

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HANDSWORTH WOOD GIRLS' SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE**

Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103505

Headteacher: Dr S Nepaulsingh, OBE

Lead inspector: Kathy MacFarlane

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 259344

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 - 18  
Gender of pupils: Girls  
Number on roll: 690

School address: Church Lane  
Handsworth  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
Postcode: B20 2HH

Telephone number: 0121 554 8122  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Brenda Addison

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Handsworth Wood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre is a multicultural comprehensive school serving the local area of Handsworth. There are 690 pupils on roll, including 52 students in the sixth form, making the school smaller than average. Unemployment in the area is relatively high. Most pupils live in the immediate area and come from some 50 primary schools. Around half the pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The school population represents a wide range of cultures and social conditions. Around three quarters are from Indian or Pakistani backgrounds and about a fifth are Afro-Caribbean. Just fewer than 4 per cent are White British. The main religious groups are Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian. Apart from English, the main community languages are Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and Gujarati with a few pupils speaking Creole. The school intake represents the full range of ability, though selection at age 11 for grammar school means there are considerably fewer very able pupils. Around half the pupils have a reading age that is very low when they join the school in Year 7 and many pupils receive learning and language support. Around a third, however, have good reading skills when they join the school in Year 7. A significant minority of pupils join the school at times other than the beginning of the school year. Some of these pupils have had a broken pattern of education or are newly arrived in Britain with little or no English language. About a

quarter of Year 11 remain in the sixth form. These students choose to stay in the sixth form at Handsworth mainly for cultural reasons or because they have special educational needs.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3472	Kathy MacFarlane	Lead inspector	Mathematics
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	
3552	David Darwood	Team inspector	History Religious education
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
33014	Andrew White	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business Education
8204	John Sheffield	Team inspector	Art and design
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
33173	Malcolm Doolin	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Handsworth Wood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre provides a **good** quality of education for its pupils and sixth form students. The clear vision and inspiration of the headteacher supported by all staff and governors ensure that it is a good, culturally harmonious and happy school. All pupils and adults are valued. It provides **good** value for money. Provision in the sixth form is **good** and is cost effective. The greatest aids to achievement are the many ways in which the school works to include all pupils in the life of the school. The unsatisfactory attendance of some pupils is a barrier to their learning. The significant numbers of pupils who join the school at times other than the beginning of the school year adversely affect standards.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good quality of teaching and learning ensure pupils achieve well.
- Standards overall are below average.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured good progress since the previous inspection.
- Although slowly improving, attendance is still below the national average.
- The excellent leadership and management of support for pupils for whom English is not their home language, citizenship and support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's high expectations and good provision for their personal development.
- The library is too small and the book stock is inadequate.
- The very good links with the community and local schools contribute very effectively to the work of the school.

Overall progress since the previous inspection has been good. Standards, although fluctuating from year to year, have shown a steady trend of improvement. Issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

Achievement is **good** overall. Many pupils join the school with very low standards of literacy and a significant number do not have English as their first language. Pupils achieve well as a result of very good special educational needs and language support. There are no major differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups. In 2003 results for Year 9 in national tests for English were very high in comparison to similar schools. In mathematics and science they were below average. Although standards are well below average overall compared with all schools nationally, the trend of improvement has been above the national trend.

Standards in most subjects remain below the national average by the end of Year 11. In public examinations in 2003 standards by the end of Year 11 were below average as shown in the table below. These, however, represent good achievement based upon comparisons with similar schools. Overall standards in 2003 for Year 13 students were well below average as indicated in the table below but had improved slightly on those for 2002. The very small numbers in the sixth form make valid comparisons with national averages unreliable. Work seen during the inspection reflected standards below average overall but pupils achieve well.

Pupils' personal development is **good** because there is a good and caring ethos throughout the school and the way in which the school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

through the high quality teaching of citizenship. Pupils have **good** attitudes to their work and to school life in general. Pupils' behaviour is **good** and most pupils are punctual.



## Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	C	D	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E*	E*	E	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now **good** overall. This is as a result of very good staff development and training, which is reflected in the quality of lesson planning. There are examples of very good teaching in many departments. The curriculum provision is **good**. There is a full range of traditional courses, together with a developing range of vocational and work-related opportunities. The school successfully meets the needs of all pupils through imaginative deployment of the staff. There is also very effective support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language. The school's **very good** local partnerships and links support teachers' professional development very well and this has a good effect on pupils' learning. The support and guidance for pupils is **good**.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership and vision of the headteacher give very good direction to all the work of the school. He is well supported by a good senior team with complementary management skills. Management is good overall and gives strong support to raise standards and ensure all pupils are included in the life of the school. Leadership and management of support for pupils with special educational needs are excellent. There is excellent management of language support for pupils who do not have English as their first language. The leadership and management of the citizenship education programme are excellent. The governors give good and active support to the school.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied with the education provided for their children. They like the approachability of the headteacher and staff and feel welcome in the school. Although a number of parents have concerns about behaviour, the inspection team found behaviour to be good.

Pupils have positive views about their school and appreciate the care and support they are given.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- standards, particularly in mathematics and science by the end of Year 9;
- attendance;
- the library space and book stock;
- provision in design and technology.



## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form, although small, is **cost effective**. There is **good** leadership and management that supports students well. Teaching is **good** and sensitive to the needs of students who continue at the school for reasons of cultural preference or special educational need. Overall **achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good**. Students have very good attitudes to their learning and behaviour is excellent. Standards overall in examinations in 2003 were **well below** average. Results fluctuate considerably from year to year because group sizes are very small and not all courses are run every year. There are good opportunities for vocational, work-related and enrichment studies alongside traditional advanced level examinations. Each year a number of students choose to follow a GCSE course either to improve upon their results in Year 11 or to increase the range of their qualifications. The school makes good provision for them.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- The open and inclusive entry policy that promotes achievement by all students.
- Teachers' understanding of students' needs which leads to good working relationships, excellent behaviour and very good attitudes.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- Many students lack independence in their learning.
- The good leadership and management that ensure all students are effectively supported.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Provision is good.</b> Teaching is very good. Standards are below the national average, but many students achieve well.
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Teaching is very good and sensitive to the needs of all students. Language skills are weak but are developed alongside work in mathematics, which helps students achieve. Standards are below average. Students lack independence in their learning. There is good subject knowledge and very good leadership and management of the department.
Science	<b>Provision is good.</b> Take-up of courses varies from year to year and currently there are no students following an AS or A2 course. Standards are below average but all students studying GCSE biology achieve well. Teaching is good with planning and subject knowledge being strengths.
Business	<b>Provision is good.</b> Teachers have very good specialist knowledge. Standards are below average but many students, including GNVQ, achieve well.

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

### ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **good** support, advice and guidance. The head of sixth form knows each student very well. Together with subject staff, this ensures day-to-day procedures are clear and that students' personal and academic needs are effectively monitored and supported. This makes a significant contribution to their confidence, personal development and achievement. Students are given good guidance regarding application to universities and other career pathways and each year around half of the students take up further and higher education courses.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **good** and have a clear view of the diverse needs of students. Leadership and management of key staff who provide both academic and vocational courses are good. There is excellent management of learning and language support. The governors are well informed and supportive of the unique character of the sixth form.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are positive about the sixth form. They say that they feel well supported both academically and personally by their teachers. They are given good guidance on career and work options after they leave school. They appreciate the small classes where their views are heard and where they are able to discuss their individual concerns.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement in **Years 7 to 11 is good**, although standards of attainment overall are **below average**. Achievement in **Years 12 and 13 is good**. Standards are **below average** in the sixth form.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment in tests at the end of Year 9, although below average, are improving at a faster rate than nationally.
- Pupils make good improvements to their literacy skills.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Standards and achievement in citizenship are very good.
- Standards at GCSE are below average.
- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11 based upon their standards in Year 9.

#### **Commentary**

1. Many pupils join the school with very low standards and a significant number of pupils do not have English as their first language. They achieve well and at a comparable level to other pupils as a result of very good special educational needs and language support. The school places great emphasis on improving standards of literacy both through specific support for reading and language development and also through a strong emphasis upon the development of literacy skills across all subjects of the curriculum. There is no significant difference between the achievements of different ethnic groups. Pupils identified by the school as being gifted and talented achieve as well as their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning in all areas of the curriculum. Work seen during the inspection reflected standards below average overall, but with pupils achieving well.

#### **Key Stage 3 (pupils in Years 7 to 9)**

2. Standards overall are below average. Standards of attainment in national tests overall at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average based upon pupils' prior attainment<sup>1</sup>. When compared with similar schools<sup>2</sup>, standards were above average for the core subjects. Based upon their prior attainment at the end of Year 6, pupils achieved well above average results in English by the end of Year 9. Standards in mathematics and science, however, were well below average based upon prior attainment and below based upon similar schools. Since the previous inspection the school's overall trend for improvement has risen steadily and has been above the national trend.
3. In work seen during the inspection standards are below average overall. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are below average, but pupils' achievement is good. Standards seen in information and communication technology are average. Standards in geography are below average but achievement is now satisfactory as a result of improvements

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<sup>1</sup> Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

<sup>2</sup> Results are also compared not only nationally but with those obtained by pupils in similar schools; this includes those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

in teaching and learning. In physical education and in art and design standards are average. They are well below average overall in design and technology.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.6 (29.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	30.2 (29.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	28.2 (28.4)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 129 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**Key Stage 4 (pupils in Years 10 and 11)**

- Standards in most subjects remain below average by the end of Year 11. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003<sup>3</sup> were below average overall, both in terms of pupils who gained the higher grades and the overall pass rate as shown in the table below. However, in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 these pupils achieved above what might have been expected of them. Pupils' GCSE examination achievement in art, English literature, home economics, statistics and community languages was good in comparison to their performance in their other subjects. Their performance in information and communication technology, design and technology, and geography was below in comparison to their other subjects. Overall pupils achieve well throughout the school. In work seen standards in French, art and design, citizenship and physical education are average. They are above average in community languages. Standards are below average in other subjects but achievement is at least satisfactory. Achievement is very good in citizenship and community languages.

**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	27 (42)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	74 (75)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best 8 subjects)	26.2 (34.7)	28.7 (34.7)

*There were 126 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Sixth form (students in Years 12 and 13)**

- Overall standards in 2003 for Year 13 students based upon their average points score<sup>4</sup> were well below average as indicated in the table below but had improved slightly on those for 2002. The very small numbers in the sixth form make valid comparisons with national averages unreliable. Work seen during the inspection reflected standards below average overall but pupils are achieving well.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the inspection the Department for Education and Skills had published national data for 2003 although this had not been validated. Comparisons with this latest data are made throughout this report for Key Stages 3 and 4.

<sup>4</sup> The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school or the national average. By the end of Year 9, the level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore, the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics at the end of the Year 9 national tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. GCSE grades are also awarded points as are A-level grades and these are calculated in the same way although the number of points awarded for each grade is different, for example GCSE A\* is worth 8 points, grade A 7 points, grade B 6 points and so on until grade G which is worth 1 point.



*Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003*

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	76.3 (65.7)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	5.3 (14.9)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	145.8 (119.2)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

**Main school**

Attendance overall is **unsatisfactory**. Pupils have **good** attitudes to school. They behave **well** and have very good relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have positive views of the school and good attitudes to their work and activities.
- Despite good monitoring procedures, pupils’ attendance, including that of students in the sixth form, is below average.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good because there is a good and caring ethos throughout the school.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons, although a few are disruptive if they are not managed well.
- Relationships are very good throughout the whole school community and pupils respect each other’s values, cultures and traditions.

**Commentary**

6. Although pupils’ attendance is just below the national average, it is slowly improving because the school has developed good systems to monitor absences and to promote attendance. Many pupils attend very well but there are some who have frequent unauthorised absence, some of which is condoned by parents. Most pupils are punctual and this has improved since the last inspection.

*Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.1	School data:	3.8
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

7. The school makes sensible use of its sanctions and exclusions are used as a last resort when other support has not worked. Records show that as a result of improvements in managing and supporting pupils’ behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen since the beginning of this academic year.



## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	22	2	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	7		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	20	2	
Mixed – White and Black African	5		
Mixed – White and Asian	5		
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	1	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	149	8	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	211	9	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	44		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	13		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	138	18	
Black or Black British – African	38		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18		
Chinese	9		
Any other ethnic group	13		
No ethnic group recorded	0		

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

8. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and to school life. Most are well motivated with positive attitudes to learning and make genuine efforts to improve. They are interested in their work, enjoy discussions and try hard to concentrate. They listen carefully to the teacher and work responsibly in groups and pairs. Overall, pupils' interest and attention in nearly all lessons are at least good, although there are instances when some are slow to settle and are noisy and inattentive. This occurs when teachers are less confident in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils are positive about school life and the opportunities offered to them and particularly value the way in which 'the staff are there for us'.
9. Pupils' behaviour is good. Most are aware of the school's rules and the standards expected of them. They behave well around the school, in assemblies and when waiting patiently to go into the dining hall. Pupils say that they are happy at school and that most pupils get on well together. They report that any bullying is dealt with seriously and are particularly positive about the approachability and care of all staff. This means that they can always talk to someone about their concerns. Some parents have concerns about behaviour, but the inspection team did not find this to be an issue.
10. Pupils' personal development is good. This is due to the way in which staff promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through high quality teaching of citizenship. The school's expectation that pupils will act maturely, considerately and with care for others

promotes a very good atmosphere in the school where all pupils are valued and included whatever their background. The relationships that pupils have with each other and with staff are very good and they respect one another. Year group assemblies provide a focus for reflection and themes, such as making the most of time, help pupils translate their spiritual and moral reflection into daily reality. Pupils listen carefully to the relayed ‘thought for the day,’ although its impact is lessened by the poor quality broadcast. Pupils learn to be independent, to understand and help others and to play a part in the school community. They have responsibilities such as being prefects or members of the school council, where they learn to listen to and value others’ ideas.

### **The sixth form**

Attendance is **unsatisfactory** because it falls below expected levels. The attitudes of sixth-form students are **very good**. Their behaviour is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students’ behaviour is excellent.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- Students like being in the sixth form and have very good attitudes to their studies.

### **Commentary**

11. Students in the sixth form value the opportunities and flexible curriculum offered to them, which enable them to continue their education beyond statutory school age. They are particularly positive about the strong relationships that they have with their teachers and with each other, which help them to feel well supported and happy to come to school. Students’ behaviour is excellent and they are very good role models for the rest of the school. While most attend well, a few have poor attendance, which affects overall levels, and a few leave school during their time in the sixth form.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

### **Main school**

Overall the quality of education provided in the main school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The **excellent** support for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is not their first language has a very positive impact upon the learning for these pupils. Curriculum provision includes an increasing range of vocational courses to meet the wide range of pupils’ needs. Assessment and teacher comments help all pupils understand how they can improve

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning in the main school are **good**. The assessment of pupils’ work and the use made of assessment information are both **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is consistently good, well planned and structured teaching in most subjects.
- Very good relationships ensure that pupils feel confident when attempting difficult work.
- In some lessons the work is not presented in a way that extends the highest attaining pupils.
- The high priority given to good teaching has resulted in effective initiatives to support staff development.

- There is high quality support and teaching for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.
- Although marking is generally thorough, it does not always give students enough guidance on how to improve.

### **Commentary**

12. Teaching and learning are good in all subjects except citizenship, where they are very good, and design and technology, geography and music where they are satisfactory. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching and in nearly a third of lessons teaching and learning are very good or better. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.
13. In most lessons very good planning ensures a good structure for lessons with individual tasks building constructively on previous ones. A Year 7 English class looking at informative texts analysed and correctly annotated various examples and discussed the format and the range of ways of presenting information as a prelude to writing their own examples. In most lessons there is good use of questioning to involve pupils and ensure they are all learning at the expected rate.
14. Teaching for pupils who are identified as gifted and talented is good overall. Departments have identified the pupils in their subject and are now beginning to prepare specific programmes for them. The school is involved in a number of local initiatives that help to enhance learning for gifted and talented pupils. Teachers usually take careful account of the different abilities and previous learning of pupils to ensure equal opportunities for learning in all lessons. Where this is not successful, as in some geography lessons, it is because the needs of some of the highest attaining pupils are not fully met. Relationships in all lessons are good and set a positive ethos in which pupils are confident and willing to ask questions and discuss work they find difficult.
15. The Key Stage 3 strategy is an integral part of much teaching with the literacy strand successfully embedded. The numeracy and ICT strands, though developing, are not so well embedded. The teaching of literacy is particularly important in the context of the poor reading skills of many pupils when they enter the school. Most teachers adopt a corporate approach to this area with attention to key words, the use of writing frames and the setting of literacy objectives.
16. The school has recently managed to establish a more stable specialist staff with the result that teachers' subject knowledge is now very good and this has had a corresponding impact upon the quality of learning.
17. Teaching is good for pupils who have special educational needs, both in terms of specialist staff and allocation of time and support given by subject teachers. Teaching assistants are allocated, in the main, to English, mathematics and science classes to maximise their value to the pupils. They are a limited resource and this does occasionally create problems for classes where pupils are not supported. Subject teachers are well aware of their pupils' needs and targets and they take responsibility for their learning needs. Teachers plan suitable work, using individual educational plans to guide them, to ensure that pupils understand what is required of them and how they can progress. Teachers also make effective use of pupil groupings within their class.
18. For those pupils for whom English is not their home language a good range of strategies is employed to ensure they are not disadvantaged in lessons. Staff training is comprehensive and results in a thorough understanding of support strategies. In a Year 10 drama lesson where

pupils were discussing a scene in small groups, two pupils who had recently arrived in the country were encouraged to contribute in their home languages. The development of the collegiate partnership is ensuring the sharing of good practice across a range of schools for the benefit of pupils at Handsworth Wood. While the team leader does not overburden staff with paperwork, excellent systems are in place for close monitoring of pupils' progress, leaving in-class and withdrawal staff to concentrate on the successful day-to-day improvement of pupils' achievement.

19. Many of the good qualities exhibited in teaching throughout the school have been encouraged and consolidated by the professional development of staff. The school has also been an enthusiastic participant in a Key Stage 3 literacy partnership programme with King Edward VI Handsworth Girls' School whereby teachers from both schools observed each other's lessons. Advanced skills teachers from within the school and from outside have also played a positive role in ensuring that the quality of teaching is a priority for the school.

*Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 106 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (5%)	26 (24%)	41 (39%)	31 (29%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

20. Pupils' learning is well supported by assessment, both on a day-to-day basis and long term. Most subject departments have developed clear individual targets with pupils making good contributions via self-assessment. They track their progress closely using primary school data as the base line on entry to the school. Approximately 17 per cent of Year 7 pupils arrive without data and their reading ages and cognitive understanding are tested and evaluated by the departments. This problem is compounded because a considerable number of pupils start after the beginning of Year 7. The tracking of pupils' progress is generally well used and in citizenship, history and special educational needs it is very good. The thoroughness provides teachers with detailed information which is regularly reviewed to identify underachievement. In design and technology the use of assessment data is unsatisfactory. Some procedures are in place but are not good enough to help pupils to make progress. Although there are some variations in day-to-day marking, this has improved since the previous inspection. The marking is always positive, using praise as a motivator, and in some areas there are innovative ways informing the pupils how to improve. Marking in history is very thorough and identifies and praises positive achievement. Marking is also very good in the areas of special educational needs and citizenship. Here there is detailed assessment of work at the end of each unit and good self-evaluation by pupils.

**Sixth form**

The quality of teaching overall in the sixth form is **good**. It is very good in nearly half the lessons. It is very good in mathematics and English.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Teachers structure lessons very well to meet the needs of students.
- Small class size sometimes inhibits lively discussion and the sharing of views.

**Commentary**

21. The very good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to illustrate and effectively show by example aspects of the subject that students find difficult. Teachers also have very good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses and so are able to allocate time and support

as required. In a Year 12 GNVQ business education lesson the teacher enabled students to achieve well by using strategically targeted questions and extra information.

22. Most sixth form lessons are very well structured with objectives clearly set out at the start so that students fully understand expectations for the lesson. In addition, starter activities provide the teachers with useful information. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson, an opening discussion on mean and range allowed the teacher to clearly evaluate what knowledge and understanding had been retained from the GCSE course.
23. The very positive ethos in lessons and the very good relationships between teachers and students encourage students to ask questions to clarify meaning. Questioning by teachers also takes account of the different abilities of students and endeavours to involve them all equally.
24. Assessment of students' learning is good. Students understand clearly what standard they are working at and know their target grades and what they have to do to achieve them. Day-to-day marking in business education is very good with detailed responses to the students' work and encouraging and informative comments that help them to improve.
25. When class sizes are very small there are potential difficulties in ensuring that there are sufficient discussions and ranges of views. Teachers are aware of this and take care to provide adequate opportunities.
26. The school makes very good provision for students with special educational needs. The teaching provision for students of all abilities and for those whose home language is not English is good and ensures they all benefit equally from the courses they are following. In some cases students would not have the necessary entrance requirements to follow such courses in other institutions and their achievement reflects the good provision in teaching.

## **The curriculum**

Overall curriculum provision is **good**. The statutory curriculum is in place and is complemented by a range of vocational courses that provide a broad choice for pupils. Pupils benefit from a **good** range of enrichment activities. Resources and accommodation are **satisfactory** overall for the demands of the curriculum.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good range of GCSE and vocational subjects offered in Years 10 and 11, enhanced by partnership links with other schools and organisations.
- The very good opportunities and support available for individual pupils help them to achieve well.
- There is very good provision for personal and social education.
- Insufficient time prevents adequate coverage in some subjects and hinders progress and achievement.
- Recruitment and retention of teachers creates difficulties in maintaining consistency within the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

27. The governors and headteacher have developed a broad curriculum that is well planned and motivating. It reflects the inclusive nature of the school and provides very good opportunities for developing pupils' personal and life skills through a very good personal and social education programme. There are innovative and exciting links with schools, colleges and

community organisations that have led to enhanced learning and achievement for individual pupils and increased the number of pupils remaining in full-time education post 16. However, in Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient time to adequately cover the short course syllabus in religious education. The way in which time is allocated to different areas of design and technology creates problems in covering what needs to be taught.

28. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is supported well through the school's planning based on their individual needs. A targeted and well-monitored programme of support or withdrawal is provided for those who require it. The very well trained learning support teachers and assistants play a key role in supporting pupils' learning and are well equipped to help pupils' progress. Not only do they support pupils with special educational needs, they work very well in partnership with class teachers to provide greater opportunities for all students. All pupils therefore have full access to the curriculum and pupils who speak English as an additional language receive very good support. Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities that have a positive effect on progress and achievement.
29. The curriculum for pupils identified by the school as gifted and talented is satisfactory and is being developed to provide a wider range of activities suitable to their needs.
30. The school has worked hard to recruit and retain sufficient teaching and support staff. Staffing is now good and meets the demands of the curriculum and pupils' learning. The match of teachers is further enhanced through the work of advanced skills teachers. The school has very good partnership links that give access to other specialist staff.
31. Overall accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Resources in many subjects, including mathematics, art and design, history and religious education, are good. Since the previous inspection the school has relocated to different accommodation at the rear of the school site that has solved many of the accommodation issues highlighted at the previous inspection. The present library facility, however, is inadequate for the number of pupils and the diversity of the curriculum. It is too small for large numbers of pupils to use at any one time and this limits opportunities for pupils to do independent research and study. The improvement in both accommodation and resources is having a positive impact on the attitudes of pupils and their achievement. However the disused and boarded-up accommodation at the entrance to the school site presents a depressing and uninviting approach to the school that is out of character.

## **Sixth form**

Overall the curriculum provision in the sixth form is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The open entry policy provides good opportunities for all students to achieve.
- A limited range of courses can be offered each year.
- Work-related provision is good.

### **Commentary**

32. The school offers a good curriculum responding very well to the needs of students. It is flexible enough to cater effectively for them and to admit students of all abilities, offering them appropriate opportunities to achieve. Although narrow, the range of A-level, AS, GNVQ courses offered, together with complementary skills-based courses, is a very good match to the needs of the students. Even though the sixth form is small, enrichment through work-related programmes and links with the community are good and have a positive effect on students'

preparation for further education and training. Low numbers and the variability of the intake each year pose difficulties in providing continuity of courses. Students have access to a study area and common room as well as good access to computers to support their learning.

### Care, guidance and support

The provision to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. They are provided with **good** quality support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard to help and care for pupils of all backgrounds.
- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with staff.
- Pupils and parents are very positive about the pastoral care provided.
- There is high quality support for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is not their home language.
- The monitoring of health and safety is good, although there are continuing concerns about the school's driveway and access.

### Commentary

33. Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened the provision that it makes for pupils' care and welfare. This is now good because, under the new leadership of the assistant headteacher, procedures, recording and monitoring of all elements of pupils' welfare are more formal and well structured. An example of the impact of this is the reduction in the number of exclusions.
34. There is very good awareness of procedures for child protection and for supporting pupils in public care. The school has good links with a range of outside support agencies and uses these effectively to provide support for pupils and families who are experiencing difficulties. The good pastoral support system ensures that all pupils' progress and development is monitored. This is achieved through form and year group teachers and senior staff responsible for pupils' welfare. Pupils are provided with sound advice and guidance when making choices about future careers or deciding on appropriate sixth-form education.
35. There is a supportive and caring atmosphere in which all pupils are valued equally and in which pupils and staff get on very well with each other. Pupils say that staff care for them, are easy to speak to and take time to explain things that they do not understand. They say that they can always ask for extra help without any problem and that their strong relationships with teachers makes them want to achieve well. Pupils are clear that their views are valued and heard and that staff listen to them very well. Many pupils join the school other than in Year 7 and they say how welcome they are made to feel and how well staff have helped them to settle in. Parents also commented on this and were very sure that teachers support their daughters' learning and help them to achieve well.
36. The school promotes the principle of supporting the whole child, whatever the specific need. There is close liaison, under the leadership of an assistant head, between the special educational needs department and those providing support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Every pupil new to the school is assessed and their learning needs identified. The quality of support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language is of a very high standard both in class and in withdrawal sessions. This ensures that these learners have the same access to their work as the rest of the pupils and are able to make

progress at a similar rate. New arrivals to the school and to the country feel particularly well supported due to the extremely efficient systems of identification, support and monitoring they receive. The pupils respond extremely well and are appreciative of the support given by both the learning assistants and the subject teachers. They rightly feel that staff have an excellent understanding of their needs and plan and adapt work accordingly so that tasks are tailored to suit and extend individual levels of ability. This excellent knowledge of pupils and their needs is a strength of the school.

37. The school makes good provision for health and safety. Policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of pupils and staff are regularly reviewed. The school is acutely aware of the hazardous access to the school and the deteriorating building at the front of the school site. It carefully monitors and records the situation for pupils' safety, although it has been frustrated in its attempts to secure improvements to the pathway.

### **The sixth form**

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth-form students is **good**. The school values students' views and responds to them **well**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The small classes enable highly individual and personal support.
- Teachers and the head of sixth form know their students' needs well.
- Students value the support and advice they receive.

### **Commentary**

38. The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to students in the sixth form is good. Students are positive about the sixth form. They say that they feel well supported both academically and personally by their teachers and that they are given good guidance on career and work options after they leave school. They appreciate the small classes where their views are heard and where they are able to discuss their individual concerns.
39. Many of the sixth-form students have special educational needs and the school makes very good provision for them with a range of appropriate courses.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

There are **satisfactory** links with parents, who are satisfied with what the school has to offer. There are **very good** links with other schools and colleges. **Very good** use is made of the wider community and excellent partnerships outside the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are satisfied with the school and feel it communicates well with them.
- Although improved, there is still some inconsistency in the quality of reporting to parents.
- The school uses every opportunity to develop its very good links with the community.
- There are very good educational links with other schools and other institutions.

### **Commentary**

40. The school has satisfactory links with parents and most are pleased with the education provided for their daughters, particularly the way in which it welcomes families from all cultures in the school. The school tries to encourage them to be more involved in their children's education and some parents respond well to this by helping with homework, attending reviews and



meetings and by good representation on the governing body. The majority, however, continue to be 'supportive but passive' as reported previously.

41. Parents are pleased with the school's expectations of their children and feel that, as a result, they make good progress. Most feel that the school is approachable and are pleased with the informal communication relating to their daughters' work and behaviour. A minority have concerns about pupils' behaviour and the way in which the school keeps them informed about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school but also find that pupils' behaviour is well managed and has shown recent improvement. They find that the school provides parents with a satisfactory range of information and encourages them to discuss their children's progress at regular intervals. Some improvement has been made to end-of-year reports since the previous inspection so that parents are given information which is easily understood. In some subjects, however, information is very limited and does not always indicate what pupils need to do to improve.
42. The school makes very good use of its community links and partnerships with other schools and colleges. These enrich the curriculum for pupils and students, provide staff with opportunities to share and develop expertise and raise the school's status in the local community. It is pro-active in developing these links to provide pupils with a wide range of interesting learning experiences. For example, the performing arts faculty makes extensive use of cultural facilities available in Birmingham to introduce pupils to a variety of music, dance and theatre. Very good links with community groups such as Shades of Black and the UK Asian Women's Centre ensure that pupils have access to experiences relevant to their own cultures. Through its collegiate arrangements, pupils have very good access to specialist teaching and a broad curriculum, including work-related learning experiences such as childcare, which is well suited to their individual needs.
43. The school is effectively involved in a number of local and national initiatives to enhance provision for gifted and talented pupils.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good** and that of the senior team and most subject managers is **good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The energy and vision of the headteacher inspire pupils and all school staff to work as an effective team.
- The headteacher is well supported by an effective senior team who work well together and have complementary strengths that are deployed to good effect.
- The school makes effective use of self-evaluation to monitor its performance and set targets for improvement.
- Strategic planning is thorough and involves all stakeholders.
- The arrangements for performance management, induction and continuing professional development are very good.
- The governors are very committed to the school and have a clear vision of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The governors do not as yet fully challenge all aspects of the school's work.

### Commentary

44. The headteacher is passionate about his school and believes strongly that 'every child matters'. The staff in the school hold this view. Staff are committed to providing a high quality education for all pupils, which includes raising achievement and standards, as well as encouraging their personal development.
45. The quality of planning to achieve the vision is thorough. There is wide consultation with all staff, teaching and non-teaching. The three-year development plan focuses on all areas of the life of the school and progress is monitored regularly. The very large numbers of targets are appropriate but the presentation of the plan is too complex. This makes it difficult to share with governors or use as a monitoring tool to track progress. The arrangements for self-evaluation by the headteacher and key staff are very good. It includes the good use of data as well as the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. The school also regularly uses outside consultants from the LEA to corroborate its judgments. Appropriate action is taken following monitoring. For example, the school has successful arrangements to help teachers who need support in their classrooms.
46. Communications within the school are good and staff are well supported by the senior team. The school functions very effectively as a calm and orderly community. With the exception of design and technology, all middle managers are now judged to be satisfactory or better. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The leadership and management of support for pupils for whom English is not their first language, citizenship and support for pupils with special educational needs is judged to be excellent.
47. There are very good arrangements for the induction of new staff and for teachers' continuing professional development. The ideas generated through professional development courses are shared with all staff. Where appropriate they are then used to improve practice in the classroom. A number of valuable activities take place within the local partnership of schools when schools share good practice and offer mutual support. Very good use is made of advanced skills teachers (ASTs). There is also a good programme for new trainee teachers. This is through the school's involvement in initial teacher training as a member of the Titan

Partnership. Several trainees have subsequently taken up posts within the school. This has been a great benefit to the school in assisting with the staff recruitment.

48. There are good arrangements for the financial management of the school. Budgets are carefully set and controlled and there are very good arrangements to ensure that departments do not overspend. The principles of best value are understood and applied. The school gives good value for money.
49. The overall quality of governance is good. Governors share the vision of the headteacher and are committed to the school's development. They have worked hard to support the school, but have not always been able to challenge the school about its performance. This is not so with the chair of finance who is knowledgeable about the way the committee works and how they ensure that the school provides good value for money.
50. Leadership and management of special educational needs are excellent. The special educational needs co-ordinator has created, and leads, a very effective team of teachers and support staff who show a very high level of commitment to the school and its students. Individual education plans are well produced and are fully in place with relevant and achievable targets that support learning very well. The department's documentation, assessment, recording, target setting and monitoring procedures are models of good practice. All legal procedures are in place and the school's annual report to parents now includes information on special educational needs.
51. Leadership and management of provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented is satisfactory. The school has a clear view of what needs to be done and is now working to enhance the provision across the whole range of its activities.
52. The leadership and management of support for pupils who have English as an additional language are excellent. Both those pupils who are at an early stage of English acquisition and more fluent learners are extremely well catered for. The area manager has a very clear vision for future developments and provides inspirational leadership for his team. This in turn leads to very good support and ensures a coherent approach across the school towards pupils who need language support. Clearly organised priorities for budgeting and spending are based directly upon pupil need and systems are flexible in order to take into account every aspect of support.
53. The school has identified a number of barriers to overcome in order to raise standards. There is a very high proportion of pupils whose home language is not English. As a result, all staff focus on improving literacy skills as pupils work through the school. This has led to significant improvements in raising pupils' levels of literacy skills.
54. A significant number of pupils start or leave the school during the school year, which does affect their progress and standards achieved. The recruitment and retention of good teachers has been an issue in the past, although the situation is currently much improved. Many pupils have low expectations of what they can achieve and a significant number have special educational needs. The school is aware of all these issues and has developed a number of effective strategies to address them. As a result, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## **Financial information**

*Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,165,885
Total expenditure	2,124,152
Expenditure per pupil	3,248

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	171,235
Balance carried forward to the next	43,364

## **The sixth form**

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **good**. Governance of the sixth form is also **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good leadership and management that ensure all students are effectively supported.
- The excellent leadership and management of learning and language support.

### **Commentary**

55. The head of sixth form has a clear view of the diverse needs of students and provides strong support and guidance for students. The small size of the sixth form enables this to be at a very individual level. Leadership and management of key staff who provide both academic and vocational courses are good. There is excellent management of learning and language support, which helps all students achieve, particularly those with special educational needs. The governors are well informed and supportive of the unique character of the sixth form and the ways in which the school uses time and resources to meet students' needs.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision for work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Partnership links are being effectively developed to support work-related learning.
- A range of courses is provided that meets the wide ability range well.
- Pupils are achieving well.

### **Commentary**

56. The school is actively developing its range of vocational and work-related courses both in the main school and in the sixth form. Currently subject co-ordinators oversee vocational courses in their areas. The deputy headteacher has a good overview of the total vocational programme but recognises that, as vocational courses develop, a review of this situation will be needed.

57. Vocational courses and activities in Years 10 and 11 are linked to subjects of the curriculum. Many of the courses are in the early stages of development but are meeting the needs of pupils well in terms of interest and ability. Pupils are achieving well. Through the school's very good partnership links a relevant programme of work placements and visits complements vocational lessons in school. Pupils also benefit from a full work experience programme in Years 10 and 11.

58. In the sixth form partnership links enable around 12 students to follow a business administration course through a work placement one day per week. This is in addition to other work experience placements that are linked to vocational courses. The school is also imaginative in providing work-related courses, such as on 'hair and beauty' and textiles, to meet the specific needs and interests of its students, particularly those with special educational needs.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in Year 9 tests show a great improvement on previous years.
- Standards on attainment in GCSE English are well below average.
- There is very good leadership and management of the department.
- Lessons are very well planned and structured.
- There is good provision of equal opportunities for all pupils in lessons.
- Marking does not consistently give guidance on how to improve.
- Fiction stock in the library is insufficient.

##### **Commentary**

59. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 were very high in comparison with national averages and averages for similar schools. This was a dramatic improvement upon results in previous years. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection was below the national average. GCSE English language and literature results in 2003 were below the national average. Work seen during the inspection reflected these lower than average standards of attainment. Even so results in English language showed a good improvement over the previous year and in English literature the overall trend since the previous inspection has been one of marked improvement.
60. Achievement of pupils overall is good. Reading ages of pupils on entry to the school have been generally very low and thus the standards attained represent good progress. In speaking and listening by Year 9, pupils listen attentively and discuss well. By Year 11 the highest attaining pupils use stress and expression to good effect, although the weaker pupils do not always use them. In reading by Year 9 all but the lowest attaining pupils are able to identify the main points in narrative and the significant features of main characters effectively, whilst the highest attaining pupils look for implied meaning. By Year 11, the most accomplished readers also recognise literary techniques well and justify opinions with relevant quotations. They are able to understand and analyse Shakespeare texts and relate them to the time in which they were written. In writing by Year 9, the major difference between the weakest and the strongest pupils is the control over sentence structure. Highest attaining pupils by Year 11 are able to write in a wide variety of styles using techniques and devices encountered in their reading. Weaker pupils struggle to adjust their writing according to purpose.
61. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the department. Teachers' planning is very good and results in well-structured lessons where pupils undertake a number of productive activities. Thus, a Year 7 class analysed a text together then discussed the need for different ways of presenting information before undertaking informative writing of their own. In most lessons, good well-structured activities helped pupils to understand how to develop their ideas more clearly. Lively questioning is usually used to involve and interest all pupils. In a Year 10 lesson on King Lear, a very demanding text for the pupils, the quality of questioning reinforced previous learning but also enabled pupils systematically to increase their

own understanding of main characters in the play. Within lessons, good subject knowledge allows teachers to answer questions from pupils clearly and bring in other references to clarify and illustrate difficult points. A central feature of teaching in the department is the explicit intention to include all pupils as fully as possible. This is done in a very supportive and positive atmosphere. Marking and assessment of work is also positive in tone and detailed. There is, however, variation in the extent to which specific guidance on how to improve is given with the result that pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve. There is also some variation on how closely homework builds on work in lessons.

62. As a result of the good teaching they receive, the vast majority of pupils are well motivated in lessons. They are keen to participate in oral work and collaborate well on a variety of tasks.
63. Very good leadership and management of a mainly new and relatively inexperienced department have produced the strengths mentioned above. They have developed sensibly thought out strategies to improve standards in Year 9. The department now works from good schemes of work written by the teachers and a modular approach in Year 10 allows teachers to teach their strongest areas of the syllabus. There is a very positive ethos within the department and a good degree of shared aims in teaching.
64. The department contributes well to pupils' understanding of citizenship and a range of social, moral and cultural issues are considered as an integral part of the curriculum. There is a particularly effective focus on aspects such as the persuasive language of the media. A good range of texts is read in lessons but the fiction stock in the library is inadequate to provide sufficient wider reading opportunities.
65. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in attainment, quality of teaching and addressing particular weaknesses in pupils' writing in Years 7 to 9.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

66. Standards of literacy are low and a substantial number of pupils enter the school with low reading ages. The school has rightly placed great emphasis on literacy as the key to improving learning across the curriculum.
67. Overall, the teaching of literacy is good. The school makes good provision for developing pupils' language and literacy skills across a range of subjects. The Key Stage 3 literacy strategy training has provided a focus on non-narrative writing that is utilised effectively in most subjects. The use of key words to develop subject vocabulary is standard in most lessons and good use of writing frames occurs across the curriculum. The literacy co-ordinator reviews progress and plans future priorities with all faculties and provides good guidance through the setting of weekly cross-curricular literacy targets.
68. Overall, the teaching of literacy is good. There is very coherent planning for opportunities to develop literacy in history with, for example, good use of writing poetry to extend pupils' understanding of conditions in the First World War. Effective use is made of literacy wall displays in mathematics and in science teachers regularly discuss word roots with pupils. The consistency with which language and literacy issues are addressed supports learning very well for all pupils, including the many who enter the school with low reading ages.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision for modern European and community languages is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching from a stable staff is bringing about an improvement in standards.
- Clear lesson planning and structure ensures good progress, although the endings of lessons need to be more constructive.
- Teachers make very good uses of resources to present and consolidate language but information technology remains an area for development.



## Commentary

69. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 study French and some learners continue into Years 10 and 11 of which some opt for either Urdu or Panjabi at this stage.
70. Standards in French in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national expectations but are well below national averages at GCSE level. Urdu was offered for external examination in 2003 and the overall pass rate was above the national average. Although the proportion reaching the higher grades (grade C or above) was below average overall, three pupils achieved an A grade and one an A\* representing very good achievement by these pupils. Although in Panjabi standards were below national standards overall, the school entered a very large number of candidates and their average point score was close to the national average. Results and numbers of pupils in all three languages have been too variable to comment upon any clear trends over recent years. However, due to more recent improvement in the department's situation and the ability of the girls, the achievement of girls in languages is now good.
71. This clear recent improvement is due to a large degree to the very good teaching in all three languages. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and pass this on to learners by very effective modelling and use of the language in class, which means that pupils develop good pronunciation and confidence. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the needs of their pupils and address this by tailoring work to suit and extend language learners of all abilities and stages. They provide detailed and clear feedback so that pupils know exactly what to do in order to improve their work. Very thorough planning by teachers results in clear progression from basic vocabulary through to more complex structures in all skill areas. The skilful use of resources and the variety and pace of activities in lessons maintain learners' interest and keep them motivated. Where teaching is less successful, there is too much English spoken so that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to become familiar with the other language. The summing-up at the end of the lessons needs to emphasise the positives as well as the difficulties in order to give pupils a further sense of achievement and pride in their work. The use of information and communication technology to support learning and written work is underdeveloped in the department and the quality of reports also needs further improvement.
72. The department is well led and managed by the team leader who has turned the department around since her appointment after the last inspection. She has a clear vision and direction for further developments and a good understanding of what still needs to be done to improve standards. Clear priorities and areas targeted for development have brought about improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9 which are set to work their way through into Years 10 and 11.
73. A strong feature of the department is the fact that pupils are taught by fluent or first language speakers which gives them ideal models on which to base their own work. All the staff ensure that other cultures are valued through their languages and pupils are entitled to take GCSE examinations in the language they speak at home in addition to the ones taught in school. The contribution the department makes to pupils' literacy skills is very positive.
74. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved, there is a stable and well-qualified group of teachers and the quality of planning, teaching and resources is much better.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good quality teaching by the core staff who support all pupils, particularly those for whom English is not their home language and those who have special educational needs.
- The standards in Year 9 tests and at GCSE are well below average, although there has been a gradual improvement over the last four years.
- The challenge for the more able in some groups is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the faculty is very good and provides clear strategies for improvement.
- Marking is regular but does not ensure that pupils know how to improve.

### Commentary

75. In 2003, standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 were well below the national averages. At the end of Year 9 pupils' results are well below those of similar schools. At the start of Year 7 pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge are poor but they make good progress in their lessons during their time in school. Achievement in lessons for pupils is good overall. Those who do not have English as their home language or have special educational needs achieve equally well. The department have recognised that the successful completion of coursework and the numbers of pupils who join the school during the academic year have been issues that have impacted on results at the end of Year 11. They are now focussing effectively on ways to minimise these difficulties.
76. Teaching is good overall. The majority of teaching is good and sometimes very good. The good achievement of pupils in lessons is a result of effective teaching and learning in classrooms. Teachers are hard working and committed to the success and welfare of their pupils. As a result pupils are interested in their mathematics and their behaviour is good. The relationships created by staff are good and encourage pupils to seek help when needed. Teachers use the considerable amount of data they have about their pupils well and this helps improve the standards they achieve. Planning is very good, as is the subject knowledge of the core teachers. Most use a variety of appropriate activities that motivate and develop understanding. However, in some lessons they do not provide enough activities to enable the higher attaining pupils to make sufficient progress. Occasionally question and answer techniques are not used well to improve pupils' confidence and their ability to explain their answers and their thinking. Teachers are good at helping pupils understand and use mathematical terms. In the most effective lessons teachers make sure that pupils are confident in reading and understanding the meaning of questions. All teachers ensure that their pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and what they should achieve by the end of it. Sometimes, however, the final part of the lesson is not always well used for pupils and teachers to check what has been learned. The practice of pupils analysing how well they have done in their examinations and what they need to improve is good. It enables them to set appropriate targets. Marking is completed regularly but pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to improve.
77. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The relatively new head of faculty has provided direction and enthusiasm. He is involved in a number of project groups in the partnership with local schools. These include liaison with primary schools as well as trialling ways to improve the quality of marking. He monitors the work of the department and new developments well. The new scheme of work provides a good basis for the department to add ideas and resources. Opportunities for information and communication technology are included but more development is needed to ensure that this work is extended further. Good

revision strategies are in place in Year 11 but now need extending throughout the year to improve the confidence of pupils. Overall progress since the previous inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

78. The standards of mathematical competence are often insufficient for pupils to use their skills in other subjects, particularly in their early years in the school. Whole-school training has taken place with staff but the emphasis in the school is on literacy. There are, however, examples of good numeracy work. In a French lesson attention was paid to reinforcing number, money and quantity. In science pupils of all abilities have a variety of opportunities to measure accurately, use and display data and calculate percentages. Overall pupils' mathematical development in all areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan very well to suit the needs of all pupils.
- Standards are not high enough in national tests at the end of Year 9 or in terms of results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Leadership is good.
- There are good strategies to improve literacy.
- The analysis and evaluation strands of the practical coursework are underdeveloped.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

### **Commentary**

79. Results for pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very low in comparison to the national average. They have improved slowly since the previous inspection, but are below similar schools based on pupils' earlier attainment when in Year 6.
80. In 2003 GCSE results were well below the national average. They have fluctuated slightly in recent years, but have improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher A\* and A grades is increasing.
81. Standards in the current Year 9 are below national expectations. This represents good achievement for the majority of pupils who entered the school with standards that were well below average. This includes pupils with special educational needs and particularly those pupils where English is not the language spoken at home. Good strategies are used so that pupils of all abilities show increasingly good literacy skills, which support their understanding of science. This was demonstrated in a Year 7 class where pupils with English as a second language could confidently discuss how raising temperature caused substances to dissolve more quickly because the teacher broke words down into syllables to help them.
82. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average. This represents good achievement for most pupils who entered the school with standards, which were significantly below average. This includes pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The levels achieved in practical coursework are satisfactory in the planning and observation strands, but pupils are less confident to analyse and evaluate unless supported by teachers. This takes

away an opportunity for independent learning. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good, offering a range of courses to suit all abilities and a large number of pupils make good progress in the relatively new vocational science course.

83. Teaching is good with some very good features. Teachers share innovative ideas and this helps their planning. The very good planning results in pupils experiencing a wide range of learning strategies. This, coupled with the very good pace of the lessons, allows them to learn more quickly. Assessment procedures are good and areas of underachievement have been identified in pupils allowing the teachers to give them extra support.
84. Leadership and management of science are good. The head of faculty has welded together an effective team of teachers who share good practice. Observation and evaluation of lessons is helping to raise standards by identifying areas where teaching may be improved, therefore improving learning. The department is making an effective contribution to school goals.
85. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. There is strong use of information and communication technology to support practical work. There are more textbooks in the department, but insufficient books in the library prevent independent study.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership and management are raising standards.
- Standards, though improving, are below average.
- Accommodation in the main computer rooms is unsatisfactory and pupils have to share equipment.
- Achievement is good because of the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- Individual support by teachers helps pupils to learn.
- The new ICT curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Commentary**

86. At the end of Year 9 standards are below average. At the end of Year 11 in 2003 standards in GCSE were well below average and lower than in the previous year. Results of the more able pupils taking GNVQ at intermediate level are above average. Standards have been affected by staffing difficulties that have now been resolved.
87. Pupils achieve better than expected for their ability in Years 7, 8 and 9 with the good support and knowledge of their teachers, although achievement is limited when pupils work in pairs in large classes. Good behaviour, attitudes and co-operation between pupils help them achieve well. A group of Year 9 pupils achieved very well in developing skills through constructing web pages while other pupils have made a good start in developing the skills needed for desk top publishing.
88. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 and above expectations for the pupils who started the school with low attainment. Special educational needs pupils in Year 11 achieve better than expected using 'Paint' software well to make simple drawings. GNVQ coursework in Year 11 shows high achievement with multimedia software, and spreadsheets and databases for handling information. GNVQ pupils visit the

Birmingham City Learning Centre regularly to use up-to-date computers and this has a significant impact on their achievement.

89. Although teaching overall is good, it ranges from satisfactory to excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The best teaching motivates pupils and this enhances learning. Pupils' ability is tested on entry to the school and teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' ability to target specific practical help where it is most needed. In Years 7, 8 and 9 resources are used well to help pupils work independently after teaching demonstration and guidance. Homework books contain worksheets that are used well by the more able pupils to prepare for future lessons and to reflect on how they completed practical tasks, for example to draft an initial design for a document using the skills acquired in class. There is insufficient differentiation of written tasks with the result that lower ability pupils do not always complete their written or practical work. Work is marked regularly but there is inconsistent use of guidance to help pupils improve in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is difficult for teachers to monitor work and to assess individual pupil performance when computers are shared.
90. Leadership and management are very good. Resources published for the national ICT Key Stage 3 strategy are modified to meet the needs of pupils. The new challenges help raise standards. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the diverse needs of pupils. There are good opportunities for teachers to share good practice. For example, team teaching between the head of department and less experienced and non-specialist teachers has a positive impact on standards, as does the planned programme of in-service training for teachers of other subject areas. The school benefits from the experience of the technical team who work well to maintain equipment and rationalise the different operating systems currently in use.
91. There has been significant investment into computer hardware. The number of computers is above average, and the range of electronic resources is good. During the inspection several computer rooms were not used, whilst pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 shared computers in their lessons.
92. Accommodation in some specialist ICT teaching rooms is unsatisfactory. The tables for housing computers are not adequate, and seating arrangements are cramped, especially when computers are shared. There is not enough working space away from the computers for pupils to plan and reflect on their work individually. These factors have a negative effect on learning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

93. ICT is planned into most subject schemes of work as a tool to support learning. ICT is used well in science, history, business education and health and social care, but is under-developed in design and technology, geography, physical education, mathematics, art and design, and in music where there is a lack of appropriate hardware and software.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to work.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership and management of the subject have improved.

### **Commentary**

94. 2003 GCSE results were well below the national average for girls' schools and below those for most other subjects in the school. As a result of pupils' disaffection, none had opted to study GCSE geography for four years before this group of pupils.
95. Standards are below average both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Improvements in teaching methods have led to a steady rise in standards. Pupils' literacy development is low on entry and this affects standards. Standards have also been adversely affected by the long-term absence of a teacher. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, but higher attaining pupils do not always reach their maximum potential because teaching methods do not focus well enough on the range of skills they need. The school library does not provide an adequate resource for pupils to carry out individual research. There are no significant differences in attainment across the minority ethnic groups in the school.
96. By the end of Year 9, a majority of pupils acquire a satisfactory geographical vocabulary and this is extended in Years 10 and 11. There is a strong emphasis on gaining factual knowledge throughout all four years. There is limited evidence of pupils developing the skills of interpretation and investigation that are important to pupils if they are to gain the higher levels at GCSE.
97. There is a focus in lessons on key vocabulary and on spelling and grammar in pupils' written work. As a result, geography makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. The subject's contribution to numeracy development is satisfactory. The use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
98. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are very well planned and managed. As a result, no time is wasted and the pace of lessons is brisk. Teachers have good class control that is achieved without fuss and without being rude or demeaning to pupils. Pupils are well behaved and show good attitudes to work so that the working atmosphere in lessons is nearly always relaxed and businesslike. Relevant homework is regularly set. Pupils' work is marked and regularly corrected. The use of marking to show pupils how they can improve their work is under developed. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but the data provided needs to be better used to set targets both for the subject and for individual pupils.
99. Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to citizenship and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Teachers have worked hard to improve the provision since the previous inspection and the subject has made good progress since that time.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the department is very good and provides a clear strategy and structure for continued improvement.
- Although standards are below national expectations, the achievement and progress of pupils is good.
- A variety of effective teaching methods is used to ensure pupils' learning is good.
- There are effective strategies for improving pupils' literacy skills.
- There are effective assessment procedures to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and relationships are very good.

### **Commentary**

100. Standards in history on entry to the school are well below average. By the end of Year 9 standards are below national expectations and below that for all girls nationally. However, given the attainment when they join the school, this represents good progress and achievement. Pupils acquire historical skills rapidly in Year 7 and soon develop a clear understanding of how to use historical sources. GCSE results are consistently amongst the best in the school and in 2002 they exceeded the national average with 80 per cent of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C. Results in 2003, however, dropped to below that for girls nationally. This was in part because of a weaker cohort of pupils and a number who joined the school mid-way through the course. By the end of Year 11 the majority of pupils are able to demonstrate their understanding of historical change and recognise that there are different ways of interpreting the past. This was seen in some very impressive course work assignments on the Irish Question. Overall achievement for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not the home language, is good. This is because of the high standard of teaching and the department's effective development of pupils' writing and speaking skills.
101. Teaching is good overall and in many lessons it is very good or excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and work hard to make the subject relevant and interesting. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were intrigued to discover that the local maternity hospital, where many of them were born, was originally a workhouse for the poor. This engaged them sufficiently to find out more about the conditions of the poor in the Victorian times. Expectations of pupils are high, both for the quality of work and behaviour. Planning of work is very good. A range of different teaching strategies is effectively used to motivate pupils and to develop their learning skills. They behave well and relationships in the classroom are good. Good use is now made of information and communication technology, which was an issue in the previous inspection. This helps both to motivate pupils and develop more independent research skills. Pupils are regularly given relevant websites to look at and make good use of the department's own site. They also have the facility to e-mail the head of department to seek help with homework or coursework assignments. This helps them improve the quality of their work.
102. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is a very good role model and gives very good support to his colleagues. He has developed very effective monitoring and evaluation strategies to check the department's effectiveness and makes good use of assessment information to set targets for improvement. There is a good range of resources in the department, although the library provision is unsatisfactory. There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below national expectations.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Teachers plan lessons very effectively and use a range of methods to encourage pupils to learn.
- More time is needed to deliver short course GCSE if standards are to improve.
- There is good support for those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their home language.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not sufficiently help pupils identify strengths and weaknesses.

## **Commentary**

103. Standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 9 are below the expectations identified in the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Year 11 the picture is the same and GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average. However, pupils arrive in the school having had a range of different experiences of religious education in their primary schools. They generally have only limited knowledge and understanding of different religions and very low literacy skills. They make good progress during Years 7 to 9 and the quality of teaching ensures that overall achievement is good. GCSE results for the last few years, although below the national average for girls, have been significantly higher than the average in pupils' other subjects. Results have been variable, rising to very high standards compared with national figures to well below performance in 2003. The 2003 results are in part due to a different ability range of pupils opting for religious education and changes in the school's option system.
104. Overall teaching is good and at times very good. Teachers are good ambassadors for their subject and they show deep commitment to the pupils. This leads to good relationships where pupils feel challenged but confident to seek advice when necessary. Lessons are very well planned. They focus on improving pupils' knowledge and skills in religious education as well as developing their literacy skills and awareness of citizenship. Teachers have high expectations both in terms of behaviour and work. Pupils recognise this and they respond positively. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were able to identify and discuss the importance of commitment in marriage and the difference between loving somebody and being 'in love'. Pupils make good gains in learning and are prepared to share opinions whilst respecting the views of others. Marking is unsatisfactory overall. Whilst there is some good individual practice, there is a lack of consistency. Often it does not provide guidance on how well pupils are doing or how they might improve. The same is true for the quality of reports to parents.
105. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is highly motivated and is very supportive of her colleagues. She is also responsive to new ideas if they benefit the learning of pupils. For example, she is currently working with other partnership schools to improve provision for gifted and talented pupils in religious education. Assessment is good and enables careful monitoring of individual pupils' progress. There are good opportunities for reflection within lessons and there is a strong emphasis on spiritual, moral and social education. A good lesson was seen on abortion where the teacher sensitively led a discussion on the sanctity of life. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection and has the capacity for further improvement. However, currently there is insufficient time to deliver the short GCSE course in religious education and this is a significant factor in the poor results.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**



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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards and achievement by the end of Year 9 are unsatisfactory.
- Planning in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not effectively build on previous experiences.
- Teaching of literacy skills is good.
- Pupils are well supported by teachers to help them make progress.
- ICT in Years 7 to 11 is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

106. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were well below average. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were also well below expectations. Pupils achieve higher standards in textiles than in other material areas. This difference is reflected in the work seen in lessons.
107. Pupils enter Year 7 with low and variable skills, knowledge and understanding in this curriculum area. The planning and organisation of what is to be taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory. Imbalances in time allocated to material areas results in insufficient coverage of the subject. Planning does not build sufficiently on earlier learning, which results in unsatisfactory achievement. However, in practical work pupils competently select the right tools and equipment to make a range of satisfactory products.
108. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory with good achievement in textiles. Pupils' understanding about the design and making processes improves. They acquire a greater depth of knowledge in the material area they have chosen to study, enabling them to achieve better standards than predicted. Use of language and technical vocabulary is weak and affects the standard of analysis and evaluation in written coursework. Access to and use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not develop the skills required in computer-aided design and manufacture, which affects the standard of their coursework, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
109. Teaching is satisfactory with examples of good teaching in textiles. Lessons are effectively planned so that pupils understand what is expected from them during the lesson. Teachers manage behaviour well, ensuring that practical lessons are safe. Pupils are interested and apply themselves well to practical work. The good individual support they receive from teachers enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, in some lessons the pace and activities lack sufficient challenge to develop the ability of higher attaining pupils. Even though pupils' literacy skills are weak, teaching consistently helps them develop their language and listening skills by encouraging them to extend their use and understanding of technical words.
110. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There has been a period of disruption because of staffing difficulties that has hampered planning and improvements. The senior managers have put strategies in place to deal with the situation. A new head of department starts in April and the staffing situation has stabilised. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory with insufficient progress to improve the quality of provision in order to raise standards and achievement.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

## **Drama**

111. Drama was sampled in one Year 8 and one Year 10 lesson. Teaching was very good in one lesson and excellent in the other. Pupils achieve very well. They collaborate and discuss issues enthusiastically and make decisions based upon the discussions. They demonstrate good understanding of dramatic conventions and terminology. The increasing number of students opting to follow the subject at GCSE is an indication of its popularity. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities further enhances pupils' experience of the subject and the theatre.

## **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good quality teaching and planning is having a good impact on progress and achievement throughout all years.
- There are good relationships between students and staff, with the needs of the individual given a high priority.
- Good resources in terms of quality, variety and quantity.
- The use of assessment is not yet a fully integral part of teaching and learning.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

112. Standards in GCSE examinations are close to the national average and have improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils do very well in art in comparison to their achievement in their other subjects.

113. The majority of pupils enter the school with a low skills and knowledge base in many elements of art. By the end of Year 9 the majority achieve in line with the national standards and a significant minority achieve above. Achievement overall is good. There is a strong emphasis on learning skills at the beginning of Year 7. The use of quality media and drawing from observation has a positive impact on achievement and progress. Pupils use the works of artists and designers effectively in their own work and are confident in their use of line, shape, colour and texture. During Years 10 and 11 pupils build well on their earlier learning experiences. They work with confidence and, when using colour, understand how its use can convey moods and feelings. Paintings and drawings are of good quality and pupils develop a style of working and sensitivity in their use of line and texture in drawing.

114. Teaching and learning are good, an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is imaginative, confident, and sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil. Tasks are challenging, varied and structured to ensure everyone is engaged and included at all levels. There is a good balance between whole group and individual help. Relationships are good. Pupils respond well to the challenge in activities in a friendly, supportive atmosphere where they feel valued and are encouraged to consider others' views and feelings.

115. Art and design is well led and managed within the expressive arts faculty. The head of art is enthusiastic and experienced with the expertise to take the subject forward and further improve standards. The use of assessment has improved and, although satisfactory overall, still requires further development in Years 7 to 9. The use of information and communication technology

has improved but its use is restricted. Accommodation is well used and displays support visual investigation and celebrate achievement.

## Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge and are enthusiastic.
- The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is good.
- The use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' compositional skills are underdeveloped.
- There are too few opportunities beyond the classroom for musicians to develop their practical skills or make music collectively.

### Commentary

116. Pupils study music in Years 7 to 9. Music is not taught as a discrete subject in Year 10 and 11 but pupils continue their music within the expressive arts course.
117. Overall standards are below national expectations. Pupils enter Year 7 with very low levels of musical knowledge and skill. Many also have low aspirations of what they can achieve. Standards by the end of Year 9 remain below the national expectation; however, pupils make satisfactory progress overall.
118. Teaching is satisfactory overall and reflects good subject knowledge and understanding. The head of department is well motivated and makes good use of music technicians to enhance pupils' understanding of music. Pupils are well challenged in lessons through the introduction of new musical terms and genre. Awareness of the need to develop melody and harmony are helped by good use of regular reflection and class discussion, which helps pupils' performance on keyboard and their vocal work. The quality of relations between pupils and teachers is good. Pupils show increasing confidence to ask questions and seek help when needed. Learning is satisfactory. Additional staff support ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. A small minority of pupils can be far too easily distracted which hinders both teaching and learning. Learning improves considerably when support teachers identify and present set tasks matched to the needs and understanding of individuals. At times, however, insufficient planning means more complex tasks are set before pupils have fully mastered earlier work. This is particularly true in composition work and many pupils are unable to present a musical score. Assessment has improved and is satisfactory. Teacher comments and targets relating to pupil performances encourage pupils to achieve. There is scope to make greater use of assessment information to guide teaching and learning. There is a lack of variety in musical activities to extend pupils' musical skills. The setting of homework does not contribute sufficiently to achievement or provide additional challenge for those who wish to pursue the subject.
119. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is well organised and resources are appropriately managed. The use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory which severely limits pupils' composing, performing and presentation opportunities. Additional music peripatetic teachers from Birmingham Music Service make a positive impact by providing additional tuition time but very few pupils learn to play a musical instrument. The head of department understands what

needs to be done to improve standards. There are insufficient extra-curricular ensemble opportunities where musicians could develop their practical skills and enjoy collective music making. Accommodation has improved since the last report but the practice rooms need soundproofing.

## **Expressive arts**

120. Work in expressive arts was not inspected in depth, as pupils were involved in examinations and examination preparation.
121. Examination results in 2003 indicate good achievement overall and very good achievement by pupils with special educational needs. Nine of the twenty pupils entered achieved a grade C or better. Pupils are offered the opportunity to complete a GNVQ foundation course in Year 10, intermediate level in Year 11 and can also take a GCSE expressive arts examination. High standards, numerous innovative workshops and a wealth of enriching opportunities make the subject a popular option in which pupils with special educational needs perform well above expectations. Excellent enrichment opportunities include working with representatives from the Midland Arts Centre, 'IKON' Gallery, 'Big Brum' and various theatres and professional artists. Good links developed with local businesses have assisted in the raising of monies to provide equipment and a recording studio, giving further opportunity for pupils to achieve. Additional courses in GNVQ performing arts and GCSE dance have been coherently planned and co-ordinated in co-operation with other schools in the local creative partnership. Inspirational leadership and management ensure the area provides a very effective contribution to the school's goals and values. The department monitors performance and constantly drives for improvement and high standards. The department is well respected and is an effective member of the collegiate cluster of schools supporting Creative Partnerships. Its commitment to provision for the arts was fully recognised with a National Arts Council Arts Mark Gold award in 2002.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Positive attitudes and relationships between staff and pupils.
- Good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Not enough pupils opting for the GCSE in the subject.

### **Commentary**

122. Pupils arrive in the school with a wide range of physical education skills and experiences, with many below that expected. They settle into the school quickly, respond positively to the good teaching and, by the end of Year 9, most pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement. In games activities pupils demonstrate good ball control, and are aware of simple attack and defence strategies. Many are able to execute basic isolated skills to a satisfactory level, although their ability to apply these skills within the concept of a game is less well developed. In dance pupils respond very positively to the high quality teaching and many are able to demonstrate good patterns of movement and gesture, which are performed with fluency and clarity. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 and by the end of Year 11 most pupils are achieving standards that are in line with the

national average. In September 2003 the school started offering Year 10 pupils the opportunity to take a GCSE in the subject, after a break of three years. A small number of the pupils have taken up this offer. The overall standard of work of this group is below that seen nationally. Some written work is well presented but low literacy skills hinder overall attainment.

123. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of work being set that is thoughtfully planned so that it meets their particular needs. School teams take part in many inter-school competitions and gain much success, particularly in netball and athletics.
124. The quality of teaching is good with the majority of lessons judged to be good or very good. A key element of this is strong classroom management that enables all pupils to be clear about the standard of work and behaviour that is expected of them. The aims of the lessons are made clear, content is appropriate, and the resources are well organised. Pupils respond very positively to the good quality teaching. The majority of them are enthusiastic, behave well, and are prepared to work hard. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.
125. The director of sport had been in post for a very short period at the time of the inspection. She has inherited good quality documentation, assessment procedures and schemes of work and is now in the process of refining and adjusting them to meet her perceptions of the future needs of the department.
126. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The overall standard of teaching has improved, the curriculum on offer is now meeting the National Curriculum requirements for all pupils, and pupils again have the opportunity to take a GCSE in the subject.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

127. Applied business was sampled. Two lessons were seen, as pupils were involved in examinations. Standards in GCSE are slightly below average but pupils achieve well in comparison to their achievements in their other subjects. Teaching and learning are good. A good range of courses engages pupils and teachers use questioning very well to check knowledge and understanding. There is good development of language skills as pupils use business terminology and often read aloud to others. Pupils have very good attitudes and this helps them learn. Year 11 pupils made good progress developing their understanding of the costs of starting up a business. In Year 10 pupils discussed and explained clearly the concepts of fair trade. Leadership and management are very good. A new teaching team is working well together to raise standards. Industry links are developing well to provide real work contexts for learning.

### **Vocational education**

128. There is an imaginative range of vocational courses and activities in Year 10 and 11 linked to subjects of the curriculum. Many of the courses are in the early stages of development but are meeting the needs of pupils in terms of interest and ability.
129. A small number of vocational lessons were sampled, including child development, information and communication technology, health and social care. Standards overall are satisfactory with teaching and learning good. The pupils' response to teaching is good. They have positive attitudes, are industrious, able to sustain concentration and enjoy their work. They are

encouraged to enter into discussion, give their opinion, listen to others, and make decisions. Pupils evaluate their progress and develop specialist vocabulary and this helps them with their language skills and builds confidence. The curriculum time for the GCSE applied courses is good. Through the school's very good partnership links, a relevant programme of work placements and visits complements vocational lessons in school. Pupils also benefit from a full work experience programme in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form good partnership links enable around 12 students to follow a business administration course through a work placement one day per week.

130. Currently subject co-ordinators oversee vocational courses in their areas. The deputy headteacher has a good overview of the total vocational programme but recognises that, as vocational courses develop, a review of this situation will be needed.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Overall, the provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are in line with those expected and are rising quickly.
- The quality of teaching and learning are very good.
- The excellent leadership of the subject co-ordinator has ensured strong development of the curriculum.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and show very good attitudes to work.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The coverage of citizenship across other subjects is good but there are some inconsistencies in some areas.

### **Commentary**

131. Pupils were entered for GCSE citizenship for the first time in 2003. One-third of pupils gained passes at A\* to C. The school intends to considerably raise the number of pupils entered for the examination.
132. Standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and in line with those expected of pupils of the same age at the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve very well. This is consistent across all levels of attainment and across the various ethnic groups found in the school. Pupils have a low level of literacy skills on entry to the school. This is particularly so of written and spoken English. The subject makes a very strong contribution to the development of these skills over pupils' time in school.
133. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan lessons very carefully so that the factual content is covered thoroughly and other important aspects, such as showing responsibility and working together, are not neglected. Pupils show very good attitudes to work and behave very well in lessons. The strong emphasis on developing speaking, listening and discussion skills ensures that pupils show sensitivity to the views and feelings of others when discussions involve people's personal experiences. The school has developed good assessment procedures to track pupils' attainment and progress. These involve elements of pupils' self-evaluation. Where citizenship is taught in other subjects, teaching is good. However, it is not yet consistently in the thinking and planning of all teachers in all lessons.

134. Citizenship makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because it complements the very strong multicultural ethos in the school. The school has carried out a detailed audit of where citizenship can be taught across the curriculum. The scheme of work for citizenship lessons is detailed and provides very good information for teachers to plan their work. The senior management and the subject co-ordinator have shown excellent leadership in planning the course and in recruiting a team of hard working and committed teachers to deliver it. The subject co-ordinator has shown outstanding management of the subject in planning and developing the course and in advising the teaching team about how best to deliver the programme. As a result, all the teachers involved have a high level of expertise and subject knowledge that is used well to provide high quality lessons.

### **Personal, social and health education**

135. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Coverage is mostly linked to citizenship education. It is also an integral part of teaching and learning in a number of subjects. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils achieve very well in lessons and show very good attitudes in the subject. The course makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and their ability to play a positive role in school life. The sex and drug education programmes give good guidance on facts, decision-making and relationships that allow pupils to make informed choices. The co-ordinator organises the courses very well and this ensures a consistent and progressive curriculum for all pupils.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

### Sixth form

In the inspection, four subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002

#### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	60.0	83.5	0	36.1	14.0	34.6
Business studies	7	57.1	89.7	28.6	33.3	22.9	36.0
English literature	8	75.0	94.9	25.0	38.7	26.3	39.4
Other languages	5	100.0	92.0	80.0	55.2	50.0	42.4

#### *Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	7	100	98.7	0	44.1	65.7	84.7

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is below national averages.
- There is carefully planned provision for students whose prior attainment is low.
- Very good teaching makes full use of teachers' detailed subject knowledge.
- More able students are not sufficiently challenged.
- Students bring an evident enthusiasm to lessons.

#### Commentary

136. Attainment in English in both AS and A-level English literature in 2003 was well below the average. The percentage of students gaining pass grades was close to average but much lower at the higher levels. However, the small numbers of students involved makes statistical comparisons difficult. Standards in work seen during the inspection reflect standards attained in the examinations. Achievement for students on both AS and A-level courses is good as they start these courses with relatively low standards of prior attainment.

137. In studying a wide range of literature, students in Year 13 have developed a good capacity to make detailed analytical judgement relating to character and motivation and the significance of specific themes to the play or novel as a whole. They are also able to make clear connections with texts outside those studied on the course itself. By this stage of the course there is



increasing evidence of consistent cohesion in their writing and essays contain well-selected quotations that provide succinct illustrations of important points.

138. In Year 12 many students have writing skills that reflect their standards in Year 11. In the class observed, nine of the twelve students had not achieved a grade C in GCSE English language and were also following a re-sit course. Nevertheless, they demonstrated good progress in their ability to analyse and comment on texts studied. A particular feature to emerge in Year 12 is the ability to set texts in the context of their times and appreciate the constraints and influences of those times on the authors. In the same way, students are able to move away from limiting comments to the purely textual and comment on the way in which other issues are addressed. One Year 12 student studying 'A Comedy of Errors' wrote,

"Immediately Adriana becomes a feminist heroine, voicing the fundamental questions of the woman's movement. Her words both assert the right of womankind to full freedom and the obligations of men to be accountable".

139. Many students in the sixth form encounter less difficulty with forming opinions and views on texts studied in detail than with technical weaknesses in writing. Progress in these areas is, however, good during the two years.
140. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Of particular importance is the way in which teachers are able to accommodate students whose performance at GCSE indicates weaknesses in attainment. By carefully structuring lessons, using very good questioning techniques and providing a very supportive environment in lessons, teachers ensure all students are able to participate fully. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject is in many ways a reflection of the teachers' own enthusiasm. Very good subject knowledge of teachers is put to good use with pertinent exemplification, references to other texts and the assured way in which difficult issues are explained. Marking is very detailed and praise and encouragement are used to motivate even the weakest students. As few students gain the higher grades, it is clearly important that care is taken to ensure that any students capable of such grades are fully catered for.
141. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are of a high quality as courses are effectively shaped to accommodate students who might not have been admitted to such courses elsewhere. There is very good support material provided and the organisation of the English curriculum in the sixth form is such as to ensure smooth progress as students gain in understanding and knowledge.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

142. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are low. Provision for developing language and literacy skills is, however, good and effectively supports students' learning. In a Year 12 mathematics GCSE lesson on probability, the teacher placed great emphasis on ensuring the students fully understood the language and terminology. In a Year 12 business education GNVQ lesson the teacher encouraged oral work as a means of supporting literacy development. In a Year 12 AS level English literature lesson, the teacher had detailed knowledge of the literacy background for all the students and took careful account of this in her teaching and allocation of support.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good teaching in the sixth form which meets the needs of all the students.
- The standards of work seen in the combined Year 12 and 13 groups are below the national average.
- Students recognise their difficulties, seek help and apply themselves well.

## **Commentary**

143. In 2003, students were entered for GCSE resits and AS level examinations. However, the numbers involved are too small for comparisons to be made with national averages. Many students retake GCSE in Year 12, improve their grades and then start AS courses in Year 13. This strategy works well, ensuring that the few who study AS are better prepared for the course. Overall standards of work seen during the inspection were below average when compared with the course requirements.
144. During the inspection, it was only possible to look at students' work and observe two lessons, one GCSE and one AS. Teaching and learning were very good overall. Despite the low base from which students begin their courses, their achievement is good. Teachers are aware of students' needs and cope well with the very wide range of ability. Students in the GCSE group had weak reading skills but the teacher ensured that they had practice with their reading and understanding during the lesson. Both teachers were very supportive and improved students' confidence by the constant reinforcement of important mathematical skills and praise for their efforts. In the GCSE class students were keen to answer questions and demonstrate their knowledge. In the AS lesson there were only three students in the group and they were more reticent, although when asked, they were able to answer questions correctly. Lessons proceeded at a good pace and students clearly enjoyed them. Relationships are very good and students clearly trust their teachers to help them do well. Overall, however, students are given too few opportunities to find out things for themselves.
145. The leadership and management of the faculty are very good. As in the main school, the head of faculty seeks to improve the standards in both examinations. There were no comments about the sixth form in the previous report.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

146. Key mathematical skills are not taught separately but through other subjects. It was not possible to see this aspect in practice and therefore judgements about the standards of mathematics in the sixth form were not possible.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The students achieve well.
- The proportion of grades A\*-C in GCSE biology is not high enough.
- Students have a very positive attitude to learning.
- The teachers have good knowledge of their subject.
- There are good strategies to improve literacy.
- Students' independent learning is underdeveloped.

## **Commentary**

147. The AS level examination results in 2003 were well below the national average with no students achieving a higher grade. The results in GCSE biology were below the national average. The small number studying advanced level biology does not allow reliable comparisons with national averages.

148. Results in the current Year 12 in GCSE biology are just below national expectations. This represents good achievement for the students who enter the sixth form with a range of grades in the combined science examination down to grade G. Very few achieve grade C in their GCSE science. Currently there are no students following AS and A-level biology. The number of students studying biology has fluctuated and in recent years the uptake has been very low, with the exception of in 2001.
149. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies and have made good gains in knowledge and understanding since Year 11. Most of these pupils have special educational needs and English is not the language they speak at home. Apart from monitoring their progress in biology and assessing their key skill of numeracy, the teachers take responsibility for improving their literacy by the continual reinforcement of subject-specific words. Well-planned practical work allows independence in learning but pupils find this hard and are most comfortable when working in pairs or small groups.
150. Teaching is good and this has led to good learning. The teacher has a good knowledge of biology and this allows her to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. Planning is good and because of this the practical coursework is strong. A good range of textbooks supports their learning but there are insufficient quality books in the library to support independent research. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of good, regular testing and comment by the teacher using examination board criteria and grades.
151. Leadership and management of the subject are good and the teachers ensure students are aware of how well they are doing. Most students make good use of the improved access to information and communication technology to improve the presentation of coursework. The laboratories provide a satisfactory environment in which to learn which is an improvement since the previous inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**

Two intermediate GNVQ lessons were observed because A-level students were taking external examinations. The inspector carried out a discussion with two A-level students about their learning but no work was available for scrutiny.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership and management is committed to raising standards.
- There is good access to resources in the attractive learning environment.
- Students achieve well because of the good teaching.
- The quality of marking is very good and students have clear guidance for improvement.
- There is not enough opportunity for students for independent learning in GNVQ.

#### **Commentary**

152. In 2003 AS students achieved the standards predicted by the department. Although A-B grades are below average, the majority of students achieved a pass grade, and standards are average. One of these was a gifted and talented Year 11 student who

achieved particularly well. All the A2 students completed the course and the lower than average results were due to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved.

153. Many AS students leave the school at the end of Year 12, and the current small group of advanced A2 students is making satisfactory achievement. They use word-processing well to enhance presentation and spreadsheets for financial forecasting. In GNVQ lessons students achieve better than expected compared with their prior learning. GNVQ notebooks are meticulously kept, students knowledgeably discuss the implications of equal opportunities legislation for a business and use the Internet well to develop their knowledge of national companies.
154. Teaching and learning on the GNVQ intermediate course are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which is disseminated clearly to enable students to apply knowledge in new business contexts. Teachers know students and their capabilities well. They are sensitive to students' needs, and use examples and interjections well to encourage more active participation by the less confident GNVQ students, but opportunities for independent learning are limited. Marking is carried out very well to inform students about progress and to encourage them to improve. Advanced students have confidence in their teachers and achievement is improving.
155. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future of the subject, and standards for current students are improving. The experienced and enthusiastic teachers work well together to share good practice. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of students of all abilities. There is a very good learning environment, resources are good and students have very good access to ICT for Internet research and presentation of coursework. Links with industry are developing well.
156. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	0	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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