

INSPECTION REPORT

GREENBANK HIGH SCHOOL

Southport

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104955

Headteacher: Mrs P McQuade

Lead inspector: Mr E J Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 258643

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	1010
School address:	Hastings Road Southport Merseyside
Postcode:	PR8 2LT
Telephone number:	01704 567591
Fax number:	01704 568736
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Shulver
Date of previous inspection:	18 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Greenbank High School is an average-sized comprehensive school with 1,010 girls aged 11 to 16. Numbers have increased since the last inspection. The great majority of girls come from White-British backgrounds and there are very small numbers of girls from other White, Black African, Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, White/Black Caribbean, Irish, and other Asian backgrounds. No girls are in the early stages of learning English and very few come from homes where English is thought not to be the first language. The percentage of girls with a statement of special educational need is well below average and the percentage on the school's register of special educational needs is below average. The percentage of girls eligible for free school meals is below average and the majority of girls are from socially advantaged homes. Attainment on entry to the school is above average.

The school is part of the Sefton Excellence in Cities (EiC) cluster. It has Investor in People status and has received a School Achievement Award in 2000 and 2001, Work Experience Achievement Award in 2003, Sportsmark Award in 2003, Artsmark in 2004 and is a specialist language college.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10013	Mr E J Wheatley	Lead inspector	
19720	Mrs D Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
2893	Mr J Manning	Team inspector	English, Drama, Media studies
2919	Dr P Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	Mrs M Foulds	Team inspector	Science
32774	Mr B Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business education
30901	Mrs S Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design
7084	Mr J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology
12118	Mr A Paver	Team inspector	Geography
2740	Mrs B Barrett	Team inspector	History
19026	Mr B Downes	Team inspector	French, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese Personal, social and health education
1340	Mr D Wigley	Team inspector	Music, Citizenship
22042	Mr J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education
10275	Dr J Cosgrove	Team inspector	Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school with some very good features. Standards are above average and girls achieve well. Teaching is good and often very good. The school has a clear vision of what it needs to do to improve although it has been a little late in introducing some initiatives that would help standards rise further. Girls enjoy coming to school and mostly work hard and with enthusiasm. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- girls make good progress as they move through the school, many make very good progress, but there is a small amount of underachievement in mathematics and design and technology;
- a significant amount of teaching is very good and has a positive effect on how well girls learn;
- the school's approaches to help girls improve the accuracy of their writing and develop their numeracy skills in other subjects are inconsistent;
- the quality and use of assessment are unsatisfactory although current efforts to improve assessment are starting to be effective;
- the curriculum is good overall and well matched to girls' needs, but citizenship is not established;
- the range of extra-curricular activities is very good and there is a high level of participation;
- links with the community, other schools and colleges are very good;
- the school's procedures to inform parents of girls' progress are unsatisfactory;
- links with parents are frequently very good, but occasionally do not keep parents fully informed about actions taken over their concerns;
- the school's status as a specialist language college is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on the breadth of the curriculum.

Since the school was last inspected in May 1998, standards in mathematics have risen, and after a period of falling, standards overall have started to rise again. Standards in design and technology are much as they were at the last inspection but are starting to rise under the new leadership of the department. Teaching and learning have improved as a result of the work done by senior staff in the school. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

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	A	A	D

*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.*

The achievement of girls is good. Standards are well above the national average for all schools and above average for girls nationally. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the results were well above the national averages in English and mathematics and above the national average in science. Compared with those of pupils of similar prior attainment in other schools, the results were well above average overall. They were below average in science because of staffing difficulties, which are now almost resolved. Current standards exceed national expectations overall and are well above average in English, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Standards are above average elsewhere, except in information and communication technology (ICT) where they are broadly average. Overall, girls achieve well and frequently very well. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the results were well above the national average and above average for girls nationally. The school did not meet its targets for five or more passes at grades A*-C, but did so for the average point score. The results were average in science

and art and design due to staffing difficulties, and in design and technology due to lack of effective use of assessment information to guide teaching. Compared with similar schools, results were below average, predominantly due to the lower than expected results in science, art and design and design and technology. Standards of pupils' current work are above average overall and well above average in geography, history, modern foreign languages, religious education and music. Overall, girls achieve well and frequently very well. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship because the subject is not fully established.

Girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good leading to good attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around school. Attendance is good and girls are punctual to school and lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good, and learning is good and often very good. The curriculum is well matched to girls' needs. The modern foreign languages curriculum is very good and is frequently used to enhance provision in other subjects. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good and many girls participate in the activities provided. The school has very good links with the community that further enhance girls' experience at school. Links with parents are satisfactory overall. The school provides a very good level of support and guidance for its pupils which is appreciated by parents and pupils. Support for pupils is good overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is well led and the headteacher and senior team provide good direction for its improvement. Management is satisfactory; the school has not improved some aspects of its work that could lead to better achievement fast enough, although there have been recent improvements. The school improvement plan is well focused on improving teaching and learning and the use of assessment information to raise standards. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but they have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements for collective worship and the teaching of citizenship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the school and are happy with the experiences their daughters have, although a small number feel that their concerns are not adequately dealt with, and inspectors support this view. The great majority of girls enjoy being at the school, show pride and loyalty towards the school and feel that their views are important.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure all girls achieve consistently well in mathematics and design and technology;
- establish approaches to improve the accuracy of girls' writing and numeracy skills;
- continue to improve the quality of assessment and to use assessment information to help girls achieve even better than they have been;
- improve the quality of reporting to parents on girls' progress and the procedures for parents to consult teachers;
- ensure that parents are fully informed about actions taken over their concerns;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;
- improve the teaching of citizenship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In general, the achievement of girls is good and they perform well in examinations. Currently standards are above average overall. The highest attaining girls achieve well, as do most other girls, whatever their backgrounds or prior attainment. Some girls achieve very well, although there is also a small amount of underachievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls generally achieve well and many achieve very well, particularly in geography, modern foreign languages and music.
- There is a small amount of underachievement in mathematics, design and technology and physical education.
- Improved teaching, more stable staffing and better use of assessment information to set targets are leading to improving achievement.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is currently above average overall, although it varies from year to year between well above average and above average.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the results were well above the national average overall. They were well above the national averages in English and mathematics and above the national average in science. Compared with schools where attainment on entry to the school was similar, results were well above average overall, well above average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Over recent years high standards have generally been maintained, though they fell in science in 2003 as a result of staffing difficulties which have now been mostly resolved.
3. Standards seen by Year 9 are above average overall. They are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Standards are well above average in modern foreign languages and art and design; they are above average in all other subjects except ICT, where they are average. Overall girls achieve well. In design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education they achieve very well and in citizenship their achievement is satisfactory. In all subjects, a significant proportion of girls achieve very well too. In design and technology achievement is very good because of the improving teaching provided by the impetus of new leadership in the department. In modern foreign languages and religious education achievement is so good because of the high expectations of teachers. There is a very small amount of underachievement in mathematics because some higher attaining girls lack confidence in their own abilities. Occasionally, in physical education, very small numbers of girls do not achieve as well as they could because they are not encouraged enough. In ICT standards are not quite as high as elsewhere because girls are not always clear about the ICT skills they are learning in the other subjects of the curriculum.
4. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the overall results were well above the national average, and above average for girls nationally. The percentages of girls obtaining five or more A*-C grades and five or more A*-G grades at GCSE were well above the national average, and the percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade was broadly average. Compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment, the percentage of girls obtaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE was below average, the percentage obtaining five or more A*-G grades was average and the percentage obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade was well below average. Results in science, in art and design and in design and technology depressed results.

In English and mathematics results were above average. In science results were broadly average which was below expectations and a result of staffing difficulties that the school has now partly resolved and continues to work on. In art and design results were uncharacteristically below average in 2003, due to long-term staff absence that interrupted girls' learning. This has now been resolved. In design and technology results were below average because teaching did not sufficiently challenge girls and assessment information was not used to help plan work that would challenge girls. However, under new leadership within the subject these issues are being addressed. In history, music, physical education and religious education results were well above average and in modern foreign languages they were very high compared with the national average. Results were above average in geography, ICT and business education. The school did not meet its targets for the percentage of girls obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C at GCSE, mainly due to the lower than expected results in science, art and design and design and technology. However, the school achieved its targets for girls obtaining at least one A*-G grade pass and for its average point score.

5. Standards seen show that by Year 11 girls are attaining at levels above the national average overall, with some girls in all subjects reaching levels that are well above average. Standards are well above average in English, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Standards have risen significantly in science due to sustained efforts to address the difficulties caused by staffing changes. Leadership in design and technology is bringing a co-ordinated approach to producing challenging work and to insisting on the use of assessment information to set targets and plan teaching. In citizenship, standards are broadly average, largely due to the work done in personal, social and health education and not by specific design; the citizenship curriculum is underdeveloped and on the limited evidence girls' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Overall, girls achieve well and in modern foreign languages, geography and music their achievement is very good. In English and science, achievement is satisfactory, taking into account their prior attainment, and in all other subjects it is good.
6. Some parents are concerned that girls, particularly the higher attainers, do not achieve well in mixed ability classes. However, the evidence indicates that in general girls achieve well, whatever the class organisation and whatever their prior attainment. The small amount of underachievement has arisen from staffing disruption and the occasional lack of challenging work.
7. Generally, girls write well and there are opportunities in most subjects to develop writing skills that help them express themselves well. However, girls' spelling and punctuation are not always accurate. Standards of numeracy are average overall. In all subjects where aspects of numeracy are required, girls are able to deal with the demands placed on them and numeracy is not a barrier to their subject work. Girls' ICT skills across the curriculum are generally sound and support their learning both in ICT and in other subjects. The use of ICT is helping to raise standards. Pupils use time out of school to improve their skills and make progress.
8. The contribution of the language college to girls' achievement is significant. Visits to other countries, lessons taught in foreign languages and the contributions of visitors enhance girls' learning by providing different stimuli to raise interest and involvement.
9. Girls with special educational needs make good progress in reaching their individual targets, and in improving their reading and spelling ages. Their progress is carefully monitored and they achieve well in all subjects and especially in modern languages and religious education. Many achieve very well in GCSE examinations.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.6 (36.4)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.1 (38.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	35.6 (36.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 204 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	66.0 (63.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95.0 (95.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (98.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.6 (41.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 197 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

Girls' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall and frequently very good. Their attitudes and behaviour are good in lessons and around school, and their attendance is good; they are punctual to school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls are confident and concerned for the world around them.
- Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good and often better.
- A small minority of girls show a reluctance to learn but are generally handled well by teachers.
- Girls mostly enjoy being at school and are rarely absent.

Commentary

10. Girls' personal development is good because many opportunities are planned into the curriculum and school life, offering a wide range of experiences to which girls respond well.
11. The international dimension evident throughout the school plays an important part in the girls' development. Many friendships exist all over the world and contribute strongly to the girls' understanding and appreciation of how others live and the experiences they have had. For example, in an assembly, girls in Year 10 and 11 spoke with passion about their trip to Auschwitz. Their thoughts were spontaneous and genuine, encouraging others to imagine the horrors people suffered. Such events help everyone to focus on the moral and social problems in the past and present world and to examine their own feelings and responsibilities.
12. Many subject areas consciously introduce girls to the spiritual, moral and cultural consideration of important issues. In religious education, debate and discussion are thoughtful, provoking and personal, encouraging girls to understand better their inner self, worth and values. Girls experience many styles and genres of music from around the world and have many opportunities to perform in public. During the inspection, girls considered human rights and feelings in the context of their studies in geography and history. In English, girls wrote good

- poetry on spiritual issues such as night and day, the value of nature, death, wealth and poverty, and practised their skills in persuasive writing by considering the arguments about abortion.
13. As a result of such good provision, the attitudes of most girls to school and to learning are good and often very good. They enjoy being at school and take part in many of the clubs, activities and events available. Their attendance is good and they mostly work hard and with enthusiasm, genuinely interested in the work prepared for them. Most girls are confident learners and organise themselves well. As a school, they have a well-developed social conscience, spending much time and effort on raising money to support charities, near and far. Relationships between staff and girls, and between the girls themselves, are good and create a pleasant and calm atmosphere in school. In most lessons, girls work together well and enjoy the success of others. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson, girls spontaneously applauded each other's efforts.
 14. Behaviour overall is good and again, often better. Girls are polite and friendly, respectful and considerate of others. Most girls understand the standard of behaviour expected and respond accordingly. Some parents expressed concern that the behaviour of some girls disrupted lessons. During the inspection, a small minority of girls were not interested in lessons and not prepared to work. Generally, they were handled well by teachers and caused minimal disruption to the learning of others. The rate of exclusion is low, with a very small number of girls being excluded for unacceptable behaviour.
 15. Girls with special educational needs are generally very positive about their learning. They work hard in lessons and take pride in their success. Those with behaviour difficulties respond well to firm behaviour management and high expectations for their behaviour.
 16. Overall, girls are happy at the school and feel that the school takes account of their views. However, a very small proportion of girls feel that their concerns are not adequately addressed. Inspectors found that the school generally dealt with girls' concerns well.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.8
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6
National data	1.1

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

No of pupils on roll
979
1
12
1
1
1
1
1
5
1
3
4

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
15	1
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and a significant amount of teaching is very good. The school has a good curriculum, matched to girls' needs, and the provision of modern foreign languages through the language college is very good. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good. The quality of care and guidance is good and the school has very good links with the community that enhance girls' experience at school. Links with parents are satisfactory although communications with parents are not always as informative or frequent as they ought to be.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching is good, with teachers' subject knowledge, good planning, use of a wide range of activities, good organisation and clear exposition being the most significant factors that lead to good learning. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall, although it is improving and there is some good practice.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's focus on teaching and learning is reflected by consistently good teaching across all subjects and is a significant factor in the good achievement of most girls.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan interesting and often imaginative and challenging lessons.
- A good range of activities in many lessons motivates and successfully engages girls.
- Teachers make good use of time and resources and the pace of most lessons ensures that learning is at least good.
- There are inconsistencies in the assessment of girls' work and in the setting of appropriate targets for improvement.
- In a significant minority of lessons expectations are too low and higher achieving girls are not consistently challenged.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The majority of teaching is good or better and there are many examples of very good teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in only a very small minority of lessons. The whole-school focus on teaching and learning is a significant factor in the improvement seen. In the more effective lessons, the focus is on well-structured planning, good pace and use of a wide range of activities and resources. In the small number of lessons that are unsatisfactory they are characterised by low expectations of girls and a lack of challenge for higher achieving girls. In these lessons, assessment is often not used to set appropriate targets for girls.
18. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are very good in music, modern foreign languages and religious education and good overall in all other subjects. In music a very good range of resources and activities immediately engages girls and this, linked to very clear objectives and well-informed exposition by the class teacher, ensures very good learning. It is a similar picture in religious education where very stimulating 'starters' to lessons motivate girls who are then prepared to engage in very well structured discussions on a range of topics, resulting in very good learning. In an excellent Year 8 geography lesson the whole lesson was conducted in French. The lesson had been very carefully prepared by French and geography teachers. Girls used ICT very effectively to present carefully researched geographical information in French to the rest of the class with the result that learning in both French and geography was excellent.
19. The picture of good teaching and learning is much the same in Years 10 and 11. Again, teaching and learning are very good in music, modern languages and religious education and good overall in other subjects. In an excellent Year 11 history lesson on the civil rights movement, a stimulating 'starter' activity immediately engaged the girls and was very effective

in ensuring that girls recalled people and events in the civil rights movement. The class teacher built on this by using a range of challenging activities and discussion topics to ensure that all girls were fully involved throughout, ensuring excellent learning.

20. In nearly all lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting, imaginative and often challenging work. Beginning with a strong focus on what pupils are expected to learn, lessons start with a crisp introduction that sets clear targets for girls. Use of a wide range of resources and activities, with good teacher exposition and appropriate intervention throughout the lesson, contribute to effective learning. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been successfully implemented in many subjects and has done much to improve teaching and learning. This and the opportunities for many staff to share good practice within departments are significant factors in the good and very good teaching.
21. Nearly all lessons are characterised by high levels of challenge which reflect class teachers' high expectations. Homework is generally used effectively to support learning and to encourage independent learning but the procedures for setting homework vary between departments.
22. The teaching of literacy is good overall. There are good opportunities for reading in most subjects but especially in science, history and geography. Girls are given good opportunities to write in a wide range of different styles in science. Teachers show girls how to express their judgements accurately in writing in design and technology and in art and design. In design and technology and in physical education, teachers provide good approaches to help girls write effectively when skimming, scanning and note-making. However, spelling mistakes are often missed in mathematics and there is no consistent strategy to improve spelling in English or other subjects.
23. Teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers mostly build numeracy into their lesson planning appropriately, so that in science girls create line graphs from observations and then draw conclusions from them, extrapolating their results. The planning and use of numeracy in art and design are particularly good. For example, rotations and transformation of shapes are employed even with Year 7 girls. However, teaching of numeracy is not always as good as this and suffers from an inconsistent approach to establishing common or agreed practices across subjects.
24. Girls with special educational needs are taught well. Individual learning needs are well known and teachers generally use a range of effective strategies to meet these. Teaching is particularly effective by specialist teachers, and also in modern foreign languages and religious education. Where teaching is weaker it is usually because planning does not take enough account of girls' learning requirements. Girls' progress is closely monitored through testing, and the regular review of their progress is improving standards. Targets on individual education plans are clear but not always sufficiently measurable.
25. The quality and use of assessment are unsatisfactory, although current efforts to improve assessment are starting to be effective. The leadership team has identified areas of weakness in the assessment systems and is taking positive steps to rectify the shortcomings. Since the beginning of the year the school has worked hard to set up potentially effective assessment procedures. There is now regular analysis of assessment information which is used to help staff produce targets for girls and to plan teaching. However, the school has come late to improving assessment, and systems are not yet embedded. Heads of faculties have received training in the analysis and interpretation of data but some teachers have problems understanding the data and in some departments there is resistance to its use. Overall, the use of assessment information is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. There is good practice in the use of assessment to respond to girls' individual needs in modern foreign languages, religious education, drama and ICT in all years and in geography in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is unsatisfactory in English, design and technology, mathematics, art and design, and in geography in Years 7 to 9 due to systems being insufficiently formalised or

rigorous to assess girls' work accurately. A new marking scheme has been introduced but marking is not yet consistently secure enough in a significant number of subjects to inform girls' understanding of how well they are doing or how to improve work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 133 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (2%)	30 (23%)	72 (54%)	26 (20%)	3 (2%)	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 good overall and provision for the languages through the language college is very good. Opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum are very good and accommodation and resources are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers a wide range of subjects although there is limited take-up of vocational courses by girls.
- The range of extra-curricular activities and curriculum enrichment activities is very good.
- The provision for careers guidance and preparation for work are very good.
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- The school does not provide food technology in Years 7 to 9 because facilities are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

26. The curriculum is good overall and meets the needs of girls. The science curriculum is very good with separate sciences and dual award science taught in Years 10 and 11. However, the school does not meet its statutory obligation to teach citizenship, and in Years 7 to 9 it cannot teach food technology because facilities are unsatisfactory. The range of vocational subjects taught is narrow, mainly because girls do not choose to follow them. Provision for cross-curricular ICT is good, although there is no provision to teach ICT as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9.
27. Provision for languages is excellent, with French, German, Spanish, Russian and Mandarin Chinese taught as a result of the school being a specialist language college. All pupils take French and Spanish in Years 7 to 9 and have a choice of a third language in Year 9 from another three. Most pupils take two languages at GCSE and can take a third. The range of exchange links, trips abroad to foreign countries, including some work experience, and the employment of native speakers of foreign languages associated with the language college are excellent. There is a good international flavour to the other subjects of the curriculum in science, geography and ICT.
28. Other opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum are very good. Participation in sport is very good and participation in the arts is good. Support for the curriculum outside of the school day and participation in other activities including trips and visits are very good. There are motivational conferences for girls on GCSE courses and Year 9 girls are encouraged to aim higher before their GCSE option choices. The local newspaper involves girls in a newspaper day and there are mathematics, science and modern foreign languages conferences specifically to encourage girls to follow these subjects after the age of 16.
29. All girls have equal access to the curriculum. Courses are matched to girls' needs. For example, girls can drop one GCSE subject to concentrate on independent study in other

GCSE courses being followed. Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses are available and the Innovative and Motivational Programmes of Alternative Curriculum and Training (IMPACT) courses support individual need. Excellence in Cities funding is increasingly well focused to improve provision; learning mentors work well with underachieving girls and extend the range of support for disaffected girls. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school meets requirements for teaching sex education and providing guidance on drugs misuse. The school has no wheelchair access beyond the ground floor.

30. Careers and further education guidance takes place in all years and the school is well placed to extend provision in line with new statutory requirements. In Year 10 the focus is on the preparation and evaluation of work placements and good support is given to the girls in finding appropriate and meaningful experiences. In Year 11, the focus is on moving into further education and training and preparation for work. Girls rightly appreciate the high quality of guidance and support given, leading to a very high take-up rate of education and training beyond age 16.
31. The school has very good links with the local business community which provides shadowing opportunities during placements in Year 10. Members of the business community also offer support for the careers programme; girls complete application forms and are given realistic interviews by senior managers with personnel responsibilities.
32. Links with the local further education and sixth form colleges are well established and girls are given opportunities to attend open days. In addition the Connexions service interviews all the girls during Year 11 to discuss career choices and opportunities.
33. Girls with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and subject teachers are well informed of their learning needs. In addition, girls follow individual learning programmes which focus strongly on the development of literacy skills. The development of their numeracy skills benefits from the effective intervention programme in mathematics in Year 7. Teaching assistants provide good support in most lessons. The learning support groups in Years 10 and 11 are very effective in promoting girls' confidence in studying for GCSE.
34. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good and teachers are knowledgeable in their own subjects and ICT. Recruitment and retention of staff are good. The match of support staff to the demands of the curriculum is also good.
35. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Accommodation is very good in modern foreign languages and good in English, science, ICT and music. Facilities in physical education will be very good when the new sports hall is completed this summer and will reduce the pressure on other areas of the school. The rooms for special educational needs, drama and art and design are too small and in design and technology some facilities are shared and this creates noise problems. Food technology cannot be offered in Year 7 to 9 because there is only a single room available for the subject. Across the school, the small size of many rooms restricts setting arrangements and narrow corridors impede movement between lessons.
36. Learning resources are generally good and are very good in history and ICT. However, there are weaknesses in drama and a shortage of textbooks in business studies. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are good and help them to achieve well. Resources for the specialist language college are good and include an impressive 'international street with a shop, café and travel agency providing opportunities for pupils to practise the languages they learn.
37. The resource centre, with a careers section and library provision, is welcoming and well used during lessons, during lunchtimes, and after school. It provides a valuable and well-regarded service for all the pupils. It is an attractive area with books, computers, videos and other

learning resources. It plays an important part in the promotion of higher standards of literacy and is a multi-media resource which helps teachers to plan research topics and pupils to pursue independent learning projects.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good level of care for the girls, which is appreciated by most girls and parents. Girls are supported well by good quality advice and new girls settle in quickly. The school has satisfactory procedures to involve girls, to seek their opinions and to act on them. The school is a safe place in which to live and work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good systems support girls' personal development well.
- Learning mentors are very effective in helping individuals and groups of girls.
- Girls need more information on their academic progress to help them improve.
- Generally, good relationships result in most girls having confidence and trust in their teachers, although a small proportion of girls do not consider some teachers to be supportive enough.
- The use of morning registration time is unsatisfactory.
- There is a good level of care given to health and safety, first aid and sickness.

Commentary

38. The experienced and committed pastoral team are effective in monitoring and supporting those girls needing extra help. The school is generally flexible and adaptable in meeting the needs of individual girls or groups well. For example, a Year 8 tutor group has been finding it difficult to live and work together effectively and much work is being done with the whole class in personal, social and health education to help resolve conflict, eliminate bullying and build positive relationships and understanding.
39. The learning mentors provide a very good level of support in many ways. They devise personal programmes for individual girls, work with groups such as the Year 10 ASDAN group and run informal clubs at lunchtime. Such efforts provide help for many girls in a reassuring and constructive environment, increasing their confidence and self-belief. The learning mentors have also established the successful peer mentoring groups 'Angels' and 'M8s' where older girls listen to and help Year 7 and 8 girls. This is doing much to build strong relationships and a good community. Most staff respond quickly to expressed or perceived needs. During the inspection, individual teachers were observed handling incidents or upsets sensitively and appropriately. However, a small number of girls from different year groups expressed concern that teachers were not always sensitive or responsive to their worries.
40. Monitoring of girls' academic performance, whilst being satisfactory, is not as strong. The school is in the early stages of developing assessment procedures and only limited information on performance is communicated to the girls. As a result, not all girls have a clear understanding of how well they are doing or how to improve. However, during the inspection Year 11 girls were keen to say how much they appreciated the help and support they received from their tutors and subject teachers to make sure they are well prepared for their GCSE examinations. They say that teachers have been accessible, responsive and genuinely interested in their progress.
41. Mostly the relationships between teachers and girls are good and play an important part in the confidence of the girls. Although girls do not keep the same tutor throughout the years, most girls feel they can talk to adults in school and ask for help if they need it. However, the use of morning registration time is unsatisfactory. It is mostly used as a social time where girls sit and chat with little constructive or productive outcome. It is rarely used to set a positive working tone for the day or for thinking and reflecting as a group.

42. The management of health and safety across the school is good and efficient. Procedures for child protection are clear and sensitive and the school has good relationships with agencies outside school to help girls and families.
43. Girls with special educational needs are well supported and guided. Their learning and personal development needs are clearly identified, and their progress checked through systematic monitoring, assessment and testing. The annual review of statements in Years 9, 10 and 11 incorporates good careers advice.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with the community and with other schools from which all benefit. The partnership with parents, overall, is satisfactory but reporting girls' progress is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with the community have a direct impact on girls' learning and confidence.
- Very good relationships with other schools are helping many pupils and teachers to benefit from specialist knowledge and facilities.
- Many parents hold the school in high regard and appreciate the work it does but consultation with parents is not often enough for the school to know what all parents feel.
- Parents' evenings and annual reports contain insufficient information to give an accurate picture of progress.
- A small but significant proportion of parents feel that the school does not communicate effectively with them or address their concerns.

Commentary

44. Through the language college, the school has many contacts with people all over the world. These are used very well to support the learning of girls in school and to broaden their experience and understanding of other countries and cultures. Many girls have the opportunity to visit other countries for a variety of purposes. A particularly memorable occasion was the trip to Auschwitz with a holocaust survivor which had a profound effect on those that went. In geography, girls get first hand knowledge from their Chinese teacher in their study of the Three Gorges Dam. Comenius assistants from Hungary and Poland provide an insight into the lives and cultures in those countries as well as running language courses for adults in the evening.
45. The school has many close links with local businesses and again uses them to great effect in many ways. The Year 10 mathematics industry day invites business people from many backgrounds who set problems for girls to solve. Activities are based on real-life situations introducing girls to a new dimension and an understanding of how mathematical skills are used in a working environment. Local employers are used to help Year 11 practise interview skills and to act as mentors. Their contribution does much to boost girls' confidence.
46. The school works actively with many groups within the community to provide facilities and resources, and where possible integrates particular groups into the life of the school to motivate and encourage girls. For example, the judo club actively encourages girls to join in. The archery group and local football club use the facilities and also provide some coaching for girls in school. Top level hockey matches are hosted by the school which inspires girls to take up the sport.
47. The very good relationships with many schools in the area are beneficial in many ways. Many teachers and pupils from other schools benefit directly from the specialist language and ICT facilities and teaching through many activities. The school is keen to share its knowledge at a

professional level and works with many teachers locally, nationally and internationally to help improve learning and skills.

48. Overall, the school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Whilst the majority of parents have positive views of the school, a significant minority appear unhappy with some elements of its work. This greatly surprised staff and they acknowledge that their consultation with parents needs to be more frequent and sensitive to concerns in such a way that all parents are prepared to voice their opinions.
49. Written comments from some parents expressed a concern that bullying was not dealt with effectively. Evidence during the inspection showed that bullying incidents are generally dealt with speedily, sensitively and appropriately but actions taken are not always communicated to parents effectively.
50. Another concern expressed by some parents was the insufficient information about girls' progress. This was confirmed by the inspection. The majority of parents see most of their daughters' teachers at parents' meetings. However, a significant small proportion of parents do not see more than two subject teachers at the parents' meetings and do not have the opportunity to meet with the tutor to discuss overall performance and how their daughter can improve. Annual reports are inconsistent in indicating achievement and progress and rarely provide practical and meaningful targets to help girls and parents. The school is aware of this weakness and is currently reviewing its parent-teacher consultation and reporting procedures.
51. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with parents, involving them fully in monitoring girls' progress and target setting for improvement. She also works very closely with primary schools in identifying girls' learning needs before they transfer to this school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led by the headteacher, senior staff and others in posts of responsibility. Management is satisfactory, with generally effective procedures to ensure the school runs smoothly. However, the school has been late establishing effective assessment procedures and has not established effective enough communications with parents. Governance of the school is satisfactory overall. Financial management is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides a clear vision of how the school should improve and this is shared by all of those in management posts.
- The school has been slow to introduce procedures to bring about improvements, but these are improving.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but have not ensured that statutory curriculum requirements or requirements for collective worship are met.
- Financial procedures, to manage spending so that the school's improvement plan is supported, are excellent.

Commentary

52. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear view of how the school should improve. This view is shared by those in management positions and by governors. However, the pace of change has been too slow. The school has come late to the process of self-evaluation but has made significant strides recently. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and subsequent work to improve practice are having a positive effect on how well girls learn. Increased use of assessment information by senior staff, and training to help other staff use assessment data, are leading to target setting for girls and improved planning and teaching. The pace of introduction varies from subject to subject, but is starting to have a positive effect on further improving girls' achievement.

53. The quality of evaluation and monitoring is satisfactory and improving. Considerable work is now being done in the light of the senior leadership team's monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and performance within individual subjects. This is starting to lead towards improvements, with heads of faculties setting targets for improvement and, in turn, heads of departments setting targets within their subjects.
54. The school has satisfactory priorities for improvement, spelled out clearly in its improvement plan. The principles of this are shared effectively with heads of faculties and departments. Leadership of subjects, special educational needs and other aspects of the school's work is generally good, with heads of department, co-ordinators and heads of year giving a clear indication of what improvements are needed. Overall, those in management roles lead their teams well.
55. The use of performance management targets to bring about improvement in the quality of teaching is good and targets are linked closely to the school improvement plan. Induction of new staff is very good. New staff are given whole-school as well as subject-specific details and are closely monitored by both heads of department and members of the school leadership team. Opportunities for professional development are good and closely linked to performance management, with much training happening in the school and supported by peer mentoring systems. The school has very good links with Edge Hill College, with five student teachers on site in the week of the inspection. With the status of Investors in People, the school takes great care to provide good training and opportunities for professional development. For example, two teaching assistants, both of whom are graduates, will start training as teachers in September 2004, partly as a result of working in school. The National Workforce Remodelling proposals are being used to develop clear career paths for the range of non-teaching staff.
56. On a day-to-day basis, the school runs well and girls and parents appreciate this. However, occasionally communications with parents are not managed effectively. The school tries not to allow issues to become over-emphasised and as a consequence sometimes fails to ensure parents know how their concerns, or those of their daughters, have been dealt with. This has led to some dissatisfaction among parents, which has surprised the school's management team.
57. Governance of the school is satisfactory. The chair of governors provides good leadership, and works closely with the headteacher. Chairs of sub-committees are well briefed, and have a sound understanding of the mechanics of running the school. Governors meet formally about six times a year, and have a satisfactory grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are conscious of the school's implicit funding problems, and are proactive in drawing up priorities. Governors are aware that they are not fulfilling responsibility for a daily corporate act of worship.
58. The school's approaches to financial management are excellent. The recent rigorous audit validates very secure financial systems and procedures. Governors' minutes track sound decision making based on very clear and up-to-date information. Financial decisions are made collaboratively, are curriculum-led and arise from the processes of internal consultation. Financial administration is impressively led, with an authoritative grasp of finance related to education.
59. The school's basic budget is very low and despite receiving substantial funds in support of the language college, from Excellence in Cities and from the Leadership Incentive Grant, available funds are still well below average. As a consequence, the school spends well below the national average sum per pupil.
60. The school's procedures for obtaining value for money are good overall and contain much very good practice. Funds carried forward over the last two years are earmarked as part of the school's contribution to the new sports hall. The language college funding is very well spent

and fuels very good provision. The Excellence in Cities funds are increasingly effectively deployed. The school gives good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,598,784
Total expenditure	2,718,598
Expenditure per pupil	2,681.68

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	213,997
Balance carried forward to the next	94,183

PART C: QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well by the end of Year 9.
- The quality of writing about literature is often good.
- There are weaknesses in spelling and punctuation in all age groups.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge but their marking does not always give girls the best advice on how to improve.
- Girls use ICT very effectively in research and in producing written work.
- Teaching in drama is very good and standards of performance are above average.
- Practical work produced in media studies is often good.

Commentary

61. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average as they have been for the last three years. They were much better than those of similar schools and girls achieved well compared with their attainment on entry. The achievements in writing of the current Year 7 are slower than in previous years because the work set is not always challenging enough.
62. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2003, results were above average. These girls gained exceptionally high standards in their National Curriculum tests in 2001 but were unable to sustain the same high level in English and English literature. Results were still above the national average and have been consistently so for the last three years.
63. Standards seen during the inspection reflect the well above average results shown in tests and examinations. Girls are very fluent orally with a command of a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary. They participate in intelligent discussions and girls with special educational needs make a full contribution. Sometimes the work set in lessons in Year 7 does not stretch all girls intellectually. For example, in one class girls were expected to carry out fairly mundane work on similes and metaphors which most of them had done in primary schools. Their written work is better when they have tasks that stimulate them to develop original ideas at length, and they write very good personal accounts using lively dialogue. Their style gains depth and maturity in Years 8 and 9. Many girls read widely and those with special educational needs show enthusiasm, and respond well to help from older girls. They take advantage of the good library with its welcoming supply of varied paperbacks, videos and talking books. In Year 8 girls managed to hold mature discussions, showing a good understanding of the themes in *Hamlet* and they were not fazed by the complex language. Girls achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
64. Standards are generally above average by Year 11 and girls' achievement is satisfactory. A high proportion of higher attaining girls are on course to achieve the highest grade in English and English literature in GCSE. Some of the written work in literature is of a very good standard and shows that girls can derive subtle insights into the use of language from which they are able to discuss character and plot with clear understanding of the author's intention. The major weakness adversely affecting achievement is the lack of accuracy in spelling and punctuation where even able girls make errors by not checking their work carefully. In all year groups girls

use ICT very well both for research and in producing information leaflets and posters for different audiences.

65. Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, the girls respond well to the confident and authoritative style of most teachers. Relationships are often very positive. In some classes teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of girls with special educational needs, intervening with apt questions and sensitive praise. This is not the case in all lessons and they are occasionally under-employed because of a lack of clarity in the planning of the lesson. The teaching of literature is especially good and girls learn a variety of interesting methods to get to grips with even difficult texts such as *King Lear*. There is good use of different resources such as ICT and video, which both motivates the girls and gives them a clearer understanding of complex issues. Marking varies from very good in a few cases where teachers set clear targets for future work and help girls to improve, to unsatisfactory where advice on spelling and style comes too late to be useful.
66. Standards in drama are well above the national average. In 2003, the first year that girls were entered for the GCSE examination, all achieved at least a grade B and many an A*. The same high level of commitment and quality was seen during the inspection. Very good teaching and trusting relationships lead to some outstanding practical work such as thoughtful dramatic monologues and excellently planned interpretations of scenes from Shakespeare. Written work is also of an above average standard. Drama groups are strong and help the school to form links with other schools.
67. Results in media studies are above average. Teaching is very well planned and there is good use of resources. Girls produce high quality practical assignments, showing good understanding of ICT and applying their numeracy skills well. Girls of all ranges of ability achieve well in the subject and sustain the levels of performance they achieve.
68. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Despite the many recent changes in staff, the department has a shared vision for the future. Assessment has improved but is still unsatisfactory because teachers are only just starting to learn from an analysis of examination data how to plan lessons with greater relevance to pupils. This information is not yet shared with the girls and their parents clearly enough to help them to understand how to achieve their targets. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place with helpful feedback to individual teachers but the systems to ensure overall continuity of teaching and learning lack rigour. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory with the same above average standards maintained and improvements in accommodation but with fewer examples of very good lessons than before.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Provision overall is good. Girls have a very good grasp of a wide range of vocabulary. This shows particularly in religious education where they use words such as 'cosmological' and 'atheism' in a discussion on the origins of the universe. In science, the writing is varied and interesting with lively poems and newspaper accounts in Year 7 related to the subject. Girls reveal a clear understanding of how to evaluate products in design and technology, and in art they express critical judgements clearly about artists and their works. History, geography and physical education provide good opportunities for girls to develop a range of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning and note-making. In mathematics, although key words are often referred to, spellings are not always corrected or commented upon. The major weakness in most subjects is a lack of accuracy in spelling and punctuation because girls are not encouraged to proofread carefully and there is no agreed strategy in the school to help them to improve.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and girls achieve very well.
- Curriculum provision is excellent.
- Teaching is very good.
- The girls have very good attitudes to work.
- There are very good links with the local community and with other schools in the area.
- Standards of written work for high attaining girls are not as high in Spanish as they are in French.

Commentary

70. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were well above the national average, continuing the pattern of recent years. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results in French and Spanish were very high in comparison to national averages for all schools and well above average compared with girls' schools nationally. Smaller entries in Russian, German and Chinese made comparisons against national averages unreliable. All girls entered passed with higher grades. French and Spanish are among the best performing subjects in the school at GCSE.
71. Standards are well above average, at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. This is consistent across all five of the languages taught. There are no differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject. Standards of written work in Spanish for the highest attaining girls are not as high as those in French. This is because some teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to the level of challenge needed for these pupils. Girls with special educational needs and those girls from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. Standards have risen since the previous report and girls achieve very well overall.
72. Teaching and learning are very good. Where teaching is very good or excellent, lessons are planned carefully to provide a high level of challenge. Teachers have high expectations of what girls can achieve. Working relationships in lessons are very good. Girls' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. A significant feature in the well above average standards attained is the high level of commitment of teachers in providing extra classes and tutorials. The languages assistants show a high level of skill in working with small groups and individuals. This makes a very good contribution to raising standards, especially in oral work. The use of computers, by teachers and by pupils, to enrich and enhance the curriculum is excellent. The subject makes a very good contribution to girls' literacy development and a good contribution to numeracy. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen during the inspection, the work was too easy, there was too much English spoken and the pace of the lesson was unsatisfactory. There are good assessment procedures in place for tracking girls' attainment and progress.
73. The breadth of the curriculum is excellent. Five languages are on offer and all girls are able to study three. There is also a wide range of extra classes and trips abroad. The subject makes a very good contribution to girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very good links with the local community and with other local schools. Other subjects make a good contribution to the language college. Both the head of faculty and the head of the language college provide very good leadership and management. An effective team of teachers is in place and the subject has clear priorities for development. There are effective systems in place to evaluate the performance of the subject and further raise standards. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection in further raising standards and in developing the language college.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well as they move through the school, although a small number of girls in Years 10 and 11 lack confidence to do as well as they could.
- The use of marking and assessment is unsatisfactory.
- There is mostly good quality teaching, from staff with good subject knowledge.
- The department makes insufficient use of ICT in its teaching.

Commentary

74. In the National Curriculum tests taken by girls at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the results were well above average. Over recent years results have risen considerably and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, girls' achievement has been good. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2003, the results were above the national averages for all maintained schools but were not as good as might be expected when account is taken of this cohort's performance in 2001 when they were aged 14. In particular, the percentage of high grades of A*-B was low.
75. Standards seen are above average by Year 9 and girls achieve well. In one good lesson, where girls were preparing for the imminent end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests, they worked confidently with arithmetic standard forms. In this lesson, as with many others, teaching material addressed the needs of the range of girls in the class and it did this effectively, with all girls working hard on related questions of different complexity. A lower set of pupils in Year 9 worked methodically, considering the mean, mode and range of given data. Most girls in this class used 'finger counting' as an aid to their work and, in this class, high quality learning support was available to two particular, slower girls such that they completed the set tasks along with their classmates. The very few girls of minority ethnic origin all have a good command of English and their progress is in line with that of the whole class. Standards by Year 11 are broadly above average and girls achieve well. A class of higher attaining girls considered algebraic proofs but displayed weakness when it came to the expansion of terms which were, in fact, the difference of two squares. Others hesitated, showing a lack of self-confidence, in identifying an algebraic expression for any odd number. A class following the less demanding foundation tier programme worked quickly with data analysis, creating scattergrams from tables and then finding the line of best fit. Again, very effective support was available to identified girls in this class which enabled them to complete the tasks set.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall in all years. There is a small amount of very good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection when staffing turbulence depressed the quality of teaching. All teaching is characterised by careful planning and good use of material presented at two or, in one case, three levels of difficulty so as to meet the needs of individual girls. In all lessons, teachers show a good, and sometimes very good, command of the subject and this has a positive effect on how well girls learn. The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory overall. In a few lessons, ICT was used very effectively, but they were not widespread. The recently installed interactive whiteboard is used by some teachers as nothing more than a self-erasing blackboard. Teachers regularly set homework but, as with much class work, it is not marked regularly. Teachers' marking is a weakness as is the department's use of assessment information to guide planning.
77. Leadership of the department is good, having provided the drive for improvements in teaching and learning. Management is unsatisfactory overall. In particular, assessment information is not used effectively as a steer for learning and no checks are made that the department's policies, for example those on literacy or marking, are applied systematically. Although

assessments are used to develop targets, these are not shared consistently with the girls. As a result, girls are uncertain of the level of their work and of the progress they make. This leads them to lack confidence in their ability to achieve the higher levels of work and so fewer girls choose to sit the higher tier paper than should be the case.

78. Despite current weaknesses, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment by both Year 9 and Year 11 has risen significantly. The staffing is now stable and girls with special educational need receive good, well-targeted support. ICT is still not a strong feature of the department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

79. Numeracy across the school is satisfactory. The mathematics department has provided two in-school training sessions for other staff but has not yet provided follow-up guidance to ensure implementation is consistent. Many departments have a numeracy policy and lesson plans ensure its use when appropriate. In modern foreign languages, girls produce graphs to show their favourite TV programmes and use the school's 'international street' for sterling to euro conversions. Graph work is also used in geography, for example where Year 8 girls study a river profile. In art and design, girls use isometric paper to plan designs and demonstrate a good understanding of angle. Computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture systems are used in design and technology, calling on girls' use of scale work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 but GCSE results have been affected by changes in staff.
- Teaching and learning are good; a focus on teaching and learning styles is having a positive impact on how well girls learn.
- The curriculum is very good; it benefits from much enrichment.
- The results of assessment are insufficiently used to raise standards.

Commentary

80. In the National Curriculum tests, taken by girls in Year 9 in 2003, the results were above average but had dipped a little compared with the previous year. Over recent years, results have shown a rising trend and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, the results were below average. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, girls' achievement was satisfactory.
81. In the GCSE examinations, taken in 2003, results for dual and single award sciences were broadly average. These results were poorer than expected, taking into account that the attainment of girls starting the course was well above the national average. In recent years, results have declined.
82. Standards seen during the inspection were higher than those indicated by the external tests and examinations. This is because some very difficult staffing problems have now been resolved and because numerous strategies, put in place by the department, are becoming effective.
83. Standards seen are well above average by Year 9 and achievement is good. Most girls have a very good knowledge and understanding of a broad range of scientific topics. They carry out practical work confidently and their investigative skills are very well developed. They represent data with good graph work, which they interpret and evaluate well, and they handle calculations

competently. Literacy skills are good overall. The higher and average attainers write fluently and give clear scientific explanations, but the lower attainers often show a weakness in spelling. Almost all are proficient in using ICT for research.

84. In Year 11, standards are above average and girls' achievement is satisfactory. In some classes there still remains a little evidence of disrupted progress because of previous staffing instability, but teachers are working hard to overcome this. The higher and average attaining girls, generally taking separate sciences or dual award science, have a clear understanding of the subject at these levels and are able to apply their knowledge in various contexts. Amongst the lower ability, scientific knowledge is less detailed, but the girls do have a good overview of scientific concepts. Through Years 10 and 11, investigative skills continue to develop well and become more sophisticated. Investigative work is supported well by good numeracy skills across the ability range and girls use ICT effectively to simulate experiments and interpret data.
85. Throughout the year groups, pupils with special educational needs achieve well; extra support in class is effective and teaching materials are matched to these pupils' requirements.
86. Teaching and learning are good overall. Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better and a significant amount is very good. Most lessons are very well planned to include a variety of activities that keep pupils engaged and motivated. There is a very effective practical and investigative approach that is linked particularly well with the girls' work in primary schools. Resources are used very effectively to enhance learning and most teachers prepare work that matches and challenges the full ability range. Most teachers make good use of time. However, in some lessons that are just satisfactory, the lesson structure is not sufficiently stimulating to maintain the interest of the girls, and the pace of learning suffers. Classes are managed well and the good relationships have a positive effect on learning. Homework is set regularly, but the day-to-day marking is variable in quality and does not always clearly indicate means of improvement. Technical support in science is good; it is much appreciated by teachers and contributes much to teaching and learning.
87. The girls' attitudes to work are good and often very good. Most show interest, remain focused and enjoy the subject – this is reflected in the numbers who attend the science club. Such attitudes, together with their good behaviour, have a positive effect on their progress.
88. The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Well-structured formal assessment is in place and is used to monitor progress and identify weaknesses. Target setting, however, is under-developed and insufficiently used to guide girls on how to improve their work.
89. Leadership and management are good. The head of department and his deputy have a clear focus on raising standards. Some well-thought-out strategies have been established and are beginning to become effective. Performance in the subject is analysed very well and appropriate action is taken to improve teaching. Much is being done to improve GCSE results. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are becoming well developed and the implementation of teaching and learning policies is having a positive impact. The curriculum is very good; its enrichment includes a commendable international dimension. Schemes of work are well developed, thorough and usefully organised.
90. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have risen in the end of Year 9 tests, especially at the higher levels. Teaching styles have improved and there is better use of resources. Most of the laboratories have now been refurbished to provide a much better teaching and learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good across the school.
- Attitudes of girls and relationships with teachers are very good.
- Provision for Years 7 to 9 is well co-ordinated.
- Lack of a distinct ICT course in Years 7 to 9 means that girls' learning is not secure.
- Arrangements for teachers' assessments in Year 9 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

91. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 showed that girls' attainment was average. Standards have been consistent over recent years and are the same as reported in the last inspection. Lack of a separate course in ICT in Years 7 to 9 means some girls are not as secure as they ought to be in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, girls' achievement has been satisfactory. In the GNVQ examinations taken in 2003, the results at grades A*-C were above average, all girls achieving at least a pass grade. These results represent good achievement, taking into account their average attainment levels at the start of the course.
92. Standards seen are average by Year 9, but younger girls are making better progress as a result of a new induction programme at the beginning of Year 7 and standards are rising. In Years 10 and 11, standards are above average and are consistent with examination results. Girls in all years work knowledgeably and skilfully, using ICT in a wide range of subjects, enhancing the quality of their work and developing their skills. Girls of all abilities make good progress and use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively.
93. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good overall and sometimes very good. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is taught through the full range of subjects. Teachers have good knowledge of the girls' work, the courses and technical skills and they teach complex programs effectively. The girls show confidence in their learning and use computers with skill and expertise; many have very good keyboard skills, which enhance their progress. They use a wide range of applications, manipulate texts and images well and present their work in a structured way with a good understanding of purpose. Very good support is offered to girls on the GNVQ programme, and additional help is given as required through additional timetable sessions. Girls choose their own themes and develop assignments creatively, working well both independently and in small groups. They show very positive attitudes to the subject and have very good relationships with their teachers.
94. The quality of assessments is good and is used effectively. There are sophisticated tracking systems so that girls know what is expected of them and often surpass targets. Marking of work reflects the syllabus requirements and grading system. Targets are challenging but realistic and the girls respond well.
95. Leadership and management are good. There is clear vision of the whole-school approach to delivering ICT and there are strategies for making it effective. Teachers' assessments are not fully secure because of the school's arrangements for teaching ICT within other subjects rather than as a separate subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Girls have maintained their above average standards, and while there has been some improvement in assessment in Year 9, assessment information is not used in a consistent or co-ordinated way to assess girls' performance and to plan improvements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

96. Provision is good. Across all subjects and in all years, ICT is taught well and girls acquire skills and knowledge effectively so that by the end of Year 11 they are attaining above average standards. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use ICT skilfully to prepare and present their lessons. There were some very good examples seen of using ICT in ways that enhanced both subject knowledge and technical skills. In addition teachers know and use the assessment criteria effectively, especially in Years 7 to 9. Tracking and assessment in Year 11 need refinement so that all girls are given assessment grades in their final reports.
97. In English, girls develop their understanding of writing for an audience. In mathematics, girls use modelling software to learn the properties of complex functions and, as a result, describe articulately and make accurate predictions. Girls create menus in Spanish and develop complex multi-media images in English and art. In religious education, girls produce posters using a range of software, and in business studies they use spreadsheets and databases. Data logging is used in science and geography.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most girls achieve well but in 2003 there was underachievement by a significant minority of higher attaining girls.
- Teaching is good overall with a strong element of very good and excellent practice.
- Very good leadership and skilful management are rapidly improving provision.
- Girls do not learn sufficient skills to help them learn independently.
- The use of assessment to measure and improve achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

98. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were well above the national average. Results were better than at the last inspection. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school girls' achievement was good overall but there were fewer than predicted higher levels and a significant minority of girls of above average prior attainment underachieved.
99. In GCSE examinations in 2003 results were above the national average. This represented satisfactory achievement overall but the results of a significant minority of higher attainers did not match their target grades.
100. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average overall, being well above average at Level 5 but with fewer higher levels than would be expected. Generally average and below average pupils achieve well. For example, they develop a sound understanding of the one-child policy of China. Special educational needs girls are well supported and they achieve well. Where tasks allow independent work and individual responses, higher attaining girls make rapid progress, but in some mixed ability classes, whole-class teaching does not challenge higher attaining girls sufficiently.
101. By Year 11 standards seen are well above average in revision of problems of urban development. Most girls achieve well. Under-achievers are identified and supported to raise their standards. There is a sharp focus on examination criteria and the thorough learning of case studies to raise examination performance.

102. Teaching and learning are good with almost half of teaching being very good or excellent. Where teaching is good or better, teachers' preparation is very good and includes a good variety of tasks delivered at a fast pace with time targets. Girls enjoy competitive starter tasks and in most lessons learning is summarised effectively at the end of lessons. Literacy, numeracy and computer skills are well used, although there are insufficient geographical enquiries to develop independent learning and no practical work in Years 7 to 9 to develop coursework skills for GCSE. Otherwise girls learn well, manage their materials well and share their learning very well. Modern classroom technology is well used to bring stimulating visual stimulus about slum dwellings in Rio de Janeiro to the heart of lessons, but there is insufficient such equipment. The department responds very well to language college links by emphasising Chinese examples and teaching some lessons about transport in French.
103. The use of assessment to inform progress and influence planning is developing well on the GCSE course but is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where some estimation of National Curriculum levels is inaccurate.
104. Leadership by the new subject leader is very good and good management is quickly improving provision. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are well established. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are well above average and girls achieve well throughout the school.
- Teaching is good, but marking does not provide sufficiently specific guidance for improvement.
- Assessment procedures are systematic but results are not used well enough to track progress and set targets for improvement.
- The curriculum is well planned and enriched by a good programme of visits.

Commentary

105. The results of the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2003, as they have been over the last three years. While above average, the work seen during the inspection did not show as many girls working at the higher levels as shown in the teachers' assessments. Nevertheless, these standards represent good achievement when compared with the girls' average standards in history on entry to the school. GCSE results have also been well above average over the last three years, and have improved steadily over this period. The standards achieved by Year 11 are also well above average. Again these standards indicate good achievement when compared with their earlier above average attainment. Girls of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, achieve equally well.
106. Girls have above average, and in the case of higher attaining girls, well above average, historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Girls in Year 9, for instance, show very good understanding of the influence of the differing standpoints of the countries at the Treaty of Versailles. Their ability to analyse sources and draw conclusions is a considerable strength. Girls in a Year 11 lesson worked confidently with considerable insight in the analysis of evidence about the causes of World War 2, showing a mature and good grasp of concepts such as appeasement. They apply their knowledge well in providing clear explanations, and in evaluating and questioning the reliability of sources.
107. Written work is weaker than oral work. Girls have good literacy skills but essay writing is not sufficiently well structured and developed. Much writing is weakened by being insufficiently

detailed, analytical and evaluative, and lacking in sustained argument supported by evidence. Writing tends to be unsophisticated in style, and sometimes careless. For example, in the analysis of one source, a girl described it as being both reliable and unreliable with no attempt to explain her judgement.

108. Teaching and learning are good with a little that is very good. Learning benefits from the teachers' good subject expertise and planning which often provide innovative and challenging approaches. For example, the introduction of the Gunpowder Plot to Year 7 girls through an explicit video clip of a re-enactment of the conspirators' punishment, was followed by a challenge for them to judge whether the punishment fitted the crime. This whetted their appetite and they rapidly became involved in keenly exploring the evidence. Girls work at full stretch in the great majority of lessons. Brisk purposeful introductions to lessons often establish a lively enthusiastic partnership in learning between the girls and their teacher. Questioning is effective in checking understanding and extending thinking, and there is constant challenge to ensure that girls work accurately as historians. Very good relationships and behaviour create a very purposeful learning atmosphere. The excellent preparation for GCSE examinations enables girls to do very well. Literacy skills are well supported, and numeracy skills are drawn on appropriately.
109. Girls' work is marked regularly, but as at the time of the last inspection, marking does not give enough specific guidance for improvement. Good procedures for assessment are being developed which provide a more secure guidance for teachers' assessment, in Years 7 to 9 especially. However, processes are at a relatively early stage of being embedded as an integral part of teaching. In particular, not enough use is made of assessment data on an ongoing basis to track girls' progress and set targets for their achievement.
110. Leadership and management are good and strongly support good achievement. The teacher in charge of history provides a very clear direction for the provision to be made. She works closely with the head of humanities in monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning. The curriculum is well managed and enhanced by a very good programme of visits and speakers, and the developing use of ICT. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving standards, the provision made for pupils with special educational needs, and sustaining high quality teaching. The improvement of marking to ensure that it is more constructive remains to be addressed.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very good specialist teaching leads to consistently very high GCSE results.
- Lower attaining girls and gifted and talented girls make good progress.
- Leadership and management of religious education within the humanities are good.
- The teaching is very good at generating profitable discussions on interesting and important topics.
- There are not enough visits to churches and places of religious significance.
- The present good use of audio-visual aids lacks the advantages provided by interactive whiteboards.

Commentary

111. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2003, the majority of the girls attained results above the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. This represented very good achievement in the light of their prior attainment on entry to the school.

112. In the GCSE examinations in recent years, those girls who sat the full GCSE course have consistently gained results that were well above the national average. The large number who followed the short GCSE course achieved results above the national average. Overall, achievement over Years 10 and 11 is good for all girls.
113. Standards seen are above average and girls achieve well by Year 9. Girls learn a good deal *about* religions but also *from* religions as they question their own values whilst showing respect for the values of others. They have good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions as required by the agreed syllabus. They describe the chief beliefs and understand the significance of signs and symbols and Holy Scriptures of different groups of believers. They show themselves to be respectful and co-operative learners and they respond very well to the mainly very good teaching they receive.
114. All girls in Years 10 and 11 benefit from good curricular arrangements that allow them to take a short GCSE course or a full GCSE course or a non-examination course. In Year 11 the majority can discuss critically moral issues such as euthanasia, justice, world poverty, social harmony and peace. Many of those sitting the GCSE examinations are able to achieve high marks by being able to organise evidence in order to arrive at, and express, considered personal opinions. Many can successfully grapple with very challenging philosophical terms and arguments. Standards are well above average and girls achieve well.
115. Girls with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented make good progress because the department encourages a good deal of oral work in which all pupils play a full part and also makes good use of learning support. Good strategies for improving literacy skills help all girls to cope with technical vocabulary and presentation, and the use of numeracy skills is satisfactory. Strategies for using and assessing skills in ICT are underdeveloped but are starting to become well embedded in the schemes of work and proving to be effective. The religious education provision makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils and a good contribution to their notions of citizenship.
116. Teaching and learning are very good. This is because of very good planning, organisation and use of imaginative activities that include all pupils so that clear objectives are achieved in a good learning atmosphere. The teaching of both specialist and non-specialist teachers is particularly good at providing interesting activities that are well matched to the age and abilities of the girls, at generating discussions, and at making full use of the full classroom space for profitable group work. Good use is made of audio-visual aids but without the benefits of modern interactive white boards. There are few visits to places of religious significance. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are now good and have improved recently, and since the last inspection. Teachers know the levels attained by individual pupils, set targets for improvement and can predict with accuracy their future results.
117. Leadership and management of the religious provision within the humanities are good, as at the time of the last inspection. Statutory requirements are met. Very good documentation outlines good policies for marking, monitoring provision, improving teaching and spreading good practice.
118. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Systems for assessment and monitoring of girls' progress and attainment are unsatisfactory.
- The number of practical rooms is not adequate, particularly as the combined provision for different aspects of the subject is not suitable.

Commentary

119. By Year 9, girls' overall standard of attainment is well above the national average with a significant number of girls attaining higher levels. Standards have been at the same high levels for the past three years. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results were below the national average overall. However, the results for the textiles examination were better than this and results for home economics were above the national average.
120. Standards seen are well above average overall by Year 9 and girls achieve very well. They produce articles of good quality, express their ideas well and communicate their designs clearly. In the Year 9 electronics project, girls solve high-level design problems involving integrated circuits. They make good use of computers, particularly computer-aided design and manufacture. By Year 11, standards are above average. Girls' achievement is good overall. Girls are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and well-presented project folders for textiles, and the very good quality practical project work. Where girls use ICT, the quality of their coursework is improved. In product design and textiles lessons, girls make good use of computers, particularly computer-aided design and manufacture. Girls are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, girls understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades. Standards are higher than indicated in the latest GCSE results because the department has started to use assessment information to set targets for the girls and to plan teaching.
121. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations to engage girls. Effective classroom management is based on good relationships. The good range of activities ensures that girls' interest is sustained and that they become actively involved in lessons. Lessons are sharply focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the girls. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and new knowledge is introduced as and when it is needed, so that girls use it immediately to develop their understanding. The higher attaining girls are challenged well and teachers work well with girls with special educational needs, helping these girls to progress very well. Girls' work is marked regularly and teachers mostly provide encouraging, motivating comments that show them how to improve. The outcomes of assessment are not consistently used effectively, however, to analyse performance and to use the acquired information to adapt future planning and teaching and to set targets for girls. As a result, a few girls still underachieve.
122. The head of faculty provides good leadership and rightly focuses on lesson planning to improve teaching, the use of assessment to set targets, and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment. Management is only satisfactory because systems for assessment and monitoring of girls' progress and attainment have not been implemented fast enough and are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there is no provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9. There is good technician support for the department, which

includes preparing materials and maintaining equipment. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weakness

- The achievement of girls is good.
- Teaching is good and girls learn well in lessons.
- Assessment systems are insufficiently rigorous to accurately inform girls of the level they are working at and this has an impact on the girls' ability to take responsibility for their learning.
- Girls behave well and show good personal development.
- Lessons are too short in Years 10 and 11 and this, combined with poor accommodation, restricts the breadth of the curriculum.
- Enrichment activities such as working with practising artists strongly support learning.

Commentary

123. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the results were well above average. Over recent years, the results have risen and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Compared to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement has been good.
124. Since the last inspection, results in GCSE examinations have been well above the national average. However, in 2003, they fell to slightly below the national average for all maintained schools and well below compared to girls' schools. This was due to the poor performance of one group, where staff absence disrupted learning and led to lower than expected standards. The 2003 results represent unsatisfactory achievement as the prior attainment of pupils starting the course was above the national average.
125. Standards seen are above average by Year 9 but are of a lower level than recorded in the 2003 teachers' assessments. This is because systems to assess the girls' work were insufficiently rigorous to assess work accurately. Nevertheless, girls achieve well given they arrive in Year 7 with an average level of skills and understanding. They learn quickly because the effective teaching and structured nature of the course give them a good understanding of how to produce works of art. They use technical skills very competently in a range of media and show a good developing knowledge of art and artists. However, skills of research are not as well developed and the lack of the use of sketchbooks affects this. Learning is very well supported by workshops with artists. For example, all girls, but particularly higher attainers, produced good quality wire structures after working with a practising sculptor. Girls with special educational needs respond well to the high level of individual support. Teachers positively encourage the written evaluation and analysis of artists' work and pupils' literacy skills are above average. ICT is built into planning but it is underused for creative purposes.
126. By Year 11, standards are above average. Standards are different from the 2003 GCSE examination results because the girls have been consistently taught well. All girls follow the painting and drawing course and achievement is good. High standards are reached when interpreting whole-class themes and girls confidently use a range of materials and techniques to express their creative ideas. They show the ability to explore, interpret and analyse when researching areas such as Cubism, and use artists such as Picasso as an influence for large-scale work. Learning is very well supported by artists in residence and visits to art galleries, which act as a stimulus for project work. For example, following a visit to the Tate Gallery a higher attaining girl produced very good quality work inspired by a war artist, based on the

dynamics and destruction of a bursting shell. Girls with special educational needs achieve well when working in the style of artists to build on their understanding of techniques. At this level girls take a lot of responsibility for their own projects and where work is below the expected level it is linked to poor organisation skills. Higher attainers achieve very well when they work independently but this was less evident in the work of other pupils.

127. Teaching and learning are good. Girls are given clear direction on what they have to do to achieve, with exemplars and demonstrations of good practice frequently used to show how to achieve it. Consequently, the girls improve and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well throughout the school and learning is good. Lessons are well planned to include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of ability. Teachers manage the girls well, often in crowded conditions, and their high expectation of behaviour creates a positive attitude in most pupils who respond by working hard. The girls' personal development is good; they work supportively together and respond maturely to the difficulties arising from the limited amount of space. There is a good pace to lessons and the limited time available in examination classes is used very effectively. However, this, combined with the poor facilities, resources and accommodation, restricts the range of the courses in Years 10 and 11 that can be offered.
128. The quality of assessment overall is unsatisfactory. Teachers give a high level of individual attention, advice and encouragement to the girls and work is marked regularly. However, formal assessment systems are presently insufficiently rigorous to accurately inform girls of the level they are working at and this affects the girls' ability to take responsibility for their learning. Examination results are thoroughly analysed by the head of department and systems have been put into place to address weaknesses but systems to analyse and monitor data to track progress and set targets effectively are in the early stages and not yet effective.
129. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head of department has been in position only since the beginning of the year but is already having a positive effect on development. She has a clear sense of vision and has introduced initiatives to improve procedures and practice. A strength of the department is the good level of enrichment which is used to enhance the curriculum. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory, the curriculum time and the standards in the Years 7 to 9 have improved. High quality display around the school acts as a stimulus to learning and raises the profile of the subject among the girls.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, due to very good teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- New assessment procedures are not yet fully embedded.
- The department makes a good contribution to girls' spiritual, social and cultural development.

Commentary

130. In teachers' assessments of girls at the end of Year 9, attainment was above average. In recent years, results have been consistently above average. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, girls' achievement is good. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2003, results were well above average, with all ten candidates gaining grades A*-C, and seven of them gaining the highest grades of A* or A. Results in recent years have been consistently high.

131. Standards seen are above average by Year 9, with a significant number of girls attaining very high standards. Girls have a secure knowledge of the subject, enabling them to develop good composition and performance skills. Almost all can write fluent melodies and add major and minor accompaniments accurately. Whole-class ensemble work is frequently of a very high quality. Singing across Years 7 to 9 is very good. By the end of Year 9, girls can sing confidently in three parts, adding rhythmic and pitched accompaniments. Girls having special educational needs, and those having particular musical talent, achieve well as they are given relevant extension tasks in practical work. Talented girls, for example, frequently take the lead in ensemble work.
132. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Girls have a very secure knowledge of music history and composition techniques, with standards of composition being of a very high order. They demonstrated a profound understanding of gamelan music in a lesson observed during the inspection. Overall, girls achieve very well.
133. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well prepared and well shaped. New concepts are taught clearly and thoroughly, with an emphasis on developing girls' aural skills. Care is taken to use subject material which will appeal to the girls, and attract their interest. Musical games are used successfully to give girls a wide experience of the subject. Effective cross-references are made to citizenship, spiritual, social and cultural aspects. When working on rock and roll music, for example, the youth and pop culture of the 1950s is discussed in detail. Overall, assessment is satisfactory, although new systems are not yet fully embedded. The head of department recognises that assessment of ICT is still underdeveloped.
134. Leadership and management are very good, with many new initiatives, such as world music which was introduced by the previous head of department. The new head of department has thoroughly monitored and evaluated the work of the department, and has a clear vision for moving forward what was already a successful area of the school. This includes proposals to open up entry to GCSE examination courses to a wider ability range.
135. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The GCSE examination results have improved, with more girls opting to take the course. Music technology is now used more creatively, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good and occasionally very good teaching and learning in many lessons result in good progress overall.
- Very good relationships between girls and with members of staff make a significant contribution to the good learning in most lessons.
- A very good range of activities after school supports and enriches work done in lessons
- There is too little teaching time for girls in Years 10 and 11 who are not on the GCSE course and this restricts the depth to which the curriculum is taught.
- Assessment of girls' work is not providing appropriate targets for improvement.

Commentary

136. In the 2003 teachers' assessments of girls at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average, continuing the pattern of recent years. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average and similar to results of recent years. Girls performed as well in physical education in 2003 as they did in their other subjects.

137. Standards observed in Year 9 are above the national average. This represents good progress during girls' first three years in the school, given the average attainment of girls on entry to the school. In rounders, girls are able to field the ball and participate successfully in a full game, but throwing often lacks accuracy and many girls still lack the confidence to catch the ball. Standards obtained by Year 11 by those girls not on the GCSE course are broadly average. Most have sound basic racquet skills in tennis, and a good understanding of the rules although the range and accuracy of their strokes are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement given the restricted time available for physical education in Years 10 and 11 for these girls.
138. Standards on the GCSE examination course are above the national average. Girls achieve well and have a good understanding of many aspects of the course, including physiology and anatomy, and the acquisition of skills. They are beginning to apply this knowledge to practical situations through a high standard of analysing performance in a specific sporting activity. The ability of girls to observe and analyse performance is average overall, although it varies. Where girls do this well, analysis has a significant impact on achievement. There are many opportunities for girls to develop planning skills and to take responsibility in lessons. All girls have a good understanding of the need for a range of warm-up activities before physical exercise.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is occasionally very good. Good subject knowledge is conveyed regularly to girls through perceptive observation of performance, intervention and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies, and a sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning are also features of these lessons. Relationships between staff and girls are very good and girls respond with enthusiasm to most lessons. In those lessons where teaching is not quite so good, individual girls are not set clear targets for improvement and occasionally there are limited strategies for engaging girls. Occasionally, the higher attaining girls are not consistently challenged. Assessment information is not used well enough to set targets for improvement and the use of self-assessment is in its early stages. Girls are not aware of how well they are performing in relation to the GCSE assessment criteria. Although ICT is used effectively by many girls on the GCSE course and in Years 7 to 9, planned opportunities to use ICT in other areas of the GCSE course are missed. The Junior Sports Leaders award for all girls is providing very good opportunities for girls to develop their planning and coaching skills. There is a very good range of activities after school for girls of all abilities to support and enrich work done in lessons. There are good and developing links with local sports clubs and girls compete very successfully with other schools in a range of sports and many girls achieve representative honours,
140. Leadership and management of the department are good. Staff work well together and are very good role models for the girls. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although there is still insufficient use of assessment information for curriculum planning, above average standards and good achievement have been maintained, while provision for extra-curricular activities has improved.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good and girls work hard.
- Non-specialist teachers receive good support.

Commentary

141. Published results for the GCSE examinations taken in 2003 were below the national average, but on appeal to the examination board these were raised, bringing them to be broadly in line with the national average. This is more in line with standards seen, which are broadly average. The trend over the last five years has been standards to be above the national average. Achievement is good across the ability range and girls produce good quality extended writing. Their ability to use number and language at the appropriate level is supporting good achievement. Attitudes to the subject are generally positive and girls work hard and with enthusiasm.
142. Teaching and learning are good and benefit from teachers' good knowledge of subject and the course. The support given to non-specialist teachers working in the subject helps maintain standards. The use of the intranet for storing teaching notes and sophisticated revision aids are helping to raise achievement levels. Girls articulate their thinking well and show a good understanding of the course. They work well both collaboratively and independently.
143. The quality of assessment is good and there are effective strategies for monitoring pupils' performance in line with syllabus requirements and the grading system. Targets are challenging but realistic and the girls respond well.
144. Leadership and management are good. There is clear vision of what needs to be done and strategies exist for the continual monitoring of teaching and learning. There are not enough vocational experiences built into the curriculum to support those girls not intending to follow A-level courses. There are good links with the local sixth form college where many of the girls move on to A-level courses in business. Resources are broadly satisfactory and are used effectively; there are too few textbooks, limiting what work girls can do at home. The subject makes a good contribution to aspects of citizenship, especially in the area of money management and finance.
145. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are generally higher than at the last inspection, but the issue of relating the course to the world of work has not been fully addressed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good, due to good teaching and learning.
- Good leadership is taking co-ordination and development of the subject forward.
- Statutory curriculum requirements are not met.
- Strategies for introducing citizenship into the whole-school ethos are underdeveloped.

Commentary

146. Initial strategies for introducing citizenship were established by the headteacher, and responsibility for its full implementation is now held by the subject co-ordinator. The school recognises that it is well behind most other schools in implementing the introduction of citizenship as a whole-school policy. Elements are taught within the personal, social and health education programme, and through the humanities and religious education departments. All other departments are addressing how they will include the subject into their programmes of study by the start of the next academic year.

147. During the inspection, personal, social and health education lessons in Years 7 to 9 were observed in which citizenship aspects were focused upon. Girls achieved well in these lessons, gaining average standards. Year 7 girls are beginning to develop strategies for target setting in life, and to consider goals beyond school life. Those in Year 8 have clear views about the problems of drugs and alcohol, both within the school and the broader community, and understand the legal implications. Girls in Year 9 appreciate the health and social problems of smoking at a personal level, and have a good perception of the political aspects of the government's attitude to the health of the nation. Very little written work is produced so it was not possible to evaluate the quality of citizenship to any depth.
148. No Year 10 or 11 lessons were observed, but during the week a talk was given in a Year 10 assembly by Year 10 and 11 girls, on their visit to Auschwitz. They presented their reflections and reactions in a mature and balanced way, and the audience listened intently. The assembly was followed by an informative talk given by a representative from 'Save the Children'. This contributed positively to the girls' awareness of citizenship issues by informing them about the very poor quality of life for millions of children around the world.
149. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well prepared, and attractive, informative resources and worksheets are used. In all lessons, teachers cover a considerable ground, incorporating a good balance between the didactic imparting of information and reflective group work. Teachers focus successfully on topics which have direct relevance to the girls' experience, and this attracts their interest. Overall, girls demonstrate a mature approach.
150. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of the way ahead, as identified in the subject and school improvement plans. The potential to develop and create a strong citizenship ethos in the school is good. Arrangements for the inclusion of aspects across all curriculum subjects are underdeveloped. A whole-school comprehensive policy statement has not been produced. Strategies are in place for Year 9 assessments to be undertaken this term, and for reporting on girls' achievements to be introduced.
151. Effective links with relevant local authority and other agencies have been established, and good community links are being developed. The co-ordinator has visited China and observed how human rights are taught in a school in that country. Links between this school and the school in Chongqing are being developed. Girls are developing good leadership qualities, notably through opportunities to be form leaders, and through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Many are also very committed to charity work, for example the Save the Children charity. There are good quality displays around the school, illustrating a range of aspects of citizenship. However, all strands of the subject are not fully covered and while some girls have opportunities for participation and responsible action, not all do.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well taught.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

152. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are broadly average and girls achieve well. The quality of planning is good and each year group follows a well organized and structured sequence of activities. Good use is made of a range of resources to support each topic. Teachers are involved in the development of teaching materials. Management of the programme is good and there is regular review and evaluation of each topic. Policies are in

place to cover key aspects of the course. Good use is made of outside agencies for specialist input including careers and work experience. There are good links with higher and further education institutions.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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