

ADDENDUM TO ALDERBROOK SCHOOL AND ARTS COLLEGE

The school (HT and Chair of Governors) have agreed that paragraph 11 should be replaced by the following paragraph.

In areas where there is a strong sense of collaborative working and an awareness of the implications of recent research into learning on classroom practice, there is a greater consistency of high quality teaching. This is particularly true for English, the arts (music, drama, dance, art), geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, mathematics and physical education. It is also beginning to develop in science.

INSPECTION REPORT

ALDERBROOK SCHOOL

Solihull

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104110

Headteacher: Mr W. Sedgwick

Reporting inspector: David Darwood
3552

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 5th February 2003

Inspection number: 249109

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr G. Gibbons
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alderbrook School is an 11-16 comprehensive in the southern part of the borough of Solihull. It takes pupils from a wide geographical area and nearly 17 per cent of its intake comes from parts of Birmingham. There are currently 1,268 pupils in roll, which is larger than the national average for secondary schools. The school has a good reputation and is oversubscribed. There are slightly more girls than boys. It was designated as specialist Arts College in September 2002. The attainment on entry is slightly above the national average. The school has additional provision for pupils with moderate learning and speech and language difficulties. There are 34.4 per cent of pupils on the special educational needs register and 3.8 per cent have Statements. Both these figures are above the national average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is 8 per cent. This is high compared to the average, although the majority of these are fluent English speakers and only five pupils have specific language problems. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 6.2 per cent, is low compared to the national average, although there has been a rising trend since the previous inspection.

The school is part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy designed to support staff in improving pupils' key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and to develop pupils' thinking skills as well as improving teaching and learning strategies.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Alderbrook School is a very good school, which provides its pupils with a high quality of education. Its previous inspection identified many strengths. The school has either maintained these strengths or improved upon them further. In addition, significant improvements have been made in other aspects of the school. Test and examination results are above the national average because of the high quality teaching and the very positive attitudes the pupils have to their learning. Most pupils make good progress, particularly those with high levels of ability and those with special educational needs. The school is led by an innovative and committed headteacher who has good support from a strong leadership team. It is well managed. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the work of the school. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above national average and the GCSE and GNVQ results are also higher than similar schools.
- Teaching is very good and pupils make good progress.
- Leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- The majority of pupils want to learn and behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of different learners in Years 10 and 11.
- The personal development of pupils.
- The promotion and development of the arts subjects within the school and the community.

What could be improved

- Greater consistency in the quality of marking, particularly in ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work.
- The monitoring of the school's personal and social education programme.
- The role of the pastoral staff in the development of the school's teaching and learning strategy.

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 very good progress since the previous inspection in 1997. There has been an improvement in the assessment and reporting procedures, which are now significant strengths of the school. The school has reviewed the time allocated to subjects to ensure that it covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. There has also been good progress in the development of ICT. Teaching and learning strategies have been significantly improved by the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, effective monitoring and sharing of best practice. The school has also sustained improvements in test and examination results. Indeed the 2002 GCSE results, in terms of the percentage of pupils who attained five A*-C grades, was the best ever achieved by the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Attainment in the core subjects by the end of Year 9 is above the national average and there is little difference in the achievements of boys and girls. Attainment in English and mathematics are comparable to similar schools, although in 2002 the science results were below. Over the last three years the school's results have improved at a rate higher than that found nationally. Although the 2002 results were lower than the previous year, this reflects a slightly weaker year group. Indeed the school actually exceeded the predicted targets set for these pupils. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher Level 6+ was well above the national average in mathematics, above in English and similar in science.

GCSE results in 2002 were the highest ever achieved by the school and well above both the national average and the average of similar schools. The school's GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that achieved nationally. Until 2002 girls achieved significantly better than boys, but in 2002 this gap was reduced so that the difference in performance was less than the national average.

Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress, as they do in Years 10 and 11. The quality of work seen in English, mathematics and science was good. High quality work was also seen in other subjects. In Years 7 to 9 it was better than the 2002 national tests might suggest. In Years 10 and 11 the work reflected the high examination results gained at GCSE.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do those for whom English is not their home language. The school has worked hard to improve the provision for the more able pupils and this is reflected in their results in national tests and examinations as well as in the work done in school. The school sets itself challenging targets and is successful in achieving them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show pride in their school. They are considerate, keen to learn and respectful of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour seen in lessons and about the school is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous and very supportive of one another.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Opportunities for personal and social development are effective. Pupils have very good relationships with their teachers. They welcome responsibility and enjoy participating in activities outside of lessons.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The attendance rates are above the national average.

One of the strengths of the school is the standard of behaviour amongst pupils and their positive approach towards work. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and this contributes to the high standards most pupils achieve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

Overall, teaching is very good in all years and has improved since the last inspection. Very good teaching was seen in most subjects. It was satisfactory in religious education but variable in personal and social education ranging from satisfactory to very good. No lessons were unsatisfactory.

Teachers' planning is very good and takes account of the needs and prior attainment of all pupils. Skilful questioning using both open and targeted questions is used to include all pupils. Lessons are well structured using a variety of teaching strategies and activities. Teachers have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and ensure that support and time are allocated accordingly. Teachers ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs are met.

There is a clear commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve. The very good relationships between staff and pupils and the positive ethos in lessons allows pupils to feel confident and valued. There is a buzz of excitement in many lessons, which makes learning enjoyable and helps in motivating the pupils. Both literacy and numeracy are taught well across all subjects and the introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been very successful in fostering a corporate approach to key learning skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and is extended by other courses in Years 10 and 11, including vocational programmes and activities outside of lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported by their subject teachers and the special educational needs staff. As a consequence, they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language are helped and appropriately supported in such a way that they can experience all that the school provides.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The very good relationships between pupils and staff help the pupils to develop into sensible and confident young people. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider the values and beliefs of other people. As a result, pupils show initiative and personal responsibly.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The quality of care for pupils is another strength of the school both in terms of personal and academic support.

A particular strength of the curriculum is the range of courses in Years 10 and 11. These are well matched to the specific needs of the pupils and cover a range of academic and vocational courses. Another major strength is the way in which the school monitors the progress of pupils and provides help and support for those who are at risk of underachieving, whatever their level of ability.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has developed a strong team approach, which focuses on ensuring a high quality in all that the school does. The school is very efficiently administered.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very clear overview of the strengths and future developmental needs of the school. They bring valuable expertise to the school and play a useful role in monitoring performance and in helping to move the school forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has developed effective systems to make judgements about how well it has done and how it can improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial resources are used wisely to support school improvement. The school also makes good use of additional resources to achieve its priorities.

This is a very effective school with the capacity and determination to improve still further. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He gets good support from a very strong and able management team and governing body as well as a hard working and committed group of teachers and support staff. Standards of attainment have steadily improved. Priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate and are established as a result of a very good school self-review programme. There is a strong sense of 'team' within which staff and governors recognise their responsibilities and expect to be held accountable. At the same time the school has a strong emphasis on mutual support and collaboration. This is one of the main reasons why standards are high and why science and mathematics have held their high standards despite recent difficulties in leadership in these areas. The school applies the principles of best value in all that it does.

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 school. • Pupils make good progress. • The behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • The way in which the school responds to questions or problems. • The high expectations the school has for its pupils. • The leadership and management of the school. • The way in which pupils are helped to become mature and responsible people. • The range of activities outside of school. • The way in which the school has continued to improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interesting and challenging homework. • Closer working relations with parents. • More information given to them about the work their children will be studying.

There were 646 replies to the parents' questionnaire giving a 51 per cent response. Thirty-six parents attended the parents' meeting with the registered inspector. Inspectors fully endorse the positive comments expressed by the vast majority of parents. Homework, overall, is judged to be satisfactory, although there are times when it could be more effectively linked to ongoing work within the school. The school has worked hard to achieve close working relationships with parents and there is a very good web-site which gives details of what is being taught as well as news on events within the school. The overall quality of information to parents is good, although in some subjects' annual reports the detail on how pupils could improve further is not specific and lacks clear targets.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of attainment are above the national average and the GCSE and GNVQ results are also higher than similar schools.

1. The overall standards of attainment of pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were above the national average. Results in English and science were slightly above the national figures but they were well above the national figure in mathematics. However, Year 9 in 2002 was academically weaker than those in previous years. There were also staffing difficulties in these subjects. Over the last three years, results in English and in mathematics have always been well above the national average, although overall results in 2002 were lower than those of similar schools. In 2002 the school achieved comparable results in mathematics and English but in science results were lower. The school nevertheless set challenging targets for this group of pupils, all of which were surpassed. Indeed the use and interpretation of data to set targets for improvement and the monitoring of pupils' performance are strengths of the school.
2. The percentages of pupils achieving the higher levels at the end of Year 9 in national tests were well above the national levels in mathematics, above in English and similar in science. Over the last few years the school has worked hard to reduce differences in achievement between girls and boys. This has been successful and the difference in the attainment of boys and girls is now less than the national average. Furthermore, over the last three years boys have, on average, outperformed their peers nationally by a slightly higher margin than the girls.
3. In 2002 the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-C grades was the highest in the school's history. The results were well above the national average. This has been consistently so for the last five years. In terms of average point scores the overall trend in the results are above those nationally. This is in part due to the emphasis that the school has given to improving teaching and learning. The ongoing programme of training and support offered to staff is designed to improve teaching approaches and opportunities for learning.
4. The school has also developed effective strategies to analyse data and track pupils' progress as they move through the school. This enables the school to identify any underachievement and to take appropriate remedial action. By the end of Year 11 pupils not only perform at a higher level than their peers nationally but also better than pupils in similar schools. Their progress from Year 9 is good. Results in all GCSE subjects in 2002 were better than the national average with the exception of mathematics where it was similar. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-B were also significantly higher than the national figures in art, English, media and modern foreign languages.
5. Over the past few years boys underachieve compared to girls at the age of 16. A priority of the school improvement plan has been to reduce this difference. In 2002 the GCSE results indicated a reduction in this gap so that it is less than that found nationally. This was achieved by a programme of academic mentoring, careful setting and monitoring of targets as well as specific training programmes designed to raise the achievement of both boys and girls.
6. The inspection team observed 41 lessons during the inspection as well as talking to pupils and analysing the quality of their work. Attainment in all years is good and above that expected nationally. In English the main strength of pupils' work is the

ability to talk with confidence and present ideas clearly as well as being able to read and use a variety of texts. By the end of Year 9 they are able to produce a range of writing – instructional, persuasive and descriptive. By the end of Year 11 they can structure extended writing and provide relevant quotations and vary sentence structure for effect. In science, pupils' notes are clear and well presented. They have good knowledge of scientific terminology and processes. As a result of the school's involvement in the pilot National Key Stage 3 Strategy for science there is now a marked improvement in practical, investigative work and independent learning. In mathematics, pupils are competent at following procedures, for example in solving equations. They have a good grasp of numeracy skills, particularly handling data. They are less effective in undertaking investigative work and applying skills in different contexts.

7. During their time at school pupils achieve well and make good progress. This includes those with moderate learning difficulties and those on the register for special educational needs. It is true also for pupils for whom English is not their home language. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are effectively developed in all subjects across the curriculum. This is again the result of a focus by the school on teaching and learning and its involvement in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

The leadership and management of the school are excellent.

8. The leadership of the school is excellent. The present headteacher has brought a new sense of purpose and direction to the school. There is a clear focus on using the school's own evaluation processes to identify good practice in teaching and learning in order to raise standards. The headteacher is visionary and dynamic. He has worked closely with his senior managers, staff and governors to identify the school's strengths and the areas where improvements can be made. There is a shared sense of purpose for staff and pupils; this gives rise to high staff morale and a very positive climate for learning. All other members of the senior management group are of a high calibre and provide support and ideas in leading and managing the school to ensure that its aims are implemented.
9. The school is very effective in evaluating its own performance. The school carefully analyses all assessment data to ascertain how well the school as a whole, specific groups of pupils as well as individuals are progressing. This information is used to set clear and challenging targets for improvement as well as to inform the school's own training programme for staff. There are regular faculty and departmental reviews. A structured programme of classroom observation ensures that staff identify, share and implement best practice across the school.
10. The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation not only inform the school's continuous professional development plan but also are used to establish the priorities for the school's improvement plan. To that end the school's performance management cycle and the continuous professional development programme are seen as vital mechanisms further to develop both individual staff and the school as a whole.
11. The senior management team has ensured that individual initiative is encouraged. Heads of faculty are given responsibility and freedom to make decisions. This has led to a transition in the role of middle managers within the school. They now see their key function as improving the quality of teaching and the learning opportunities for the pupils. The quality of some of these heads of faculty is outstanding. They have created strong and supportive teams of staff. Indeed the sense of 'teamwork' within the school is one of its important strengths. In areas where there is a strong sense of collaborative working and an awareness of the implications of recent research into

learning on classroom practice, there is a greater consistency and high quality teaching. This is particularly true for the arts, (music, drama, dance, art), physical education, history, geography, English and modern foreign languages. It is now also beginning to develop in science but is less effective in personal and social education and religious education.

12. In those areas where there have been staffing difficulties, for example in mathematics and science, it is noticeable how the rate of improvement since the last inspection is less effective. However, it is to the credit of the school that it has at least maintained the standards in these areas. As a result of the management style, within the school, there is a great deal of consistency and agreement about what needs to be done and how to achieve this. The creation of the 'learning group,' which has representatives from all faculty areas, has been an important factor in achieving this. The group has responsibility to identify, share, evaluate, disseminate and embed good teaching practice across the school. It organises training for colleagues and identifies areas of good practice in other schools. When appropriate, it arranges visits. It also acts as a sounding board and forum for promoting new ideas.
13. Governors have a wide range of valuable expertise, which they use to good advantage. For example, the chair of governors uses his legal background to check school documentation to ensure that it is clear and unambiguous. Governors are good at strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation and see themselves as 'critical friends'. Many of them attend regular training sessions for governors provided by the local authority. They are fully aware of the principles of best value and how they can be applied. Governors are prepared to hold staff to account for the performance of their pupils and often receive presentations from subject leaders. They are also very supportive and appreciative of the work of the staff and have a comprehensive awareness of their strengths and development needs.
14. Since the previous inspection the leadership and management of the school have improved significantly from what was already a strong base. Results have continued to rise and the quality of teaching has improved. There have been significant improvements in the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) as a resource to improve learning. Classrooms are well maintained and the quality of displays is very good. This helps to create a warm and interesting learning area, as well as providing a resource for learning and as a celebration of pupils' work. The headteacher has a vision for the school as a learning community. He has already made links with a neighbouring school to initiate the International Baccalaureate programme for next year. The school also currently provides training and support to other schools, both through the 'leading teacher' programme and by the provision of training to staff from other schools. For example, during the inspection an excellent session was seen in dance, where a number of primary colleagues received training from the school's own specialist staff. There are plans to improve the library and to create a sports hall, which would greatly improve the facilities and opportunities for physical education and the local community. The lack of a sports hall was an issue at the time of the last inspection but, as yet, the school does not have sufficient funds to address this.

Teaching is very good and pupils make good progress.

15. The overall quality of teaching is very good and in many instances it is exceptional. During the inspection 41 lessons were observed of which 88 per cent were good and 61 per cent very good or excellent. Examples of very good teaching were seen in all faculty areas and all years. There were no cases of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is consistently good in modern foreign languages, English, history, geography, ICT, business studies, art, music, drama, physical education and dance. It was satisfactory in religious education but variable in personal and social education ranging from satisfactory to very good.
16. The school sees itself as a learning community and has worked hard to ensure that teaching approaches are varied, appropriate to the learning needs of all its pupils, exciting and fun. In this it has been successful. The very good quality of teaching is the key to the increased levels of attainment in all years. The school has piloted the National Key Stage 3 Strategy as well as the National Foundation Strategy. These initiatives are designed to enhance pupils' literacy, numeracy and thinking skills, as well as providing an effective structure around which the best teaching strategies and learning opportunities can be developed and embedded in all subject areas.
17. There is a corporate approach to teaching and planning across the school. Staff regularly observe one another teach and discuss the impact of the teaching on pupils' learning. They also give good support to each another in lessons. For example, in a Year 7 physical education lesson two experienced and very capable staff used each other's different strengths and skills to enable pupils to develop specific gymnastic skills.
18. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and pass on their own interest and enthusiasm for their subject to the pupils. They plan effectively and ensure that tasks are well matched to the pupils' needs and abilities. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson the planning included how the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs, identified in their individual educational plans, were to be met during the session. Teachers are also aware of the need to give appropriate support to different ability groups, particularly in mixed ability lessons. This is achieved by the use of small group activities, structured worksheets, different resource materials and the very good use of ICT. As a consequence all pupils are appropriately challenged and make good progress. In the majority of lessons the teachers work hard to produce a learning atmosphere in which pupils feel relaxed and secure, whilst at the same time recognising that they are expected to perform to the best of their ability. This 'low stress, high challenge' ethos permeates most subjects and is important in providing the opportunities for pupils to learn and make progress. In many lessons there is a buzz of excitement as the teachers encourage the pupils to 'have a go'. For example, in a Year 7 music lesson pupils were encouraged to experiment and be inventive in producing specific sounds and effects.
19. Teachers use questioning techniques very effectively both to motivate and to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 7 English lesson, where pupils were reading 'Skellig', the teacher used questions to lead pupils to a close analysis of an extract so that they were able to identify particular characteristics of the author's style. In a Year 9 German lesson skilful questioning enabled the pupils to give a range of different responses and developed their confidence in speaking in a foreign language. The encouragement of pupils to discuss, reflect and share ideas helps in their social and spiritual development.

20. The use of a variety of activities and resources within lessons ensures that pupils are fully engaged in their work. There is particularly good use of the electronic whiteboards both to help focus pupils' attention and to review learning points. Pupils are frequently encouraged and expected to review their own work and that of others. For example, in a Year 10 dance lesson, pupils had been concentrating on improving their performance of dance choreography. They first discussed in small groups how they had performed and then individually spent time coaching pupils from other groups in the elements they had improved.
21. In most lessons teachers ensure they maintain a good pace by setting very precise time limits. On longer activities they remind pupils frequently of how long they have left. In this way teachers maintain a sense of urgency. Assessment and marking of pupils' work are good overall but there is variable practice, particularly in ensuring pupils know how to improve their work and in the setting of precise targets for improvement.
22. Another of the main strengths of teaching is the very good relationship between staff and pupils. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils feel equally valued and that they realise that they all have an important contribution to make. Accordingly, even when work is difficult, pupils of all abilities feel confident about voicing opinions and attempting to answer questions. Even when they make mistakes the pupils know that they will be supported and encouraged to learn from their mistake. Teachers use praise and positive feedback to provide recognition of both effort and attainment. Staff also link new learning to pupils' prior knowledge and experience. For example, in a business studies lesson the teacher used a 'job description' for an Alderbrook pupil as a basis of introducing the concept of appraisal and performance indicators. In a Year 9 science lesson the teacher referred to the recent US space-shuttle tragedy to explain the difficulties of acceleration and friction. Effective teaching is an important factor in the development of pupils' self-esteem and social skills.

Pupils want to learn and behave well.

23. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and learning. Relationships with each other and with staff are very good and there is a good balance between enjoying the lesson and having fun, and the need to observe the school's code of behaviour and the expectations to produce high quality work. These expectations are made clear. Pupils work well individually, in pairs and in small groups. This is particularly true in history, geography, English and modern foreign languages. In the latter the positive relationships allow pupils to build up confidence to try and speak a foreign language and not be afraid to make mistakes. In many lessons pupils spontaneously applauded the work of others, whether it be a demonstration in dance and drama or a presentation in English, history or PSE. This is, in part, the result of the school's very good social and moral provision.
24. Many lessons carefully make links between pupils' own experiences and feelings and those of other people, or characters. For example, in an excellent Year 9 English lesson pupils were asked to explain how they felt when put under peer pressure to do something they knew to be wrong. This was role played and then discussed before linking it to a discussion of how Macbeth might have felt when under pressure by Lady Macbeth to commit murder.
25. Pupils listen well, are confident and are generally very responsive to teachers' questions. They seek to be actively involved in the lessons and show appreciation of and trust in their teachers. There is a strong sense of mutual support so that pupils are not afraid to seek help or clarification. In the best lessons there is an exhilaration generated by the subject teaching and pupils are totally absorbed in their lessons.

26. Pupils are increasingly developing good learning skills. They organise their work effectively, can undertake research ideas and make good use of a range of resource materials, particularly information and communication technology. There is an emphasis on what pupils can and will be able to do rather on what they cannot. This provides a sense of challenge to which pupils enthusiastically respond. In the event of difficulties relating to behaviour there are clear procedures and support networks. Lack of concentration, or potentially disruptive behaviour, are dealt with calmly and firmly, often without effecting the flow of the lesson. Movement about the school is also good.

The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of different learners.

27. The curriculum is designed to enable pupils to achieve well academically against their previous attainment and to make good progress. All pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, which is enhanced in a variety of ways. The school recognises that pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, have very different needs and it is necessary to cater for different types of learners and those with different career aspirations. All Years 10 and 11 pupils have choices of GCSE and GNVQ courses. In English all pupils have the opportunity to take 'media' as an additional GCSE course within the English timetable. This has been particularly successful in terms of results. To ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the different methodologies employed by the different courses, particularly with reference to GCSE and GNVQ, a careful induction programme for options takes place in Year 9. For example, all Year 9 pupils, once they have finished their national tests, will experience three-week blocks of science as a GNVQ and science as a GCSE before having to make a decision about the options. Pupils also have the choice of intermediate GNVQ qualifications in ICT, business studies and, as from this September, in the performing arts. There are also well-structured work experience opportunities and a very good careers guidance programme.
28. To support those with learning difficulties the school organises short intensive workshops and one to one support within mainstream classes. Pupils with special educational needs also have the opportunity to follow more work-related courses and gain ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), silver or bronze accreditation.
29. From September 2003 the school, in partnership with the local college and a neighbouring secondary school, intends to offer the International Baccalaureate for the more able students after they have finished Year 11.
30. There is very effective liaison between the school and its feeder primary schools. This helps to ensure that there is, as far as possible, a seamless transition from the primary to the secondary phase of education. This is achieved by exchange visits of staff and pupils, joint curriculum projects and the transfer of accurate records and data.
31. In July the school has an activities week for Years 7 to 9. Pupils can opt into a menu of activities, which range from residentials in the UK and abroad, skiing, swimming, horse riding, sports, painting and dance. This is well received by the pupils and helps enhance their social and personal development. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is also provided. These include a large number of lunchtime and after school clubs, including sporting and cultural activities.
32. The school is strongly committed to establishing an inclusive education where all, regardless of ability, gender, race, creed, physical or learning ability, can grow and flourish within a supportive and caring environment. The headteacher is passionate

about the reciprocal benefits of physically handicapped children and those with learning difficulties working alongside other pupils when possible and appropriate. He sees it as important for pupils to understand the need to recognise, value and respect other people's differences. To that end the school has striven hard to improve the access in and around the school, but as yet is unable to meet the full financial implications.

33. Much progress has been made since the previous inspection in improving the information and communication technology (ICT) provision and in implementing the National Curriculum more effectively. There are presently ten interactive electronic whiteboards, which are used very effectively across the school. Staff have received appropriate training and ICT is now well integrated into most subjects areas.

The personal development of pupils is very good.

34. Pupil's personal development is very good. There are regular personal structured review sessions with tutors as well as frequent informal discussions on progress. The school encourages pupils to be thoughtful of and to care for others who have particular challenges because of their individual circumstances. Pupils accept that some of their peers have particular disabilities, specific talents or behavioural problems and make no fuss about the implications of these situations. Peer mentoring is a positive feature of the support which pupils offer each other. For example, older pupils are used as mentors to those entering Year 7 to help them adjust to their new school.
35. The school is a lively community where pupils relate equally well with adults. They enjoy talking and share humour and light-hearted banter with staff. They also value the feeling and experiences of others. Pupils show good levels of interest in and compassion for the lives and needs of others beyond the school. For example, the school runs a very successful 'Wednesday club' for senior citizens. Here a range of activities takes place including pupils' presentation of pieces of drama and dance. They also raise money to support outings for this club.
36. The school acknowledges the importance of pupils' individual personalities and ensures all of them make gains in their personal development. Staff are very good role models and work hard to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem, both in their academic work and general development. The school encourages pupils to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities. These include, for example, a wide range of sporting activities, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise, the school orchestra, choir, street dance and other performance opportunities. Up to 300 pupils engage in activities after school. This does much to promote their personal development and involvement in the life of the school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils in lessons to discuss, share opinions and take responsibility for their own work. They respond positively to this and also enjoy taking responsibility for aspects of school life, whether that be as peer mentors, guides at open evenings, prefects or members of the school council. The latter is extremely well organised. Pupils and the senior managers of the school take it very seriously. Pupils speak confidently about school issues and listen attentively to each other. During the inspection there was a high quality debate and discussion on the school's 'Racial Equality' policy. Pupils' views were clearly seen as important in the formation of school policies. Pupils' views are also sought via pupil questionnaires, most recently from Year 8 on the quality of lunchtime provision. This also reflects the very good social, moral, cultural and spiritual development provided by the school and the impact this has on how pupils learn and work together.

37. Pupils themselves are aware of the concept of 'citizenship' and that people have rights but also responsibilities to others in the community and society at large. Pupils flourish and demonstrate appropriate levels of maturity for their age, a point made strongly by parents in their responses to the inspection questionnaire. The inspectors endorse this view.
38. Pupils' efforts and successes are celebrated across the school and good use is made of displays to share high quality work. Pupils are appreciative of the care and support they get and act responsibly. In modern foreign languages they are actively involved in a pilot project as evaluators of the department's teaching and learning. They take this very seriously and speak assuredly about the aspects of teaching and learning they enjoy and those which they feel could be improved, adding not just reasons why but also how.
39. The school has a clear statement in its prospectus about relationships; 'We value others for themselves, not only for what they have or what they can do for us.' In this it is highly successful.

The promotion of 'the arts' within the school.

40. The school received Arts College status in September 2002. This followed a lot of hard work in creating support networks with local primary schools and community groups and raising sponsorship from different agencies and industries. Pupils were actively involved in the shaping of the bid and their ideas taken on board. They are currently planning the introduction of a school radio station. The arts subjects (dance, drama, art and music) are a major strength of the school. They effectively contribute to the pupils' personal development, particularly in developing their creative thinking skills. Arts College status has also allowed the school to enhance provision, giving more choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and also a greater involvement in the local community. There are strong links with Solihull Arts Society and plans to put on joint productions to fit with the school's GCSE English texts, as well as hosting other productions.
41. The arts subjects programmes of study are helping pupils who have challenging behaviour problems to become more actively involved in the school. They also encourage them to reflect upon the consequences of their behaviour as well as encouraging them to work more effectively as part of a team.
42. The school has established links with feeder primary schools to promote literacy through the arts. It is providing training for primary staff and helping in the development of units of work on 'African dance' and 'mask making'. Wider links with other schools and different art groups nationally have enabled the school not only to improve good practice but have also introduced its pupils to a range of different cultural experiences.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The consistency of marking, particularly in ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work.

43. At its best the assessment and marking of pupils' work is excellent. Pupils are made aware of what they do well, where areas can be improved and how this might be done. In Year 11 English, pupils were actually looking at external examination reports to see whether or not they were working to the appropriate standard. From this information, specific targets for improvement are set. However, this process is variable not only between but within subjects. In some cases marking is not helpful in providing a clear indication of how their work could be improved. In the annual reports the targets set for pupils, and shared with parents, were also quite variable. Some were specific, measurable and challenging; others were too general and lacked clarity.

Monitoring and evaluating the school's personal and social education provision.

44. One of the main strengths of the school is the overall consistency in the quality of teaching within subjects. This is, in part, the result of careful review and monitoring to ensure staff share and disseminate best practice. In personal and social education, however, this was less evident. Whilst no teaching was unsatisfactory, the quality ranged from satisfactory to excellent. As a consequence, pupils' experience of personal and social education is very variable across the years. Many receive an exciting, challenging and informative programme, which is well taught. However, others are not given sufficient opportunities to engage with the issues. Presently this programme is well structured, but it lacks a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedure to raise the overall quality.

The role of pastoral staff in the development of the school's teaching and learning strategy.

45. The pastoral staff play a very effective role in supporting pupils' personal development and are good managers of the Year tutor teams. They are not, however, as involved as they could be in supporting the school's drive further to improve teaching strategies and learning opportunities. They are in a unique position to monitor teaching and learning across the year. This requires a more structured approach to monitoring and evaluating by the Heads of Year of what the school offers to its pupils. This is particularly true in relation to the school's programme for personal and social education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. This is a very good school with significant strengths. Indeed the areas identified above are already recognised by the school and are not in themselves significant weaknesses. They do, however, represent features of the school that need to be improved. In order to do this the staff and governors should:
1. ensure that the best practice in marking and target setting is shared and implemented in all subjects; (*paragraph 43*)
 2. develop a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating personal and social education to ensure that:
 - best practice is identified and shared with staff;
 - staff receive appropriate support and training to develop the skills and expertise in this area;
 - pupils are actively involved in discussions of key issues that affect their lives;
(*paragraphs 11, 15 and 44*)
 3. strengthen the role of the heads of year by:
 - ensuring that they have a clear brief for monitoring and evaluating the learning opportunities and experiences of pupils;
 - providing time and appropriate training. (*paragraph 45*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	17	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	19.5	41.5	26.8	12	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,268
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	70

Special educational needs	Y7-11
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	48
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	127

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	118

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.2

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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	124	126	250

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	80	90	82
	Girls	107	104	101
	Total	187	194	183
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (83)	77 (85)	73 (81)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	35 (48)	58 (60)	31 (42)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	79	91	90
	Girls	111	108	99
	Total	190	199	189
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	76 (81)	79 (88)	75 (83)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (46)	49 (67)	31 (44)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	130	115	245

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	77	121	129
	Girls	80	109	113
	Total	157	230	242
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	64 (61)	94 (96)	99 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.4 (45.7)
	National	39.8 (39.1)

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	27	100
	National		

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1046	61	6
0	0	0
31	0	0
6	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
12	0	0
100	6	0
29	0	0
0	0	0
14	0	0
13	1	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
6	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	625

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	23.53
Key Stage 4	22.67

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
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	£
Total income	3,586,060
Total expenditure	3,600,341
Expenditure per pupil	2,839
Balance brought forward from previous year	158,609
Balance carried forward to next year	-14,281

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.82
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.38
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 50.9%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,268
Number of questionnaires returned	646

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	56	6	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	51	19	4	2
The teaching is good.	32	58	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	51	19	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	45	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	54	18	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	40	50	3	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	48	7	1	5