above the national average for boys' schools which is 42 per

cent. With small numbers taking the examination course it is not possible to draw comparisons on the results over recent years but pupils have been attaining levels in line with or above the national averages. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in the sixth form A level course is also in line with expectations although the numbers following the course are too small to make comparisons with national averages meaningful, as often there is only one pupil. Inspection evidence of the work of non-examination pupils in the sixth form shows that the standard of work is in line with expectations but attainment at the end of Key Stage 5 is below expectations in the breadth of topics studied, due to the limited time available for the course.

191. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have acquired a significant body of knowledge and are able to recall the basic facts of Christianity and the various world religions including Sikhism and Islam. Many pupils are beginning the process of forming balanced views on spiritual issues. Pupils in a Year 9 class, for example discussed healing and wholeness and related it to their own views of miracles and pilgrimage to Lourdes. In another lesson, Year 8, considered anger, war and pacifism and looked at the part played by Quakers in wartime and Martin Luther King in his struggle for equality. Progress over time is satisfactory and can be seen in both the increased knowledge base and in the increased clarity of expression of views. In both the full and short GCSE courses pupils are confident in the understanding of facts and use them to discuss issues and develop balanced views. This learning from religion is strength of the department. This was seen in a lesson looking at the Biblical teaching on materialism as 'don't let money get the better of you' and in the sensitive handling of the discussion and the contributions made by boys whilst studying the place of women in Islam. A significant number of pupils following the non-examination course in Year 11 is working below the Agreed Syllabus level of expectation as they are unable to concentrate and consider the views of others in a mature manner. Year 10 pupils are following either a full or short GCSE course and are currently working at a level in line with them achieving the expected level by the end of the key stage. There is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds or of pupils with special educational needs.
192. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Only one unsatisfactory and two good lessons were seen. All staff have a good knowledge of the subject and this is used to maintain interest by giving additional information or by giving examples from everyday life and pupils make good gains in the knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Appropriate expectations and positive encouragement, enable pupils to contribute effectively their own ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere. Discussions develop systematically and pupils listen and contribute sensitively on topics, such as sexual relationships. A particular strength in the teaching is the use of small group discussions, which allow the pupils to develop ideas and stimulates them to think further. Learning is less effective where the lessons are teacher dominated such as when the teacher gives the information rather than allowing the pupils to contribute and when the teacher takes over the group feedback. Many lessons have a similar format using a worksheet and photocopied extract of a textbook but lack pace,

challenge and clear purpose. A lack of variety in the homework also inhibits the development of the topics being studied.

193. The way pupils' work is marked and evaluated varies from teacher to teacher. There are some very good examples where constructive comments give clear guidance on how the work can be improved. However there are other instances where work is just ticked, or brief comments are made which provide little or no indication about what must be done in order to improve the quality of the work. A number of well-planned educational visits to places of worship assist the understanding and learning of the religious themes. A Year 7 visit to a Gurdwara has stimulated interest and assisted the long-term remembrance of information and understanding of the Sikh religion.
194. Management of the department is satisfactory and a positive ethos gives status to the subject. However there is limited sharing of resources and ideas within the department and so not all pupils benefit from the best educational experience available in the department. The recording of marking and assessments within the department is not consistent and does not enable effective monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress. The library does not have suitable resource books to encourage individual research and so is rarely used to support the subject.
195. Since the last inspection progress has been made in the provision of new rooms for the subject. Religious education is now taught entirely by specialist staff and there has been a steady increase in the number of pupils following GCSE courses so that now all pupils follow an examination course in Key Stage 4. However the time for non-examination pupils in the sixth form has not been extended. The department has a solid base on which to build and in order to develop further it should:
- develop the assessment scheme.
 - monitor effectively the progress of pupils and the department.
 - encourage pupils to undertake independent enquiry and individual research.
 - review teaching styles to include more variety and challenging tasks.