

INSPECTION REPORT

FLIXTON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Urmston, Manchester

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106364

Headteacher: Mrs J Hart

Lead inspector: Mr T Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th February 2004

Inspection number: 258630

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	1005
School address:	Flixton Road Flixton Urmston Manchester
Postcode:	M41 5DR
Telephone number:	0161 912 2949
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Graham Barrick
Date of previous inspection:	21 st September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Flixton Girls' High School is a secondary modern school with 1,005 girls aged 11 to 16. Numbers have risen since the last inspection. The great majority of girls are from white United Kingdom backgrounds. There are small numbers each of Indian, Pakistani, Caribbean, Chinese, Black African, Bangladeshi, and very small numbers of girls from other ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of girls who do not have English as their first language is above average. None is in the early stages of acquiring English language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below the national average and the percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is broadly average.

Attainment on entry to the school is currently below average and there are fewer higher attaining girls than normally seen. Within the local education authority, 40 per cent of pupils are selected for grammar schools at the age of 11. The level of girls' attainment on entry is rising.

The school has been involved in a project with the local authority ethnic minority achievement unit. Buildings are used for community use by Trafford Music Centre and by adult evening classes. The sports facilities are used by local groups and organisations.

The school has been awarded Sportsmark in 2002 and is reapplying to become a sports college.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10013	Ted Wheatley	Lead inspector	
19720	Deborah Granville Hastings	Lay inspector	
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English Drama
2919	Philip Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	Marie Foulds	Team inspector	Science
30901	Sue Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design Personal, social and health education
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Careers
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography Religious education
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	History
32774	Barry Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business studies
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1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	41

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school which provides a good standard of education. The great majority of girls achieve well considering their generally below average attainment on entry to the school. Teaching and learning are good and the headteacher provides very good leadership. The school is well managed and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Girls generally achieve well and some very well, though there is underachievement in history and cross-curricular information and communication technology (ICT).
- A significant amount of teaching and learning is very good and occasionally excellent.
- The headteacher provides very clear direction for how the school can improve.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient ICT in several subjects and the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education are not met.
- A significant minority of girls arrive late for lessons or school.
- The great majority of girls have positive attitudes to school and work hard, but the unacceptable behaviour of a very small number interferes with the progress of others.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is good and there is a high level of participation by girls.
- There is too little extra support for girls with special educational needs.

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected. Standards have risen overall, though in a few subjects they have not risen at the same rate as in the rest. Teaching and learning have improved as a result of improved monitoring and sharing of good practice. Assessment has improved significantly and the information gained is used well to plan the curriculum and improve teaching. Time for management and co-ordination of the school's work in ICT has increased, though provision of ICT across the curriculum has not improved enough. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are still not met. Accommodation has improved considerably and shortages of textbooks have been addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	n/a	C	C	A

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Capped average points scores were not available in 2001

The achievement of girls, whatever their background or prior attainment, is good and standards are in line with the national average. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2003, attainment was in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. This showed that girls achieved well considering their below average attainment on entry to the school. Compared with girls of similar prior attainment in other schools, girls' attainment was well above average. Standards seen are broadly average and are rising. In the GCSE examinations in 2003 results were in line with the national average. The percentage of girls obtaining five or more A*-C grades was below average, the percentage gaining five or more A*-G grades was above average and the percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade matched the national average. Compared with results in similar schools, attainment was well above average. Results are improving. Standards seen are broadly average by Year 11. They are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. In general girls achieve well. In English and design and technology they achieve very well and in art their achievement is excellent. In mathematics, science, French, ICT and

citizenship, girls achieve well and in geography, music, religious education and business studies their achievements are satisfactory. Achievement is unsatisfactory in history.

Provision for girls' personal development is **good**. Girls' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. The great majority enjoy lessons and participate enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities. Most girls behave well, but there is a significant small minority whose unsatisfactory behaviour sometimes disrupts the learning of other girls. Girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory** and steadily improving. Small numbers of girls arriving late disrupt the start of lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and learning are **good** and frequently very good. Teachers generally plan lessons well and have high expectations of girls. They give good guidance and girls learn well as a result. Occasionally teachers do not challenge girls enough or manage the poor behaviour of some girls effectively. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** overall because in Years 10 and 11 the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are not met and there is insufficient use of ICT in some subjects. The range of subjects offered is satisfactory and there is a **good** range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides a **good** level of support for girls overall, though there is too little support for some girls with special educational needs. The school has **good** relationships with parents. **Good** links with the community broaden girls' experiences and links with other schools and colleges help girls to make well-informed decisions about the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** and the headteacher provides very clear direction for improvement. She is very well supported by senior staff. Governance of the school is **satisfactory** overall, but governors do not ensure that the school meets statutory requirements for collective worship, the teaching of religious education and the provision of ICT across the curriculum, though procedures are in place to address improvements in ICT.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are supportive of the school and are happy with the experiences they and their daughters have. Girls enjoy being at the school and appreciate its strengths. They know their views are important and they show pride in and loyalty towards their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve teaching in history and cross-curricular ICT so as to increase girls' achievement;
- improve the attendance and punctuality of girls;
- consistently apply procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour;
- provide more support for girls with special educational needs;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that there is continued improvement in the provision of ICT in all subjects;
- meet requirements for collective worship and for teaching the local agreed syllabus for religious education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are broadly **average** but the achievement of girls is **good**, taking into account their below average standards on entry to the school. Achievement is particularly good in English, art and design and design and technology but it is unsatisfactory in history, in religious education and in ICT taught through other subjects. Girls with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well and in English and design and technology they achieve very well. In art and design their achievement is excellent.
- Girls' literacy skills develop well as they move through the school.
- GCSE results in 2003 were very good in English, art and design and design and technology and were unsatisfactory in business studies, history and religious education.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average and the proportion of higher attainers is also below average, because 40 per cent of Trafford pupils are selected for grammar schools at the age of 11. Attainment on entry to the school is rising, but still remains below the national average. Literacy skills are below average on entry to the school.
2. At the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests taken in 2003 the attainment of girls was close to the national average for all pupils in English, mathematics and science. Compared with girls nationally, performance was below average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, girls' performance was above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Results are improving at a faster rate than that seen nationally. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in other subjects in 2003, attainment was below average in history, geography, design and technology, ICT, French and music. Attainment was broadly average in physical education and above average in art and design. In religious education, attainment was below the expectations of the local agreed syllabus.
3. Evidence from the inspection shows that by Year 9 standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science and that girls have achieved well in mathematics and science and very well in English since entering the school. Standards are average in design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. They are below average in history, ICT and French and they are well above average in art and design. Overall, girls achieve well, whatever their prior attainment or ethnic background. In art and design their achievement is excellent, in design and technology it is very good and in geography, physical education, religious education and citizenship achievement is good. Achievement is satisfactory in French, history, music and ICT.
4. In the GCSE examinations taken by 16 year olds in 2003, results were below the national average overall, but have been improving in line with the national trend and overall were well above average compared with similar schools. The percentage of girls obtaining five or more A*-C grades was below the national average but well above the average for girls with similar prior attainment. The percentage gaining five or more A*-G grades was above the national average and well above the average for girls with similar prior attainment. The percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade was broadly average and well above the average for girls with similar prior attainment. Compared with other secondary modern schools, results

were above average overall. The school was close to its targets and exceeded them for the percentage of girls obtaining five or more A*-G grades at GCSE. Results were highest in English, art and design and design and technology. They were lowest in business studies, history and religious education. Results in business studies were poor because the examination course was not matched to girls' needs; in religious education results are low because there is not enough time in Years 10 and 11 to adequately cover the syllabus; in history teaching is not demanding enough.

5. Standards seen were broadly average by Year 11. They are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Standards are well above average in art and design and design and technology and above average in citizenship. They are average in geography, ICT, music and physical education. Standards are below average in history, French, religious education and business studies. All girls, whatever their backgrounds or prior attainment, achieve well generally. Achievement is very good in English and design and technology and it is excellent in art and design. It is good in mathematics, science, French, physical education, citizenship and the taught ICT course and it is satisfactory in geography, music, religious education and business studies. It is unsatisfactory in history where teaching is not consistently demanding enough.
6. Standards of literacy are average overall with girls producing good standards of writing in English, science, art and design and design and technology. Standards are broadly average in reading. Girls' achievement in literacy is good because of the sustained efforts made by teachers throughout the school, in all subjects, to improve literacy skills. Good application of the literacy strategy in most subjects is leading to improvement in basic skills. Girls speak clearly and show good understanding in class discussions.
7. Standards in numeracy across the school are generally average. In design and technology, science, geography and history girls use numeracy effectively and in geography, for example, Year 7 girls made good use of numeracy using conflict matrices. In science girls employ a wide range of numeracy skills to good effect – drawing and interpreting graphs, substituting numerical results into a formula and calculating percentages from experimental findings. In history girls employ numeracy effectively with analysis of data. In art, Year 7 girls use scaling effectively.
8. Standards of girls' ICT skills are below average across the full age range. In business education and design and technology the use of ICT is helping to raise standards. Pupils use extra-curricular access to improve their skills and make progress but insufficient provision in Years 9, 10 and 11 presents a barrier to raising standards.
9. Girls with special educational needs achieve well. Many of the girls on the register experience difficulties with literacy skills. Several others have difficulties related to behaviour and some have specific learning difficulties related to physical disability. The majority of these girls tend to perform below the level of other pupils in their year group with regard to basic skills and, in particular, speaking, listening, reading and writing. These difficulties also affect their ability to progress in other areas of the curriculum. However, when many of these pupils are withdrawn from lessons and when they are provided with support in lessons their progress is good. It is also often good when support is not available as teachers are aware of their needs and work extremely hard to ensure that appropriate strategies and resources are used. However, in a few lessons a significant minority of pupils who have behavioural problems receive no additional support and do not make appropriate progress. In these lessons the progress of other pupils is restricted because of this.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.1 (34.4)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.7 (34.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.8 (33.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 210 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44 (40)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.0 (34.7)	32.6 (34.7)

There were 174 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, the girls' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. However, there is a small minority of girls whose attitudes and behaviour are **unsatisfactory**. Attendance is **satisfactory** but punctuality is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most girls enjoy being at school and participate enthusiastically in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- The behaviour of most girls in lessons and around school is good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of girls are unsatisfactory and disrupt the learning of others in lessons.
- Relationships between most girls and teachers are good, which develops the girls' confidence and aspirations.
- A minority of girls arrive late for morning registration and are slow to arrive at lessons during the day. This disrupts the learning of others.

Commentary

10. Most of the girls have good attitudes towards school and to their learning. They enjoy their lessons, listen carefully, work well on their own and are eager to answer and ask questions. Most girls apply much intellectual effort to their work. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the girls were working to the limits of their understanding to achieve as well as they did. Similarly, Year 7 girls responded very well to the pace and energy of their teacher in an ICT lesson and concentrated very well when researching sources of information on the Internet. Many girls take part in extra-curricular activities, such as sporting clubs and music and drama productions. Their enthusiasm and dedication contribute directly to their success.
11. Girls are well behaved in and around school. They are polite and friendly, respectful and considerate of others. Most girls understand the standard of behaviour expected and respond accordingly. However, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small number of girls sometimes affect the learning of others. For example, some girls shout out, ignore instructions, constantly

interrupt and are rude to teachers and other pupils. This occurs across the year groups and in many subjects and the other girls find it frustrating and annoying. When such behaviour is not managed effectively by teachers, the learning of all girls is disrupted. The school is aware of this problem through its regular behaviour audits. While much work has been done to improve the situation there are still some inconsistencies by teachers in using the school's procedures effectively.

12. Relationships between pupils and staff are good, which helps to boost the girls' confidence and self-esteem. Relationships between the girls are also good and they generally live and work together in a sociable, comfortable atmosphere. The girls say that there is a small amount of bullying in the younger years but most of them are confident that it is dealt with quickly and appropriately. The girls show strong loyalty towards their school. They feel they are always encouraged to aim high and to do their best.
13. Girls respond well to taking on more responsibility for their learning and this improves their confidence and their achievement. In art, girls are often inspired by the teaching and organise themselves exceptionally well when working on their individual compositions for GCSE. There are many opportunities for girls to contribute to the day-to-day life of school through being form captains and prefects, doing litter patrols, presenting assemblies and representing classmates on the school council.
14. Attendance is average and steadily improving due to the school's good efforts to monitor and promote regular attendance. The link between good attendance and good achievement is constantly highlighted and the school works very closely with parents to prevent truancy. However, the punctuality of a small number of girls is unsatisfactory. Often they arrive late for registration and there is little urgency to move quickly between lessons. This means lessons either start late or are interrupted, so learning time is lost.
15. Pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to lessons when withdrawn from lessons to receive extra support. This is also the case in most lessons particularly when teaching assistants provide support. Here, they are confident they will succeed because both learning support staff and teaching staff are generally aware of their specific needs, so they get precisely the help they require. Girls' attitudes to work here are enthusiastic. They have good relationships with other pupils and with members of staff. In some lessons where there is no additional support and there are pupils with behavioural problems, attitudes and behaviour are unacceptable and learning suffers as a result.
16. The school makes good provision overall for girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this has a positive effect on personal development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, though the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship. There is time for reflection in many lessons. This is seen in subjects such as English and design and technology for example, where girls have opportunities to reflect on the work of great poets and on aspects of design. In citizenship pupils study a wide range of spiritual themes. Assemblies and themes for 'thought for the day' in classes also provide spiritual development. The provision across subjects is inconsistent and teachers do not always plan well enough for the spiritual dimension found in subjects.
17. Provision for moral development is good. The majority of girls have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. In many subjects moral issues are discussed and girls are well aware of the standards expected by the school. Lessons in religious education, physical education and ICT provide strongly for moral development. For example, girls learn about drinking sensibly and retaining control and about using the Internet responsibly.
18. There is good provision for social development. Most subjects provide opportunities for girls to work in pairs or groups, which enables them to develop good social skills. There are many visitors to the school and trips out that provide for pupils to develop social contacts with people outside their usual group of friends. Opportunities for development of leadership qualities are

provided through the school council and other activities in form groups. Provision for cultural development is good. Girls receive very good opportunities through the range of physical education and art activities in school. There are regular visits out of school and a number of performances in school. The multicultural element of provision is good. There are strong international elements in music and art, for example, and the annual trip to France provides good social and cultural development. All pupils, whatever their backgrounds, have opportunities to join in the school's activities.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.1
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	877	28	1
White – Irish	4		
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	3	1
Mixed – White and Black African	6		
Mixed – White and Asian	9		
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	4	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	15		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	17		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	6		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	4	1
Black or Black British – African	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4		
Chinese	5	3	
Any other ethnic group	1	1	
No information	8		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory overall due to some omissions though the range of subjects taught is satisfactory and available to all girls**. There is a **good** range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides **good** support and care for girls,

and has **good** relationships with parents. There are **good** links with the community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**, often very good and occasionally excellent. Assessment is satisfactory and is often used effectively. Occasionally teachers do not challenge girls enough or manage the poor behaviour of some girls effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in art and design and citizenship throughout the school and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
- The teaching of literacy is good and is helping girls' achievement throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in history.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use school procedures well enough to deal with unsatisfactory behaviour.

Commentary

19. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Overall, teachers plan work matched to the various needs of pupils, whatever their attainment level or background. Teaching is best in art and design, citizenship and design and technology. Teaching is unsatisfactory in history. In those subjects where teaching is best, teachers' subject knowledge, teaching methods, enthusiasm and high expectations have a significant impact on girls and they achieve well. The impact on how well they learn is marked; girls concentrate hard, work industriously and enthusiastically, while recognising what they need to do to achieve even better results. Teachers guide and support, often because girls want to perform that little bit better and because they obtain pleasure in their own success. In the best lessons, teachers insist on good behaviour and do not tolerate rude, disruptive behaviour in any form; the great majority of girls respond well to this 'zero tolerance' approach.
20. In most lessons teachers set academic and behaviour standards that girls respond to well. Teachers also employ a wide range of teaching methods matched to what girls need to feel secure about in their learning so most feel that they are achieving successfully. Teachers establish friendly, professional relationships in which girls feel secure to ask for help, discuss their own understanding of difficult ideas and to work with enjoyment. In the majority of lessons this leads to good order and well-behaved girls who learn effectively. Encouraging girls to engage in independent learning is an important part of lessons and girls become confident learners.
21. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teaching methods are not suitably challenging – excessive time is spent on cutting out and pasting or colouring-in exercises, which are a waste of time and girls recognise this. This was most noticeable in history and on rare occasions in other subjects. Consequently, learning is slow, girls lose interest and achievement over time is unsatisfactory. Occasionally in French, teachers issued too many worksheets and too much of the lesson was conducted in English rather than French, which slowed girls' learning. In addition, and this is true of some lessons where teaching is satisfactory, some girls have a tendency to be rude and to seek attention through silly, disruptive behaviour. Teachers do not always respond to this firmly enough. A few do not make use of the school's good procedures for behaviour management that are used effectively by the great majority of their colleagues.
22. The use of homework is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is good in Years 10 and 11, where in most subjects it is used effectively to support learning and to prepare girls for GCSE examinations.

23. The teaching of literacy and language is good. Good opportunities are provided for writing in science, in evaluations in art and design and design and technology and in history and geography where pupils show they have a feeling for how different people in different ages and places lived. There are plentiful opportunities provided by teachers for girls to practise reading aloud in drama and science but not many in mathematics. French teachers reinforce the learning of language features regularly. Most staff teach technical vocabulary well. There are weaknesses in the listening skills of several girls and less experienced teachers find difficulty in channelling their energies towards the task in hand.
24. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of subjects have numeracy built into their schemes of work and lesson plans. As a result, the teaching and use of numeracy are generally consistent across the school. Graph work in science, geography, history and physical education is good. Numeracy in art and design and design and technology are good, with good use of scales and measurements.
25. Teaching of ICT skills across subjects is unsatisfactory overall. This is partly due to there being too little but also because there has not been enough training and support to increase staff confidence and to improve their skills, including in the use of interactive whiteboards. There are some good examples of effective use of computers that enhances learning, especially in design and technology and business studies.
26. Assessment is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, systems for recording and monitoring pupils' progress have improved significantly. The management of assessment systems is very good. Records are now computerised and managed by a data technician. Assessment information is thoroughly analysed by senior managers and most subject leaders, and frequently used well to set targets and track progress. However, there is lack of consistency in the use of assessment within some departments which leads to the provision overall being satisfactory. It is very good in English, mathematics, science and art and design where data is analysed systematically and used very effectively to set targets, to adjust the curriculum and to inform pupils on how they can improve. There is good practice in ICT where marking strongly supports pupils' learning. It is satisfactory in music, geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology, but it is unsatisfactory in religious education where systems are insufficiently rigorous, and poor in history where marking is not thorough enough and does not help pupils to improve their work.
27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in most subjects. Pupils' needs are well known by teaching staff and a wide range of teaching activities and resources is used. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson on developing vocabulary and word sounds nearly half the class had special educational needs. Their needs were very well known and the class teacher adapted a range of teaching materials to suit the needs of all pupils. The lesson was also carefully structured so that a full range of learning styles was utilised. As a result progress was very good. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils are thorough. In some lessons support for these pupils is not provided but good classroom teaching, involving an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources, compensates to some extent and pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and usually good. There are several lessons where a significant number of pupils who have behavioural problems receive no additional support. In many of these lessons progress for the whole group is restricted through the disruptive behaviour of these pupils. In most subjects support from learning support assistants in lessons is providing pupils with special educational needs with very good support although collaborative planning between class teacher and teaching assistant was not always apparent. Some teaching assistants also lead literacy support lessons for small groups of Year 7 pupils who have not achieved the appropriate National Curriculum level in English. Progress in these lessons is good although restricted opportunities to use ICT for all pupils withdrawn from lessons are limiting progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 119 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (3%)	30 (25%)	55 (46%)	25 (21%)	6 (5%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9, but it is **unsatisfactory** in Years 10 and 11 because statutory requirements are not fully met in ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is supported well by good staffing and resources. Accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is fully inclusive. A small number of pupils are appropriately disapplied from French in Years 10 and 11 to attend a work-related course at a local college.
- The National Curriculum is enriched by drama, and citizenship is provided within a well-planned course for personal, social and health education.
- There is too little time in Years 10 and 11 to teach all parts of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The provision for ICT in subjects is not satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Work-related provision includes good careers guidance in Years 9, 10 and 11, and work experience in Year 10.
- Vocational courses have not yet been introduced but planning is underway to introduce a course in leisure and tourism in September 2004.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are good and they are very good in art.
- Teachers are very well qualified and resources are good. The accommodation is well maintained but there are weaknesses in the teaching accommodation for some subjects

Commentary

28. Overall the curriculum is broad and balanced and enables pupils to achieve well. In Years 7 to 9, drama is included in addition to the normal subjects. This helps to develop pupils' speaking, listening and social skills. Personal, social and health education is good and includes citizenship which is taught to all girls. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory and there is a satisfactory programme for gifted and talented girls. Timetable constraints result in too little time for geography and history in Years 8 and 9 which restricts learning in depth.
29. In Years 10 and 11, in addition to the National Curriculum, girls also follow a course in life skills which includes citizenship. In addition, pupils choose from a wide range of GCSE options. A small number of pupils, who have difficulty coping with a full range of GCSEs, attend a local college one day per week for work-related learning. While there is good up-take for both religious education and ICT at GCSE, the statutory requirements for these subjects are not met. The time allocated for the provision for religious education within the life skills programme is too little to cover the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Provision for ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. Careers guidance and preparation for adult life are enhanced by good support from local employers and Connexions, and by two weeks' work experience in Year 10
30. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory and the school regularly reviews where things might be improved. The school is currently seeking to introduce vocational courses

through the introduction of leisure and tourism in September 2004. It is also reviewing timetable arrangements to create greater flexibility and thus address the curriculum shortcomings caused by shortage of time.

31. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive good support as do all others on the school register of pupils with special educational needs. Although support from teaching assistants is not always available for pupils with special educational needs, many teachers compensate for lack of support in lessons by providing relevant work and a range of appropriate resources which ensures that progress is at least satisfactory and often good. However, all pupils receive their basic curriculum entitlement. Although a minority of pupils aged 14 to 16 have opportunities to participate in vocational or work-related courses, this is still developing and provision for many pupils is unsatisfactory at the moment.
32. Provision for literacy and language is good. The literacy strategy has been integrated into subject curriculum planning and has had a good impact on girls' achievement generally. Staff have been well trained and in most subjects they are aware of the need to provide chances for girls to write for different purposes.
33. Provision for numeracy is satisfactory and within this geography has taken a lead over the use of numeracy, and is planning exploiting numeracy to the full. Science also makes good use of graphs, calculation of percentages and data handling in support of its work. History analyses data when looking at population changes and art and design and design and technology both employ scale and measurement well.
34. Curriculum provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. Design and technology has enhanced its curriculum with the use of computer-aided design and manufacture but few other subjects make significant use of computers. While resources for the discrete courses are good, with sufficient computers and software, other areas of the school, including the library, have insufficient access to the technology to help raise standards.
35. An alternative curriculum has been introduced to provide a more relevant learning experience for those girls who find the curriculum does not match their needs. The course includes an element of work-related learning at the local college and also provides extended work placements. The work-related curriculum is monitored regularly and thoroughly, and changes are carefully planned to meet girls' needs.
36. Girls have good access to well-organised and impartial guidance on career and work opportunities and there are good opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 11.
37. Extra-curricular provision is good. Girls benefit from an imaginative programme which includes productive links with the Ironbridge museum and visits to exhibitions. This enrichment has a very positive impact on girls' learning in Years 10 and 11 especially. The good range of sporting activities includes ski trips, outdoor pursuits and Outward Bound activities. Learning in science is strongly supported by science club activities which benefit from links with the British Association, lectures and well-structured visits. Many pupils sing in two choirs, one of which will perform in Disney World, Paris in October 2004, and play a range of instruments in the school's three bands, performing in shows shared with the nearby boys' school. Fieldwork extends pupils' learning in geography. Several subjects run revision clubs to help pupils prepare for examinations.
38. The overall match between the expertise of staff and the demands of the curriculum is very good. All staff teach in their area of specialism and modern foreign languages has access to a native speaker. Recruitment of staff has, for the first time, presented some difficulty, particularly in English and in design and technology where one post remains unfilled. The school provides good induction for new staff, be they newly qualified or in training, with subject mentors in each department. Continuing professional development of staff is very good, being

linked closely to the school development plan as well as to department needs. The school is well served by training providers, good use being made of local authority opportunities particularly. The match of support staff to the needs of the school is also very good but with too few teaching assistants, particularly in support of pupils with special educational needs.

39. Accommodation has undergone much improvement since the last report and is now satisfactory overall. The sports facilities, having been upgraded, are now very good. Provision is good in science where most of the laboratories have been refurbished and also in drama where a new studio has been built. The interior of one older block has been re-modelled to increase classroom provision, and provides good facilities for special educational needs, as well as a small support unit. A modern building provides very good suited accommodation for modern foreign languages and good accommodation for art.
40. Space, however, remains at a premium. Corridors and stairways are narrow and the canteen is much too small for the numbers who use it. The library is a little small and its use as a classroom, on a daily basis, limits its use for independent learning. Some teaching rooms are rather cramped, for instance in English, geography and history. Provision is unsatisfactory in music where there is a lack of practice rooms for group work, and in design and technology where the single resistant materials room is inadequate and the food technology room is in need of refurbishment.
41. The buildings are kept very clean and very well maintained and together with the newly replaced window-frames provide an overall pleasant learning environment.
42. Resources for learning are generally good and further improvements are planned as the school's investment in advanced technology for the classroom is put in place. The ratio of five pupils to every computer is satisfactory and the school plans to invest in another computer suite, but the management of access to computers to facilitate whole-class use is problematic; consequently the school is in breach of its statutory obligation to use computers in the subjects of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a **good** level of care for the girls, which is appreciated by parents. Girls are well supported by good quality advice and are actively involved in the development of the school. Good consideration is given to health and safety matters.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good level of support for girls' academic and personal development, particularly in Years 10 and 11, through good tracking procedures.
- The school involves pupils well in school life, seeking and valuing their views.
- Good relationships result in girls having confidence and trust in their teachers.
- Good arrangements help new pupils settle in quickly.
- High regard for health and safety ensures the school is a safe place in which to live and work.

Commentary

43. The school provides good support for its pupils' personal development on a day-to-day basis and as a result the girls are confident and relaxed as they move through the school. Teachers know the girls very well and have a good understanding of their individual circumstances and needs. The girls have trust and confidence in their teachers and generally find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the school, the good relationships result in teachers and girls interacting well and there is a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere. The pupil support unit is well organised and provides a valuable level of support for those girls whose behaviour prevents them, and others, from learning effectively.

44. The role of the form tutor is developing as tutors take on greater responsibility for monitoring the girls' academic progress. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good system for tracking progress and every half term the girls have individual meetings with their tutor to assess and compare their progress in relation to their predicted and potential GCSE grades. Those girls identified as needing extra help are supported by teachers in a variety of ways. Girls clearly understand how well they are doing and they are set agreed targets to help them to improve. The school is working towards using a similar system for younger pupils.
45. The school takes the views of the girls seriously and genuinely seeks their opinions on ways in which improvement can happen. The girls feel that the school council is a good and effective 'voice' and they regularly suggest and ask for changes. Recently their request for lockers was deemed not possible due to lack of space but the girls are now conducting a feasibility study of the site to assess for themselves if this is the case. The good relationships between staff and girls produce a good two-way informal dialogue and the girls do feel that teachers listen to them.
46. The induction arrangements for Year 7 girls are good and they settle into their new school quickly. Parents are particularly appreciative of the work of the school and know their daughters will be well cared for.
47. The school pays good attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. There is an effective child protection policy which follows the local authority procedures and all issues are handled very sensitively and appropriately. Very good use is made of outside specialist agencies where necessary to help and support the girls, parents and staff. Arrangements for dealing with sickness, accidents and health and safety are good.
48. Links between departments in the school and the learning support department are generally effective in ensuring that most staff have an appropriate understanding of the specific learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans provide a range of appropriate information and set useful general targets, but are not yet accessible to pupils and parents and are not being used consistently to set appropriate subject-specific targets. Liaison with primary schools is sound but the special needs co-ordinator is not involved enough in liaison. Liaison does, however, form the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through testing of pupils on entry. This provides relevant information which helps the school to make decisions about the level of support necessary for all pupils. Teaching assistants are a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils. Many have developed some subject expertise, know the pupils and their specific needs very well and liaise effectively with subject staff, although collaborative planning of lessons is not always apparent. Pupils make good progress when supported by teaching assistants.
49. This is an inclusive school and significant progress has been made to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make appropriate progress and have access to the whole curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents, which helps raise girls' confidence and aspirations. Good community links are used well to broaden the curriculum, and good relationships with other schools and colleges prepare the girls well for life after school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good communication between school and home involves parents well in their daughters' education but reports in Years 10 and 11 give insufficient detail.
- Girls' experiences are broadened through the very good range of trips, visits and guests planned into the curriculum, but links with industry and business are less developed.

- Good partnerships with other secondary schools and colleges ensure girls' post-16 choices are well informed but partnerships with primary schools are only just beginning to improve.

Commentary

50. The school values the support and interest of parents and works hard to develop and strengthen the relationship. Teachers are quick to contact parents personally to explain problems and how they intend to deal with them. Dialogue is frank and open and parents appreciate this. Overall, parents have positive views about the school and are happy with the experience they and their daughters receive.
51. Parents receive much good quality information which helps them understand how they can help and support their daughters' learning. However, the annual written reports are less helpful and are unsatisfactory for girls in Years 10 and 11. Different means of reporting attainment are used in different subjects and it is sometimes difficult to interpret exactly how well girls are doing. Not all subjects relate to GCSE grades and the comments are too general, not clearly indicating what the girls can and cannot do. Suggestions for improvement are occasionally referred to but not as clearly defined practical targets that help both girls and parents.
52. The school is very committed to providing many opportunities to extend and broaden the girls' experiences. The curriculum is full of visits, trips, activities and guests from the near community and further afield, which complement learning well. Particularly strong are the school's relationships with sporting bodies. For example, Manchester City Football Club uses the astro-turf for training and offers football coaching to Year 11 girls in return. Year 8 girls have the chance to attend the Manchester United study club which aims to raise achievement and self-esteem. As part of their specialist college bid, the school identified the elderly, people with disabilities and disaffected young people as being the ones they wanted to help. Work has already begun and a good two-way relationship is growing with a nearby residential home for the elderly. The pupil support unit ran a fitness programme with the David Lloyd centre for some girls which did much to raise their confidence and self-belief. The school acknowledges that its links with business and industry are not as well developed but has an industry day planned for later in the year to help promote this aspect.
53. There are good links with other schools in the area from which all benefit. The arrangements for the transfer of girls from primary schools is effective but as girls come from over 40 primary schools, the school has found it difficult to establish strong curriculum links with all of them. The situation is improving though. In mathematics and science there has been observation of primary teaching by staff to smooth the move from primary to secondary learning. Through the School Sports Co-ordinator partnership, the school is working closely with five primary schools to share specialist teaching and good practice. The school works closely with other schools and colleges, which gives additional specialist help and also helps girls to think ahead to after their GCSEs. A regular joint music and drama production with the nearby boys' school involves many girls and all pupils move comfortably between the two schools. Stretford Language College holds a weekend revision school to which girls are invited and an advanced skills teacher from another school has been working with newly qualified teachers in the modern foreign languages department. Good communication ensures that girls wanting to move to a sixth form are well prepared and look forward to the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good** and senior staff provide very good support. The school is well managed. Governors are supportive of the school but do not ensure the school meets statutory requirements for ICT, collective worship and religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and direction for the school to continue improving.
- Senior staff are very supportive and actively support the headteacher in driving improvements and in managing the school well.
- Procedures to evaluate the school's work are very good. However, while most departments implement improvements arising from evaluations, some do so more slowly.
- The school has effective procedures and policies which are generally well implemented. However, the behaviour policy is not consistently adhered to by some teachers.

Commentary

54. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and direction for the school to improve. She is ably supported by a strong team of senior staff who provide good and sometimes very good leadership. The senior team work very well together and have established effective procedures to manage the school on a day-to-day basis and to give direction for raising standards. Their work is well respected by staff and there is an overall drive to improve the quality of education and thus raise standards. Generally this is a well-run school with effective policies that support and guide girls effectively, but there are a few inconsistencies in applying school policies. This is most noticeable where there is inconsistency in using school procedures to insist on good behaviour and to deal with girls who misbehave.
55. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are very good, though some departments have not introduced improvements indicated by evaluation as fast as they ought to. However, school evaluation has led to good use of examination information to set targets and to improve curriculum planning. Classroom observation is leading to improved teaching because effective practice is mostly shared well.
56. Overall, departments are managed and led well, and new appointments to head of department roles are bringing about improvements in teaching and in standards achieved by girls. Heads of department are increasingly involved in evaluating the work of their departments and ensuring improvements take place. Some heads of department are more effective than others in doing this and there is support to help all in management roles to improve their leadership and management skills to continue to raise standards. The efforts of teachers are appreciated by senior management and there is careful evaluation of teachers' performance, and support for their professional development.
57. The management of support for learning is satisfactory. The special educational needs co-ordinator, with the support of the learning support manager, leads a team of staff effectively. There is a clear policy and a good and developing range of information for staff. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is well organised. The pupil support unit is well managed but liaison between the unit and the special educational needs department is still developing. Teaching and learning are a priority in the school development plan, and the development of learning support across the school has benefited from this. There is a development plan for special educational needs which reflects school priorities but does not provide enough detail to ensure that targets are met. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and a named governor is well informed and supportive.
58. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are well led by an experienced and dedicated chairman. They are well informed about financial and staffing matters, and make decisions based upon accurate, up-to-date information. They have knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, though this is not always through first hand experience by regular ongoing visits to the school between formal meetings. While being extremely supportive, there is not a developed culture for challenge by governors. Statutory responsibilities for collective worship, the teaching of ICT across the school, and religious education in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met, though in the case of ICT the situation is steadily improving.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,727,792
Total expenditure	2,710,434
Expenditure per pupil	2,952

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	307,578
Balance carried forward to the next financial year	324,936

59. Approaches to financial management are good. The latest auditors' report, three years old, says that financial systems meet the best practice of Ofsted and the Audit Commission very well. The principles of best value are applied well. Because of its socio-economic background the school does not attract some grants aimed at combating social disadvantage. Nevertheless, substantial recent improvements to buildings have been managed skilfully. Central funding has been reduced but the school has maintained systems at current levels by committing most of its reserves so that the budget for 2003-2004 remains in balance. The accounts for 2002-2003 have not yet been agreed with the local authority. The school is an effective school and gives good value for money.

PART C: SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of girls is very good, especially in writing.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject have had a major influence on maintaining good standards.
- There are many instances of very good teaching but a small number of aspects to be improved.
- The immature behaviour of a minority of girls in some lessons distracts and irritates those who wish to work.

Commentary

60. Girls come to the school with very low literacy levels. By the age of 14 most have at least attained the national average and they achieve higher standards than those in similar schools. At GCSE their results in English continue to be higher than in similar schools.
61. Standards seen were average overall by Year 9. Standards of reading and speaking are generally average and teachers keep good records of reading progress as well as regularly requiring pupils to read work aloud in class. Writing is a real strength and many girls do well. The very good adaptation of the National Literacy Strategy by the teachers has taken full account of the needs of all the girls. As a result, those with special educational needs receive clear guidelines to help them structure their stories and factual writing. Several girls from minority ethnic backgrounds are identified as gifted and talented and, along with others, are given work to challenge them. Writing in the highest ability sets is often extensive, imaginative and carefully crafted. Girls take notice of their teachers' detailed marking and use their advice to develop more stylish drafts. Girls display a fine sense of humour in their fantasy stories. They understand clearly the main theme of *Macbeth*, "a play exploring the opposing forces, good and evil."
62. By Year 11 standards are average. Girls have a good grasp of the works of literature being studied. Their essays are analytical and show a very good knowledge of language features, and they use apt references from the text. Displays show that good group work takes place in the media topic. Girls reach sensible conclusions about the subtle ways in which advertisers manipulate various audiences. Middle and lower attaining pupils also write extensively but their work is often marred by basic spelling errors such as the repeated misuse of 'their' for 'there', and other careless errors. Girls of all abilities do not always proof read their work carefully enough, but presentation is usually good and many girls use ICT to good effect.
63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Many lessons are very good. They have a clear structure that helps all pupils to understand what they are expected to do. Teachers set interesting tasks with clear deadlines, and always help pupils to see what progress has been made at the end. In the best lessons the variety of approaches and the well-planned links between the starting activity and the main part of the lesson inject pace and increase the demand on the girls as they progress. A minority of less experienced teachers have more difficulty sustaining the involvement of the pupils because a significant minority of girls prefer to chatter about trivial matters rather than concentrate on their work. Though achievement in these few lessons is satisfactory, a small proportion of pupils become too easily distracted. The good teaching sets out clear parameters of behaviour and encourages the girls to work

hard. For instance, a lower attaining set in Year 8 had to find out for themselves what happened to children evacuated in the Second World War by highlighting key phrases in different fiction and non-fiction texts. Supported by carefully constructed writing frames they reached a good understanding of the period. In Year 10 many pupils with special educational needs understood quite difficult ideas in a poem set for GCSE because of the very good classroom management of the teacher. She, together with her colleagues, has very good subject knowledge, which gives the girls confidence to try hard in most lessons.

64. Leadership and management are very good. The department has taken a lead in establishing clear lesson plans and making very good use of assessment procedures to ensure that the girls reach the targets set. Lessons are monitored thoroughly and teachers in need of support are given help at regular intervals. The action plans for future developments take account of recent successes as well as making changes after careful analysis of results. This enables good practice to be shared across the department. Not enough is being done to develop the use of ICT even though the girls are keen to exploit it more. The close working relationship between the former head of department and her current acting successor has ensured a sustained degree of consolidation since the last very positive inspection report, and results continue to be very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. Provision overall is **good**. Most departments promote good awareness of the importance of reading and writing. They also encourage girls to develop their ideas in discussion to help them with future written evaluations. This occurs frequently in art and design and in design and technology where very good teacher intervention results in impressive results. Reading is promoted well in drama and girls gain a good understanding of how to express different moods and emotions. The same is true in science where girls have a good grasp of technical vocabulary. Writing in both geography and history shows that girls can empathise with different types of people in various places at various times. Girls have a good knowledge about how language is used because subjects such as modern foreign languages reinforce the work done in the English lessons. Girls make good progress in most lessons when they are prepared to listen.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.
- Teachers ensure all girls join in the full range of activities provided.
- Teaching is good and girls learn enthusiastically.
- A small proportion of girls do not always concentrate well enough.

Commentary

66. Standards in drama have risen steadily in recent years and GCSE results are now close to the national average. This represents good achievement from girls who enter the school lacking confidence in expressing their ideas and emotions. The good leadership of the subject and well-planned teaching bring girls of all abilities into the lesson and encourage them to think about the development of character and how this can be best shown on stage. In Year 7 they learn about different dramatic conventions and put them into practice. In a very good lesson all pupils, including those with severe disabilities, collaborated enthusiastically during rehearsals before performing some very good improvisations. In later years girls grow in confidence because of the carefully structured nature of the lessons. They are better at performance than at writing about the theory of drama. Some lessons are noisy because of the poor acoustics in

the drama studio and because a minority of girls forget to concentrate on the teacher's directions.

Modern Foreign Languages

French

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- About half of teaching and learning is very good or excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching that results in girls learning too slowly.

Commentary

67. In 2003, results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national expectation. In the GCSE examinations in 2003 results were below the national average, as they were in 2002.
68. By Year 9 and Year 11 standards are currently below average. There are no significant differences in attainment across all aspects of the subject. Girls achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Girls with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. Standards have risen steadily since the previous report.
69. By the end of Year 9, girls listen to and understand the foreign language adequately. They conduct short conversations in French, but inspection evidence indicates that only a minority extend this into longer, more sophisticated conversations. The majority read simple authentic texts with understanding. In their written work most girls produce short passages from memory but only few examples of extended writing using a range of tenses and wide vocabulary.
70. By the end of Year 11, the majority of girls carry out longer conversations with a number of exchanges. They write longer passages but their spelling and grammar are often inaccurate. More able pupils produce longer examples of writing and a minority write at length with imagination and using a wide vocabulary.
71. French makes a good contribution to girls' literacy development. The use of computers to enhance girls' learning was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and remains so.
72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, found more often in Years 7 to 9. There is also some very good and excellent teaching, concentrated more in Years 10 and 11. The improved quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is still not sufficient to improve achievement and raise standards significantly. In general, teachers do not take account of the range of attainment found in most classes and adapt work to meet the needs of pupils, leading to satisfactory rather than good achievement. Not all teachers consistently use the wealth of assessment information available about pupils' abilities when planning lessons. Where teaching is excellent, lessons are planned carefully and provide a high level of challenge. Teachers have very high expectations of what girls can achieve and working relationships in classes are very good. As a result girls respond very well and work hard. In general, girls' attitudes to work and behaviour in class are good. The behaviour of a minority of girls is poor, which adversely affects learning for other pupils. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons are slow and lack challenge, and teachers speak too much English and have no strategies for dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour.

73. The department has good links with other schools and colleges that help to enrich the curriculum. The new accommodation is very good and this enhances learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory so the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations are improving significantly.
- The frequency and extent of use of ICT are unsatisfactory, though they are improving.
- The behaviour and attitudes of a small number of girls are immature and slow the pace of work of others.
- Teaching is good, due to teachers' strong grasp of the subject.
- Test results are monitored thoroughly so as to provide useful information.

Commentary

74. On their entry to the school in 2000, girls' attainment was below average. In view of this, the results of the 2003 National Curriculum tests taken when this cohort was in Year 9 represented good progress. The proportion of girls achieving the average level 5 or better was just above the national average. These 2003 figures continue the trend of rising results apparent over the past few years. In the 2003 GCSE examination, results were below the national average. However, in view of the previous low attainment of these pupils in Year 9 these results represent good progress. They continue the improving trend in results over the last four years.
75. Standards seen were average in Year 9. Girls' achievement was good overall. Where achievement was unsatisfactory a few girls behaved immaturity and disrupted the learning of the whole class. Where poor behaviour was not an issue girls worked well. One class began work on solving linear equations of increasing complexity and did so with interest and determination. Their progress was hampered by hesitancy in dealing with simple numerical operations. For example, $13 - 6$ led some girls to resort to finger counting. In some classes with a high proportion of girls with special educational needs, teaching assistants made useful contributions, ensuring that their particular charges stayed on task and played a full part in the lesson. Not all classes had this support, however. Standards in Year 11 are average, and achievement is good. A higher attaining set worked very well, using graphical calculators to consider graphs of transformations of second order equations. Their behaviour was exemplary, which enabled the lesson to proceed at a fast rate and cover a lot of ground. This class contained girls with special educational needs but even without additional support their work rate and achievement were no different from the rest of the class. Hesitancy over simple operations and use of rules extends to these older girls, so that factorising algebraic terms containing a negative term causes a problem for some.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall, and better for girls in Years 10 and 11 than for those in Years 7 to 9. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed, but in over half the lessons seen teaching and learning were good or better. Good teaching is characterised by planning that provides interest, an appropriate level of challenge, good use of time so that the pace of work is rapid, and teachers employing good subject knowledge in an interesting way. Too many lessons suffered from incessant chatter from the girls despite their teachers' remonstrations. Teachers have a good command of their subject and so deal easily with hesitations or questions arising from a lack of understanding. Teachers' relationships with pupils are generally good so girls find it easy to ask for help. Whole-school literacy is helped to some extent by the display of key words but the department's contribution is unsatisfactory. Teachers set homework and mark it regularly. The application of ICT in mathematics, though

improving, is hampered by the lack of sufficient hardware. Consequently, there is insufficient formal teaching or assessment of ICT.

77. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides very good, calm leadership and the department has a clear idea of what still needs to be done. Monitoring and analysis of results are very thorough and the action taken as a result of findings is well considered and appropriate. The department's contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school is unsatisfactory.
78. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Since the last inspection numeracy across the school has improved and is now satisfactory. Textbook provision is satisfactory. Homework is now linked to and supportive of work in the classroom, and progression in lessons is now in place.

Mathematics across the curriculum

79. Numeracy provision is satisfactory. In 2002, the department ran a successful numeracy in-service training day. As a result, a cross-curricular working party developed numeracy guidance issued to all staff. In it, is good advice as to how to employ core concepts such as percentages and graphs. As a result, numeracy across the school is now generally satisfactory. Science and geography employ good graph and other numerical methods. Application of numeracy in a few other subjects such as music is unsatisfactory. The mathematics department started a review of numeracy in a few departments, but has not extended this to the whole school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in scientific experiments.

Commentary

80. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with the national average and well above average when compared with similar schools. Results have shown a rising trend over the past three years and are higher than at the time of the last report. In the 2003 GCSE dual award examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was broadly average and almost all girls entered gained an A*-G grade. When compared with similar schools, results were well above average, and higher than might have been expected given the pupils' low prior attainment. They are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
81. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national expectations and reflect recent test results. Progress is good. By Year 9, girls show good gains in knowledge and understanding of a variety of scientific topics and approach their work with a commendable sense of enquiry. A good, wide, range of investigative skills is well developed and pupils use numeracy competently. Higher attaining girls write fluently; their explanations are clear and they make good use of technical terms. Those with lower prior attainment, however, have weaker literacy skills and this often limits the accuracy of their written answers.
82. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average and pupils are making good progress relative to their below average attainment in Year 9. All pupils take dual award GCSE science. Higher

ability sets benefit from specialist teaching, taking their understanding of biology, chemistry and physics to greater depths. Girls in lower attaining sets have a secure grasp of fundamental scientific knowledge and use technical terms well, but their explanations are more superficial and less precise. By Year 11, most girls' investigative skills have become more sophisticated, the girls use their scientific knowledge well to make predictions and their skills of analysis and evaluation are good. The provision for girls with special educational needs is good so that they too achieve well, and sometimes very well.

83. Girls' attitudes to work are good and contribute to the good progress made. Most girls show a keen interest in learning and make a positive contribution to lessons. Most enjoy their work in science and this is reflected in the numbers that attend the science club in Year 7. In a minority of lessons, however, the immature behaviour of just a few is a little disruptive. Teachers' management is not always sufficiently rigorous to deal with this disruption effectively. The very good presentation of work, across the ability range and in all year groups, is commendable.
84. Teaching and learning are good overall. Much is very good and a small amount is excellent. All teachers show very good command of their subject. They plan lessons very well to include a variety of activities that not only make good use of time but also engage the girls very effectively. There is a very good investigative approach to teaching and learning in all of the year groups; pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and explore their own ideas. Teachers' explanations are clear and help girls develop their understanding and, together with regular consolidation, ensure sound learning. Teachers' expectations are generally high, but in a small proportion of lessons, a few girls are not sufficiently challenged. The integration of literacy and numeracy into the structure of lessons is very effective. ICT is used appropriately for research and revision, but is not yet being used sufficiently in scientific experimentation. Homework is set regularly and is generally useful in extending pupils' understanding or consolidating work done in lessons. Whilst much marking is thorough, it does not always clearly indicate to pupils how to improve. Teachers ensure that pupils' notebooks are well organised so that they form a good resource for revision, and extra support for external tests and examinations is provided outside normal teaching time. Technical support is of a high standard and contributes significantly to teaching.
85. Leadership and management of science are very good. The head of science has a very positive vision of the way forward and the department shares his enthusiasm for raising standards. Responsibilities are deployed very effectively and this results in a good team spirit. Analysis of the subject's performance is very thorough indeed. It is being used very positively to identify areas for development and to respond appropriately. Teaching is monitored and evaluated by the head of department and improvements are made. There is much, very well organised assessment of pupils' progress. Teachers set targets and so pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing. There is good personal support for girls, especially in Year 11.
86. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and teaching have improved. The use of mathematics in science is better developed, but ICT is not used enough. Most of the laboratories have been refurbished to provide good accommodation, and a suite of computers is being established for data-logging. The provision of books and other resources, which was unsatisfactory in the last report, is now good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and is promoting effective learning
- Girls' attitude to work is good across the whole school
- Assessment is good and helps pupils to make progress

- Provision for girls in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow a GCSE course fails to meet statutory requirements.
- Provision for ICT within other subjects is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

87. In teachers' assessments of girls in Year 9 in 2003, standards attained were below average and targets for 2004 show the same to be the case. In Year 11, those pupils who follow the GCSE examination course attain below average standards. Until this current year, girls' standards on entry were well below the national average. This year there was a considerable rise in standards on arrival in Year 7. Most girls use computers with confidence and understand appropriate technical language, writing and talking confidently about their work. They also have sufficient numeracy and literacy skills to make effective use of a range of programs.
88. By Year 9 standards are below average. However, girls in Years 7 to 9 achieve well across the ability range. One group of Year 7 girls showed good research skills, making effective use of search engines with little need for teacher support. By Year 11 standards are average. Girls taking GCSE courses work hard and their folders show good progress throughout their course. Pupils' work in ICT helps them develop a good understanding of moral and social issues, for example in considering how applications can help overcome disability.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils develop skills through a variety of software applications. An LEA consultant is helping to develop new programmes of study to enrich the curriculum, especially in the area of control technology. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good, so pupils use their skills confidently and take care with their work. One group of Year 11 girls was using an extensive range of applications to provide real-life solutions to a business problem.
90. Lessons are challenging, well structured and consistent in quality, so girls respond with enthusiasm. Teachers deal quickly and effectively with occasional incidents of poor behaviour, bringing girls quickly back on task. Girls make use of good extra-curricular opportunities to spend more time on their work or to develop their skills. Good assessment procedures help girls understand how to improve their work, which in turn leads to the raising of standards.
91. Leadership is good, with clear priorities for development linked to whole-school improvement. Management is less effective, however, because some issues relating to curriculum provision have not been addressed effectively.
92. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory largely because standards have not improved enough. The curriculum is still not covered in Years 10 and 11, and there is not enough time to cover the GCSE course adequately. There have been satisfactory improvements in management, and in particular to provide more time for the management and organisation of cross-curricular ICT. Resources and accommodation are good, but there have been insufficient improvements in classroom layout to help with whole-class teaching. Teachers make good use of textbooks and refer frequently to permanent classroom posters. Good support is given by the technical team who ensure that computers and software are always ready for use.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. Provision is unsatisfactory although there is some good practice. ICT in other subjects is not firmly established as an integral part of girls' experience nor does it consistently give them planned activities which develop their ICT skills. Some teachers lack confidence, so support is planned to extend those skills developed in the recent national training programme. Regular meetings of the ICT liaison group successfully develop activities for classroom use. Teaching and learning are supplemented by some use of ICT in English and science but it is mainly

good quality material used for presentation and research. In art, girls manipulate images scanned into computers as part of their coursework. However, in design and technology girls use computers to design, decorate and construct a range of artefacts to a very high standard and business education involves very good ICT applications.

94. Interactive whiteboards are being introduced and training is provided to help staff to enhance teaching and learning. The technicians provide good support, and connection to the school's administration network is planned to give teachers direct access to assessment information. Girls make good use of extra-curricular ICT activities to develop and enhance their coursework in a wide range of subjects. Assessment of ICT in subjects is inconsistent and there is no system to monitor and evaluate the quality of assessment procedures or their accuracy. There is a clear vision of what is required but this has not been translated quickly enough into effective classroom practice. The library is poorly equipped and is not an effective multi-media learning resource.
95. While still unsatisfactory, there have been improvements in whole-school provision, and cross-curricular provision is a key component of the school's development plan.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE were too low in 2003 since some girls underachieved, but standards overall are rising throughout the school and girls' progress is accelerating.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are mostly good and often very good.
- Resources for learning are good and improving but too little ICT is used.
- There is insufficient teaching time in Years 7 to 9 so standards are too low.

Commentary

96. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 results were in line with the national average for boys and girls but below average for girls. GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were significantly below average and some girls underachieved, though results were better in 2003 than 2002.
97. Standards seen are broadly average by the time girls are 14, indicating recent improvement. Girls mostly achieve well in Years 7 to 9. The highest attainers in Year 9 understand global warming and link its effect on changing sea level to coastal landscapes. Where the pace of learning is slower, unchallenging tasks like colouring-in, girls find too easy. There is not enough time in Years 7 to 9 to cover the National Curriculum in sufficient depth. There is likewise insufficient time to write at length or to learn sufficient geography; which adversely affects standards at GCSE. Progress in Year 10 and in the top set in Year 11 is good. Girls in Year 11 understand complex graphs of three variables modelling changes in world population.
98. Teaching and learning are improving and good overall. They are often very good although a minority is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good or better, starter activities focus girls on learning quickly. Good relationships and good behaviour contribute significantly to good learning. Where the teacher's focus is on class management, lessons are slow to start and girls lose concentration. Many girls lack skills in independent learning though in one lesson most reacted well to a series of stimulating exercises on what happened to Pompeii in 79 AD. However, a few are too dependent on teachers. Literacy skills are developed well through

writing in a good variety of styles. For example, girls produced travel brochures advertising the Masai Maru game reserve in Kenya. Mathematical skills are well practised. For example, in Year 7 pupils developed a simple conflict matrix to judge the environmental quality of the school grounds. They were unable to develop their reports using computers because of problems of whole-class access to computer rooms. Whilst the department plans to teach using ICT it currently cannot do so and is in breach of its statutory obligation. Dramatic visual images from video clips and skilled use of *PowerPoint* to project excellent diagrams often make teaching exciting. Such teaching is developed skilfully to present challenging tasks to which the girls react very well. There is insufficient additional classroom support to help the high number of girls with special educational needs to make progress. Marking is generally thorough, but comments occasionally do not show girls how to improve and whilst they know their target grades they do not always have targets for raising standards.

99. Leadership and management are very good. A new head of department and strong line management are giving a clear direction for improvement based on very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' work. There is a practical agenda for change which is already raising standards. Resources for learning are good and are improving. A new set of textbooks for girls in Years 7 to 9 allows them all to work at their own level and pace. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and potential for further improvement is good.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards are below average. GCSE results and the number taking the subject have fallen over the last three years.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where expectations and challenge are too low.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and in the best lessons work for pupils is well planned and challenging.
- Leadership and management do not give a clear direction for improvement.

Commentary

100. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, results were below average in both 2002 and 2003. GCSE results were below average in 2002 and well below average in 2003. Standards are declining against a pattern of improving standards elsewhere in the school.
101. Standards seen were below average by Year 9. Most pupils have sound knowledge and acquire a number of historical skills, for example in empathising with the past, placing events in order of time, and using historical sources as evidence. Higher attaining pupils develop good research skills. Levels of understanding vary and in a few instances are good. A small number of Year 9 pupils, for example, showed good understanding of living conditions in nineteenth century towns. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory when compared with their below average standards on entry to the school.
102. By Year 11 standards are below average and lower than those that girls are capable of. The highest attainers have good understanding, as is evident in their GCSE coursework. On the other hand, Year 10 pupils observed had very limited understanding of the significance of changes in medicine. Written work is mostly factually accurate but much of it is brief, lacking detail and explanation. Most is descriptive with very little evidence of analysis and evaluation. Literacy and numeracy skills are competently applied and generally used well by higher

attaining pupils, but the work of average and lower attaining pupils is often careless and often reflects too limited knowledge and understanding. Too little use is made of ICT.

103. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. In part this is because of the poor motivation of a significant number of pupils, but it is also because teaching is weaker in these years. The unsatisfactory achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils.
104. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, though it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well in making clear presentations. In the best lessons, learning objectives are made clear and lessons are well planned. Group work is well supported and effective in enabling pupils to work together in exploring issues in depth, and activities are well timed to sustain momentum in the learning. For example, Year 7 pupils made rapid progress in exploring changes in religion under the Romans because of this collaborative approach. Satisfactory attention is given to the development of historical skills but pupils are too rarely challenged to work accurately enough, for example in the analysis and evaluation of historical sources. Literacy and numeracy skills are well deployed but insufficient use is made of ICT.
105. In Years 10 and 11 in particular, teachers' low expectations result in pupils working at an undemanding level. Tasks set to help Year 11 pupils to judge the reliability of sources, for example, were more suitable for younger pupils and presented too little challenge. Year 10 pupils learnt very little when a whole lesson was given to creating a chart on which to record changes in medicine. In this lesson the lack of support by the teacher slowed learning further. Poor lesson planning often results in a lack of focus and structure. Pupils lose interest and a small proportion behave badly, further disrupting learning. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and in Years 7 to 9 assessment tasks are linked closely to National Curriculum levels. Work is also marked regularly but mostly superficially with too little guidance for improvement.
106. Unsatisfactory leadership and management are resulting in a lack of clear direction and strategic planning to raise standards and the quality of provision. Too little time is allocated for the subject in Years 8 and 9, which restricts learning and weakens preparation for study in Years 10 and 11. School procedures for monitoring and review are not effective as they do not result in systematic action planning. Assessment data is not used to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement. Too cramped accommodation restricts team work and the sharing of the best teaching methods. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory as standards have fallen and, while progress has been made in the teaching of historical skills, overall, the quality of teaching has not improved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Insufficient time is allowed in Years 10 and 11 to teach the programmes of study of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Leadership is good because the department is moving swiftly to implement good new policies.
- Teaching is good, never less than satisfactory and occasionally inspirational.
- Standards are not yet high enough on the GCSE course.
- Systems for the assessment of pupils' attainment are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

107. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2003, results were below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In 2003 GCSE results were significantly below average but better than in 2002.
108. Standards seen are average in Year 9. The achievement of all girls is good and accelerating. The highest attainers in Year 9 learn well from the life of Gandhi. They apply their good understanding of prejudice and discrimination to gender, disability, race, colour, the aged and refugees. Girls demonstrate sophisticated understanding. For example, a lower attaining Year 8 girl expressed her perplexity in believing she has a soul given by God but not knowing enough about the nature of God.
109. By Year 11, standards are below average but are rising with a change of examination syllabus and a sharper focus on examination criteria. In the religious education element of the life skills course in Year 10, girls enjoyed a lively debate containing some skilled counselling and made good progress in understanding Christian attitudes to drug abuse. On the GCSE course girls make satisfactory progress over time although the progress in lessons seen was good. While answering an examination question they applied their good understanding of the nature of spirituality to the media's attitudes to religion. Skills in answering examination questions are improving but girls still have too little practice. There is too little additional support in class to assist the progress of pupils with special educational needs.
110. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is occasionally inspirational and it is never less than satisfactory. The three-part lesson, suggested in the Key Stage 3 strategy, is in place and good starter tasks grab the attention of girls. The late arrival of a minority often disrupts the beginning of lessons. Good teaching is challenging and generates a lively pace. The best teaching is humorous. Good relationships ensure that girls behave well and listen with respect to the contributions of others. Strongly directed discussion is a particular feature of the department and girls participate in lively, sometimes noisy debate. Their writing does not reflect their frequently quite profound talk and teachers use a good variety of word frames and styles to help girls write what they say well and understand clearly. Computers are not used in teaching because of problems with the management of whole-class access to machines. There is a useful and improving website to help with examination revision. Assessment is unsatisfactory, but teachers are in the early stages of developing a scheme of assessment designed to give a sharp edge to monitoring achievement.
111. Strong line management and monitoring are successfully directing improvement. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Leadership in the department is good. The effective team of well-qualified subject specialists works well together and shares good practice but the schemes of work are insufficiently specific in planning the work of the department, particularly literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teachers are rightly gaining more experience in using the non-statutory levels of the National Curriculum. There is insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 to deliver the programmes of study of the locally agreed syllabus, so the school is in breach of its statutory obligation.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls' achievement is very good because of good and sometimes very good teaching and learning.
- There are inconsistencies in the rigour of assessment and its use to guide teachers' planning.

- The department does not use ICT enough for computer-aided design and manufacture.

Commentary

112. At the end of Year 9 results in teachers' most recent assessments were below the national expectation. In 2003 GCSE examinations, results were well above the national average and show a significant increase over the previous year. A significant number of girls achieved higher grades.
113. In the inspection, evidence showed that by Year 9, girls' overall standards are broadly average. This represents very good achievement, and a significant improvement on teachers' most recent assessments, since pupils start Year 7 with below average attainment. In lessons teachers provide planned opportunities for them to reach the higher levels expected by the National Curriculum. Girls produce articles of good quality, express their ideas well and communicate their designs clearly.
114. Girls' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above average. They make very good progress and their achievement is very good. Girls are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in their detailed, well-presented project folders for graphics and textiles and the very good practical project work. Where pupils use computers, the quality of their coursework is consistently well above average. In lessons too, girls make good use of computers, particularly computer-aided design and manufacture, an area that has improved since the last inspection. Girls are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, they understand what they need to do and are thus helped to reach higher grades.
115. Teaching and learning are always good and frequently very good. Teachers' enthusiasm and very good knowledge engage pupils. Expectations and challenge are very good. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes so these too are good. The teachers ensure that key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed, so girls can immediately use it to develop their understanding. The purpose of lessons is sharply focused and learning objectives are clear. The department places strong emphasis on speaking, listening and writing skills. There is good use of numeracy in calculations when measuring length, weight and time. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs and they achieve well.
116. The strengths of the good teaching are in subject knowledge, high expectations and effective pupil management.
117. Girls' work is marked regularly and teachers provide both encouraging and motivating comments. In Year 11 the very good marking includes a commentary showing girls how to improve their work. Teachers are beginning to establish systems for assessment of pupils' attainment, but assessment results are not used consistently in planning and teaching to raise standards.
118. The head of department provides very good leadership and manages the subject very well. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Assessment has improved and further improvements are planned. The department does not use computers enough for computer-aided design and manufacture. The technician makes an effective contribution to the work of the department and supports teachers very well. The small size of food technology rooms has an adverse effect on the progress that older pupils make.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results and the achievement of girls are excellent.
- Teaching is very good; teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and commitment inspire and challenge girls.
- Extra-curricular activities strongly support learning.
- ICT is underused for creative purposes in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' independent learning skills are very good.
- The breadth of the curriculum is too narrow; there is too little three-dimensional work.
- The management of the department is very good.

Commentary

119. In 2003, results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average. All girls who were entered gained a grade A*- C and over a third of girls gained A* or A grades. For the three years prior to this, results have been well above the national average and results have been improving. Girls performed significantly better in art and design than in their other subjects within the school.
120. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. This represents excellent achievement given that the majority of girls arrive in Year 7 with a low level of skills and understanding. They learn very quickly because the effective teaching and the structured nature of the course build strongly on their technical skills and understanding of art and artists. This gives them the confidence and ability to produce high quality work. Girls produce work of a very high standard when researching areas such as ethnic art. Lower attainers competently use the style of Chinese art as an influence for good quality watercolour compositions. Higher attainers inspired by Indian art research wide areas of regional pattern before producing complex designs for fantasy boxes and mirrors. Girls with special educational needs respond very well to the high level of individual support and frequently produce work of a similar level to the rest of the class. ICT is used well for research about artists but access to resources in the past has limited its use for creative purposes.
121. Standards of work in Year 11 are well above average. Girls work with a high degree of independence. They plan and organise their projects following visits to art galleries and are positively encouraged to develop their own style. Very high standards are reached and girls confidently use a range of materials and processes to express their creative ideas. Following a visit to Portmeirion, girls independently researched areas such as the Renaissance, after being inspired by the Italian-style architecture. This resulted in high quality large scale mixed media paintings demonstrating a very high level of technical skill. A strength of the department is the emphasis put on girls' personal response and interpretation. The achievement of girls of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, is excellent. Higher attainers' work often shows a sophisticated understanding of concepts, whilst lower attaining girls get the guidance and support they need to produce work to the very best of their ability.
122. Teaching and learning are very good and a major strength of the department. Consequently, girls improve and develop their skill, knowledge and understanding throughout the school and learning is very good. Teachers put strong emphasis on building up girls' capacity to work and think independently. This is very well supported by the high quality of individual attention and advice given by the teachers. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, where girls were working on individual projects, the teachers' knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment inspired and

challenged girls to produce work of the highest standard. By involving girls in challenging discussion, giving very clear explanations, demonstrating techniques and building in an element of humour, the teachers stimulate and motivate the girls to do their very best. The girls respond very well to this effective teaching so their attitudes and behaviour are very good. In examination classes, they are very well motivated, frequently pursue work in their own time and confidently discuss their ideas and how to research them.

123. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads a very effective team who promote a culture of high expectation and achievement. Assessment is well structured and data is thoroughly analysed, then used to plan the curriculum. A wide range of two-dimensional activities such as painting and drawing, printing and textiles is covered, though there are fewer opportunities for girls to work in three dimensions. ICT has been used well for research but previous poor resources and lack of staff training have limited its use for creative purposes in Years 7 to 9. The department offers a very good range of enrichment activities. Girls have been involved in a very wide range of activities linked to museums and community initiatives. They have produced high quality work, such as a millennium mosaic wall reflecting a wide range of cultural influences. The ethos of the subject is strongly promoted by high quality displays within the school and in exhibitions of work. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- There has been a significant uptake of girls on GCSE courses in the current year.
- Poor behaviour by a significant small minority of girls restricts the achievement of others.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation creates management of resources difficult.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

124. Girls enter the school with standards well below average, with a few exceptions. The 2003 end of Year 9 teachers' assessments showed standards to be above average. There have been no GCSE entries in the past two years.
125. Evidence shows standards to be average, demonstrating good achievement from well below average standards on entry. Girls in Year 7 are already acquiring competent keyboard skills, playing a melody fluently and adding up to three major and minor chords as accompaniment. By the end of Year 9, girls have command of a good range of music skills, enabling them to compose and improvise with success. Creative work is particularly well developed. In some classes, a significant minority of girls with special educational needs have behavioural problems, and make unsatisfactory progress. They restrict the achievement of others in those classes, as teachers have to spend time managing them. Talented girls are challenged well, and attain very good standards. A group of Year 9 girls, including an accomplished violinist and flautist, improvised an extensive, haunting composition of very high quality during the inspection.
126. Standards by Year 11 are broadly average although girls are predicted to get good GCSE results. Their compositions are of good quality, but their appraisal skills are below average. They have, for example, difficulty recalling the information they have been taught when they are analysing music.

127. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well prepared and teachers produce very informative worksheets which enable girls to progress quickly and systematically. Lessons are carefully structured, allowing time for performances to take place at the end of lessons, thus demonstrating what has been achieved. Teachers always encourage girls to improve themselves. Strategies for dealing with disruptive girls are consistently, and usually successfully, applied, though they take up valuable time.
128. Leadership and management are very good and are leading to significant improvements. The new head of department has established new directions for music in the school, and has set achievable targets. The curriculum has been completely reviewed and updated. Music now has a very favourable image in the school, as reflected in the significant uptake for the GCSE music course. The head of department gives effective support to the newly qualified teacher in the department. Assessment procedures have been reviewed, and are still being analysed. They do not adequately relate to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, and the assessments at the last end of Year 9 in 2003 were not completely accurate. GCSE predictions are a little too ambitious.
129. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The use of music technology has been carefully incorporated into the curriculum in all years. ICT is underdeveloped, but improvements are planned. Inadequate accommodation creates management problems for practical work. For example, in one teaching room keyboards have to be set out and collected each lesson. The provision of instrumental tuition has been expanded, with about ten per cent of the school population receiving free instrumental or vocal tuition. Extra-curriculum provision has been extended. Two successful shows have been produced with a local boys' school. Approximately 40 singers will visit and perform in Disneyland, Paris.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good teaching and learning in most lessons result in girls achieving well.
- Very good relationships between girls and with staff make a significant contribution to good learning in most lessons.
- Assessment is not providing information to help girls improve in both core and GCSE physical education.
- A good range of activities after school supports and enriches the work done in lessons.
- The time allocated for physical education in Year 11 is insufficient to cover the National Curriculum.

Commentary

130. In 2003, results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 equated to national expectations. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average although results in both 2001 and 2002 were above the national average.
131. Standards seen are broadly average by Year 9. This represents good progress during girls' first three years in the school, given the below average standards seen in Year 7. During their first three years in the school, girls develop many of the appropriate techniques and skills in gymnastics, where standards are average. Most girls, for example, apply sound body tension to a range of gymnastic movements and are able to develop a simple routine.
132. Standards obtained by girls in Years 10 and 11 are also average, although in a GCSE practical lesson skills and technique in trampolining were above average and girls were evaluating performance effectively to improve technique. Evidence from GCSE coursework indicates

standards that are slightly above the national average. Girls have a good understanding of many aspects of the course including physiology and anatomy and the principles of training. Girls are beginning to apply this knowledge to practical situations. The ability of all girls to observe and analyse performance is good although opportunities to develop their planning skills are missed. Most girls have a good understanding of the need for a range of warm-up activities before physical exercise. All girls achieve well.

133. Teaching and learning are good overall and were very good in several observed lessons. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to girls through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies, and correct sequences of both individual and collaborative learning activities also feature strongly in these lessons. Teachers' class management is good. Relationships between staff and girls are good and girls respond with enthusiasm to all lessons. Assessment of performance by teachers in the best lessons is used to enhance learning. Even in some of these, individual girls are only rarely set clear targets for improvement. In the very small minority of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, there were insufficient strategies for engaging girls or developing and insisting on high standards of behaviour. In a very small number of lessons the higher attaining girls were not effectively challenged. Observation and evaluation by girls to help improve performance are a feature of most lessons and result in good learning. The recording of assessment does not yet involve girls in setting their own targets and so is not contributing to their progress. Marking of GCSE theory work is not providing enough information to help them make further progress. Girls are often not aware of how well they are performing related to GCSE assessment criteria. ICT is rarely used and several relevant applications are overlooked in the GCSE course. There is a very good range of activities after school for girls of all abilities, which support and enrich the work done in lessons. The school competes very successfully with others in a wide range of sports. GCSE girls attend an Outward Bound course for one week where they successfully develop skills and activities for some practical assessments.
134. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department leads a dedicated team of staff very well and encourages all staff to contribute according to their interests. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. All members of the department work extremely well together and have a clear focus on teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing of good practice are underdeveloped but are beginning to encourage a more consistent approach. Development planning lacks sufficient detail to ensure that targets are met. There is not enough time in Year 11 lessons to cover the National Curriculum in satisfactory depth and the range of activities is also too limited. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although some lessons still start late, the majority of teaching is now good or very good. Girls now have a good understanding of health-related fitness, and the development of girls' evaluation skills has been very good. Development planning has not improved enough.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising, but have not risen far enough.
- Teaching and learning are good in about half of lessons.
- Accommodation is good.

Commentary

135. Two GCSE options are offered in Years 10 and 11. Business studies results in 2002 were well below the national average and in 2003 results showed only slight improvement. Business and communication studies is a new examination and, because it has less emphasis on mathematical skills, it is part of the school's strategy to raise attainment, particularly that of lower achieving girls. This is already raising standards, as was evident in work seen in lessons and folders. Literacy skills are not a barrier to progress and a few girls produce extended writing of high quality.
136. Teaching is generally satisfactory and about half is good. The teacher has good strategies for addressing poor behaviour and supporting learning. Girls of all abilities make satisfactory progress, especially in ICT skills where they start with attainment below the national expectation. The teacher has good knowledge of both subject and syllabuses, and good assessment helps girls to recognise how to improve their work. Examination techniques are, however, not sufficiently well developed for standards to be raised significantly.
137. Several aspects of the courses interest the girls and increase their motivation, especially the unit on job application where girls produce good quality letters of application and curriculum vitae. The department's development plan is reflective and honest and has led to significant changes, but standards are not rising fast enough. Resources are well organised and accommodation is good, offering facilities for discussion and group work as well as for individual learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course makes a significant contribution to the pupils' positive role in the school.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The management of the course is good.
- There is no discrete provision for Year 9 girls.
- Monitoring and evaluating are undeveloped in the Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

138. The PSHE programme is well structured and develops girls' understanding of health, relationships and the culture they live in, all of which are interlinked with citizenship and careers education. Girls' personal development is good and they learn to take an active and responsible role in school life. It builds strongly on their study and social skills and emphasises personal responsibility. Both the sex and drugs education components give strong guidance based on facts, decision making and problem solving, which enables girls to make informed choices. Girls achieve well and make good gains across a satisfactory range of areas because teaching is good. In the best lessons teachers build on pupils' confidence in discussion and challenge girls to think independently. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned to engage and interest girls. The management and leadership of the course are good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of the departments' development and is now working towards a more cohesive structure for the Years 10 and 11, where the monitoring and evaluation of the course are currently undeveloped. As the lower school course is only delivered in Years 7 to 8 and not in Year 9, it is difficult to deliver parts of the curriculum, such as sex education, at the appropriate age. This also impacts negatively on the continuity

and progression of learning. Not all girls have equal access to the curriculum since girls in Years 7 and 8 with low literacy levels are withdrawn for extra support for English.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in discrete citizenship lessons are good and result in good achievement by girls.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Very good community links are being developed.
- The co-ordinator has no strategies for monitoring and evaluating citizenship in other subject areas.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

139. Citizenship has been effectively introduced into the school, and is being further developed as an ongoing process. Aspects are taught discretely once a week in Years 7 and 8. Plans are advanced to extend this to Year 9 from September 2004. Discrete citizenship is taught as an eight-week module in Year 10. In Year 11, girls study human rights and responsibilities in an eight-week module organised by the religious education department. Almost all subject areas have identified where citizenship is being included in their schemes of work. During the inspection, one Year 8 and one Year 10 discrete citizenship lesson were observed. No record was made of aspects of citizenship being observed in other subjects.
140. By Year 9 and Year 11 standards are above expectations and girls achieve well. Year 8 girls, studying the role of disabled people in the community, have a clear understanding of segregation, integration and inclusion of this social minority. They sensitively and accurately compare the community treatment of such people today with that in previous centuries. Girls have a good knowledge of human rights issues. They ask perceptive questions, and have well-developed research skills. Year 10 girls have a good understanding of how media reporting can be biased. For example, they concentrated well when considering subjective and objective reporting in the media, and made a very good start at writing a biased report about the use of fluoride.
141. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. The citizenship co-ordinator, who teaches almost all of the discrete lessons, has considerable enthusiasm for the subject, and thorough subject knowledge. Lessons are very carefully prepared and are enriched by informative, attractively produced resources. Lessons develop at a fast pace, and are successfully divided into related activities. There is a good balance between teachers' input and pupils' activity. Subject matter is constantly related to the girls' experiences within the school and local community. The majority of girls enjoy the subject, and regard it as an important part of their education.
142. Leadership is very good, and management is good. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to bring the subject into the curriculum, and has produced good schemes of work. There is an achievable development plan for extending the provision of citizenship. Monitoring and evaluation of how citizenship is taught in other subjects are difficult to manage, as the co-ordinator does not currently have time allocated to undertake them. Assessment procedures are currently unsatisfactory but the co-ordinator is working closely with the local education authority advisor on this matter. Allocated budgets have been carefully spent.
143. Very good links with the community are being developed. These include projects through Trafford Crime Partnership, Police Liaison and Trafford Victim Support. Members of the school

council have taken part in debates with other schools in the Town Hall. Girls' awareness of citizenship matters is regularly raised through their participation in charity activities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).