

INSPECTION REPORT

TURVES GREEN GIRLS' SCHOOL & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Northfield, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103499

Headteacher: Sarah Brehony

Lead inspector: Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 1st – 4th December 2003

Inspection number: 262502

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:	City Technology College
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
Number on roll:	780
School address:	Turves Green Northfield Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B31 4BP
Telephone number:	0121 464 8346
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor L Lawrence
Date of previous inspection:	16 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Turves Green is a girls' Technology College in the south west of Birmingham catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. It is involved in Excellence in Cities, Young Enterprise, Create a Future and CREST initiatives. It holds the following awards: Healthy Schools and Investor in People (2002) and Artsmark, School Achievement, Education Extra and Specialist Schools Most Improved Schools (2003). The school provides daytime adult education courses, family learning programme literacy and numeracy courses, a family support counselling service, community use facilities, community outreach Youth Aware services and Parent Link Worker and Community Education Development Worker services. The school has 780 pupils, of whom the substantial majority are of White-British origin. One hundred and thirty pupils have special educational needs, which is a lower proportion than found nationally. Most of these needs relate to moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Eleven pupils have statements of special educational need, which is below the national average. The school is situated in a very stable catchment area. Pupils' social and economic backgrounds are below average. Fewer than 2 per cent of pupils joined or left the school other than at the usual time. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11746	Robin Coulthard	Lead inspector	Music
9391	Norma Ball	Lay inspector	
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
27719	Paul Metcalf	Team inspector	
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector	Science
15208	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
8159	Kevin Wright	Team inspector	Art
8076	Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	Geography History
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	French
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education
30128	Shirley Stanley	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
17171	Mary Last	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Turves Green provides a very good education and gives very good value for money.

Standards have risen above the national trend since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are very good. The leadership of the head is excellent. Overall leadership and management of the head and other key staff are very good. The school makes excellent provision for technology.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results have risen above the national trend and are above the national average.
- The school looks after its pupils exceptionally well and their behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- The wide range of curricular opportunities includes excellent provision for technology.
- The curriculum is enriched by a very wide range of additional activities.
- Teaching and learning are very effective as a result of the strong ethos for learning.
- The headteacher shows excellent vision for the school's development and leadership and management are very good.
- Standards are not high enough in music.

The school has shown very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen. Attendance and punctuality have improved after strenuous efforts by the school. All statutory requirements are now met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Overall, they achieve very well. Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average, and below average for similar schools. Pupils did best in English, where results were above the national average and a high proportion gained Levels 6 and 7. In mathematics and science results were average. Current standards are similar to those indicated by last year's examination results. GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than nationally. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A* to C passes was above the national average. Results are very high in comparison with similar schools. Current standards are well above expectation in design and technology, engineering, geography, history and religious education. Standards are above average in English, science, ICT and art. Standards are below average only in music.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are very good. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and to school in general. Parents and pupils have responded well to the school's vigorous attempts to improve attendance, and this is now average. Pupils behave very well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education.

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and of course requirements, and plan lessons very well to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard, concentrating well and working purposefully. Time is well organised to maintain efficient learning. Teachers check pupils' learning with carefully directed questioning. Work is assessed very well and pupils know what they have to do to improve. Teaching is unsatisfactory only in music, where staffing difficulties result in work being below the level appropriate to pupils' abilities.

The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities and a particular strength is the opportunity for girls to benefit from exceptional provision in technology and engineering. An outstanding range of other activities enriches the curriculum. The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils, encouraging them to be ambitious, and this has established a secure ethos where the girls can work confidently towards fulfilling their potential. Links with parents are very good. The school's involvement with local and national projects and its international links, help to raise the girls' sights further.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher has worked with outstanding vision and energy to improve the school, year on year. Every aspect of the school is very purposefully monitored. Senior managers work harmoniously and with a strong sense of common purpose. Governors are very knowledgeable and support the work of the school strongly. Finances are well managed and the principles of best value are applied well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school, overall. In response to two parental concerns, inspectors judged that settling-in arrangements are very good and that any incidents of bullying are well handled. The girls enjoy school and appreciate the quality of teaching they receive. Concerns about some girls' respect for teachers expressed in the school's own pupil questionnaire were judged without foundation by inspectors.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is

- Improve provision for music.

All statutory requirements are met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Girls achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Overall, their achievement is **very good**. Results in national examinations are average at the end of Year 9 and current standards are average. Results in Year 11 are above average at GCSE. Current standards are above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average GCSE results in 2003.
- Rise in attainment in Years 9 and 11 that is above the national trend.
- Significantly above average results in design and technology, art, religious studies, geography, history, science and English literature.
- Current standards in Year 11 are above average overall, and well above average in design and technology, engineering, history, geography and religious education.
- Below average standards in music.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.1 (33.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.3 (32.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.9 (30.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 146 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1. Results in national testing at the end of Year 9 were average compared with all schools, but below average for similar schools. In English, mathematics and science, results had recovered from their slight dip in 2002. The overall trend of improvement has been above the national trend in recent years. Pupils did best in English, where their results were above average, both nationally and for similar schools. The proportion gaining Level 7 was particularly good. Results in mathematics were average overall, but below average for similar schools. In science, results were below average for all schools and well below for similar schools. The school exceeded its challenging target for the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 in English, and came close to its targets in mathematics and science.

2. Standards seen in Year 9 were average, overall. However, standards observed were well above average in design and technology and religious education. In design and technology, achievement is enhanced by the sophisticated use of ICT from the start of Year 7. In English, geography and history, standards were above average. Elsewhere, they were average, except in music, where standards were well below expectation. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their capability. Standards on entry are below average. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve well, because the school plans effectively for them

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	61 (55)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.5 (34.7)	36.3 (34.7)

There were 142 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion gaining five A* to C grades was exceptional, that is, in the top five percent nationally. The proportions gaining five A* to G grades and one A* to G grade were well above the national average. Results were above the national average for the average points score gained by pupils in their best eight subjects. Both the percentage gaining five or more A* to C grades and pupils' average points score slightly exceeded the school's targets, but the percentage gaining five A* to G grades was just below the target. The GCSE average points score has maintained a rising trend that is above that found nationally. It has risen from below to above the national average. Results were significantly above average in a good range of subjects – design and technology, English literature, art, science, geography, history and religious studies. The result in history was particularly high both in relation to national standards and the girls' attainment in their other subjects. Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 10.

4. Current standards in Year 11 are above those seen nationally as a result of the very good teaching the girls receive. They are well above expectation in design and technology, engineering, geography, history and religious education, and above expectation in English, science, art, the GCSE course in physical education and the GNVQ course in ICT. In other subjects, standards are in line with what is expected, except in music, where they are below average. Gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs continue to achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall the attitudes, values and personal qualities which pupils develop are **very good**. Pupils behave very well, and show enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work. They respect the staff and each other. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths

- Very good behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Very good attitudes to work whether working individually, in pairs or groups.
- The school has worked hard to promote better attendance. This has improved year by year, and it is now satisfactory.
- Very good relationships at every level help promote enjoyable and productive lessons.
- Excellent approach to responsibility and appreciation of being part of a community.
- Very good provision for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils.

Commentary

5. Attendance is satisfactory and the school has worked with dedication to secure an average attendance level which is close to the national picture, and this represents an improvement since the last report. The means of achieving this have included: efficient monitoring of attendance by staff, very prompt follow up of absences, very efficient use of community facilities to support families, and a clear system of rewards to respond to good attendance. The high profile in the school has helped to emphasise, to both pupils and their parents, the need for regular and prompt attendance at school. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school punctually. Moving around buildings at times of lesson change can be time-consuming, especially if pupils have to move between buildings, but they do their best to reach lessons on time.

6. Pupils like their school very much, and when interviewed they were clear that they enjoyed their lessons, thought they were well taught by staff who were very supportive in helping them with their work and any concerns they might have. All pupils have a very sincere appreciation of their school community. They respect each member of that community and the wider community outside, and this is a very significant feature of the school's ethos. They work very well, both independently and in groups, and show very good attitudes to their studies. Pupils enjoy discussions and share their ideas and opinions well together. They settle quickly to their work without fuss and persevere even with difficult and challenging work. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, looking at the play 'Hobson's Choice', they talked with sensitivity about the way the characters in the play showed love. They understood how humour was used to emphasise themes in the play although the text was new to them and they were at first nervous about exploring it in such detail. In lessons, pupils show

a real interest in what they are doing, and a desire to do the best they can and this helps promote very good achievement.

7. The behaviour of pupils in the vast majority of lessons is very good, and they still remained on task well and tried their best even in the few lessons when they were not engaged in interesting work. The few very challenging students are well managed and well supported by teachers and they do not interrupt the learning of their classmates. Around the school, when on trips to other schools and in extra-curricular activities, there is a very good community atmosphere and all pupils are polite, friendly and positive about what they are doing. Year 10 students, who went to the Community Learning Centre at Frankley High School to continue their design technology project, showed exemplary behaviour. All pupils show very good respect for teachers, for each other and for the school and other people's property and the result of this is a happy and relaxed ethos in which good learning can take place. The concerns expressed in the pupil questionnaires carried out by the school and the parents' questionnaire about respect for teaching staff proved in the inspection to be entirely unfounded. Equally unfounded were concerns about bullying. The inspection showed that pupils are aware that bullying is unacceptable, and that procedures to deal with it are fair and effective. Pupils have a good range of responsibilities open to them in school and they fulfil their chosen roles with dignity and enthusiasm. For example, pupils spoke with warmth about the role they had played as aunts to Year 7 pupils, their role on the newly-formed school council and their prefect duties. Such positive behaviour and the value attached to taking a responsible role in the school community greatly enhance the personal development of pupils, as well as contributing to their learning.

8. Pupils' personal development and understanding of their role in society and their own responsibilities through the social, moral, spiritual, and cultural provision of the school are very good. This positive picture has been well maintained since the last report. All staff provide good role models, showing courtesy, care and respect so pupils learn by this example to value themselves and care for others around them. Relationships are warm and supportive and pupils understand that they have responsibilities for their fellow pupils and others in the wider community. They understand and accept the rules and, through discussions in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and subject lessons, reflect on and consider the implications of social and moral issues. For example, in a Year 11 physical education lesson, pupils reflected very maturely on the morality of fair play and why it was important. Pupils raise money for charities, and help within their local community, which gives a practical dimension to their understanding of the need to help others.

9. Cultural development is very good, and promoted well through a number of subjects, especially religious education, history and geography. Pupils know about different cultures and faiths in the world and have respect for those whose lives and beliefs are different. The school enjoys a special link with a school in Soweto, South Africa, and pupils are helping their South African partners in developing a Young Enterprise initiative. Spiritual development is very good. Pupils consider the power of faith and the power of nature and its forces. The school complies with the requirement for a corporate act of worship through the opportunities given to all pupils in assembly or form time to think about important issues and contributions they can make towards improving the quality of life for all. For example, the thought for the week was centred on looking deeper and not making hasty judgements about others or being deceived by appearance. The school has a very strong commitment to full inclusion and valuing each pupil. Its commitment to the extension of learning to the whole community is at the centre of what the school stands for and the way day-to-day life is conducted so that it forms a spiritual core for the school.

10. Pupils with special educational needs take responsibility for their own learning, grow in maturity and achieve well in public examinations and further study. In all observed lessons, relationships, attitudes and behaviour were good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.0
National data	1.1

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White - Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Any other ethnic group
Parents preferred not to say
Total

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
681	45	2
2	0	0
4	2	0
13	0	0
1	0	0
26	4	1
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
43	4	0
780	53	3

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11 and **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enjoy positive relationships with their pupils, which lead to effective learning.
- Lessons are interesting and well planned to meet all pupils' needs, and time is used productively.
- The structure of lessons enables pupils to consolidate their learning effectively.
- National strategies have had a beneficial effect on teaching and learning.
- Assessment is very effective and purposeful, despite some inconsistency in the quality of marking.
- Pupils with special educational needs learn well because teachers' planning takes good account of their individual requirements.

Commentary

11. Almost half of the teaching observed was at least very good, with almost a quarter of this excellent. This is a substantial rise in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching was very good overall in English, geography, history, religious education, design and technology, engineering and physical education. In geography and history in Years 10 and 11, teaching was excellent. Teaching was satisfactory in French, but poor in music due to staffing difficulty.

12. Teaching has many strengths because teachers share their expertise, and the school's effective monitoring system ensures that improved teaching is a constant priority. Teachers have great enthusiasm for their subject and very good levels of subject skills and knowledge. Lessons are interesting and generate purposeful enjoyment amongst pupils. This leads to good and often very good learning. Relationships amongst pupils and between teachers and their classes are very good which ensures that pupils are enthusiastic and ready to learn. Pupils behave very well and their very good attitudes add to the efficiency of their learning.

13. Planning is very good and takes careful account of the learning needs of the range of pupils within a class. Teachers use a good range of appropriate and imaginative resources to extend pupils' understanding. In a Year 9 history lesson, groups in the class used a board-game to gain an understanding of the horrors of warfare encountered in World War I. The effectiveness of this resource was the greater because the unsuspecting pupils did not anticipate its impact.

14. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been effectively introduced across the curriculum and this has had a beneficial effect on teaching and learning. Teachers use carefully-targeted questioning to recall previous work, capture pupils' interest and establish a good pace of learning. Many lessons begin with a starter activity for the full class, followed by a substantial task to be carried out in groups or individually. Lessons conclude with a review of what has been learned, using question and answer to consolidate pupils' understanding and inform the teacher of what to plan next. Homework is purposefully used to extend what is done in class. It is set in good time and carefully explained, providing an effective means of developing pupils' skills in independent learning.

15. Resources are appropriate and very good in some subjects, for example design and technology and engineering. Where possible, ICT is used as a teaching tool, and pupils gain a wide experience of its varied uses across the curriculum during their time in the school, for design, presentation and research.

16. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and learn effectively. The greatest strength is the support and guidance they receive from experienced teachers and support assistants. Staff understand their personal and educational needs. Teachers pay good attention to the pupils' individual educational plans (IEPs). Because the staff know the pupils well and the pupils themselves are aware of their targets, the work is well focused upon their needs. In only a few lessons, were the IEPs and targets not known to the teacher.

17. Subject teachers are skilled in teaching the range of pupils in their classes and dealing with difficult behaviour. Where teachers match a variety of activities to pupils' needs, achievements are good and frequently very good. There are very good examples of students making consistently very good progress in English, physical education, science, mathematics and PSE. Where in-class support is available, it is effectively deployed and makes a constructive impact on pupils' learning.

18. Assessment is carried out thoroughly and is very effective. Pupils are aware of the levels at which they are working. In design and technology, pupils are involved in self-assessment, which is very good practice. Pupils are thoroughly aware of their target grades in terms of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, and GCSE expectations in Years 10 and 11. However, some inconsistency is apparent in the effectiveness of marking across the curriculum, and in music and citizenship assessment is not yet used constructively.

19. Assessment of the work of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Procedures are applied consistently, and its many other strengths include improved measures for identifying and recording the pupils' achievements and test scores. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that the

focus upon pupils' educational targets is consistent across the school. Arrangements for meeting statutory requirements are very good. A minor weakness is the repetition of some pupils' targets over time.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 116 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10 (9%)	42 (36%)	43 (37%)	17(15%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum, overall, is **good**. It has many obvious strengths. The school's status as a Technology College is well reflected in the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality provision in many subject areas.
- The stronger vocational element in Years 10 and 11 is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils of all levels of attainment benefit from a very wide range of enrichment activities.
- Provision for music in Years 7 to 9 is poor.

Commentary

20. The curriculum is, in the main, broad and well balanced, and it has improved substantially since the last inspection and meets pupils' needs well. The time allocation for subjects is appropriate, but the arrangement of lessons for French impedes progress as a result of difficulties involved in timetabling some part-time teachers. The length of the school week remains slightly below national recommendations but is compensated for by the outstanding range of extra-curricular provision. An act of corporate worship is partly in place and provides a useful opportunity for pupils to reflect on moral issues. This is supplemented by a 'thought for the day' which is satisfactorily incorporated into tutor time. The National Strategy for ICT is being followed for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. The range of vocational courses has been increased significantly in Years 10 and 11, enabling all pupils to study a technological subject. This development results from the school's specialist status as a Technology College. The school's commitment to inclusion is reflected in the increased flexibility in the option system. This is having an important impact on raising the aspirations and attainment of middle and lower-attaining pupils.

21. Provision in design technology, engineering and history is excellent and there are many strengths in other subjects, notably in English, geography, science and physical education and, in Years 10 and 11, in religious education. Good progress is now being made in implementing the new subject, citizenship. Imaginative innovations, for example 'Theme Days', enable pupils to practise a range of cross-curricular skills.

22. Pupils' work in music in Years 7 to 9 is not linked to appropriate standards, and provision is poor.

23. The needs of lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well provided for by the ASDAN course, which reinforces the learning of basic skills, and the alternative curriculum which a small number of pupils pursue at Bournville College. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is well organised, thoroughly monitored and constructively developed in the work of subject departments.

24. Full use is made of local, national and international resources to provide a whole host of enriching extra-curricular experiences, including projects, competitions and visits to enable pupils to develop their talents and achieve success.

25. Most pupils have access to two hours of high quality sporting provision each week, the vast majority of this time being formally timetabled. However, pupils in Year 9 and those in Years 10 and 11 who follow the compulsory course only, have less timetabled provision than others. The very good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year provides further opportunities. This includes both recreational and competitive fixtures. This provides valuable experience for all participants and provides further opportunities for talented pupils to improve and develop their skills. During the previous academic year, 13 per cent of pupils represented the school in competitive fixtures and 29 per cent took part in a range of extra-curricular activities.

26. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum, with suitable vocational options in Years 10 and 11. Very good planning for their individual needs in lessons results in very good achievement in several subjects. Some pupils continue to experience problems with literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The SENCO has recently introduced specialist-teaching groups to boost the achievements of such pupils. Although this initiative is comparatively new, the pupils' results in tests and standardised reading assessments are already encouraging.

27. The accommodation is generally adequate to the needs of the curriculum and in some areas is of high quality. It is enhanced generally by the attractive displays of pupils' work and by the effective displays of teaching resources in classrooms. The quality of art display is very high. Access for wheelchair users has been established to enable participation in all subject areas. Technology rooms are of high quality and permit a full range of the subject to be taught including the more traditional aspects of work in wood and metal. However, physical education accommodation is poor. The quality of indoor and wet-weather provision adversely affects activities such as basketball and racket sports. In addition, the limitations to the outdoor provision affect the provision of track sports.

28. Teaching and learning resources are good, overall. Resources for technology and for engineering are outstanding and include facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture. High quality resources have been developed in history and geography. Access to ICT in these subjects is very good. Resources for music are poor. Percussion instruments are in poor repair, there are too few keyboards and there is no ICT provision in Years 7 to 9. The school has dealt adequately with the accommodation and resources issues highlighted in the previous inspection report.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a very safe and extremely caring environment for all pupils. Staff assign a high priority to their pastoral role. The advice and guidance provided for pupils is of a very high order and makes a major contribution to the progress, achievement and personal development of all pupils. Pupils are very effectively involved in all aspects of school life and their views are actively sought and highly valued.

Main strengths

- The support and guidance provided by the school is enhanced by excellent links with a range of external support in the community and from external agencies.
- All staff assign a high priority to their pastoral role and this contributes to the progress, achievement and personal development of pupils.
- Excellent arrangements are made to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all pupils.
- Excellent child protection and children-in-care arrangements are in place.
- New pupils entering the school benefit from very thorough and supportive induction arrangements.
- Very good relationships and respect for the individual are evident at all levels.

Commentary

29. The school provides excellent support for pupils and the care, health and safety arrangements are of a very high order. All staff assign a very high priority to the care and support of pupils in their care and this is a significant feature of the school. Child protection matters and the support for children in care are excellent and led with a clear sense of their importance by a very

experienced and committed senior member of staff. All staff receive regular update training and they are well briefed about how they should identify and deal with any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. First-aid cover within the school is very good and sensible arrangements are made for girls who are unwell. Inspections of equipment and fire drills take place regularly. Risk assessments are carried out very efficiently and this is an area that has improved since the last inspection. Excellent, clear and well-structured procedures operate throughout the school to ensure that pupils are safe.

30. Staff know pupils extremely well and provide consistently excellent guidance, advice and support for the girls in their care and this contributes in a very significant way to their progress, achievement and personal development. Staff and pupils enjoy strong and trusting relationships at all levels in the school and this is an important feature of the pastoral life of the school. Pupils, when interviewed, were very clear that they felt well known and respected by their teachers and they could confide their problems and be assured of help. They felt they were respected and treated as individuals and that the school was very inclusive. The role of the heads of year, with support from senior staff, is central to the successful organisation of the schools' sophisticated network of care. These staff, together with tutors, build a wealth of knowledge and understanding about the pupils in their care. The support provided in school is flexible and adapted quickly and sensitively to meet the needs of the individual. Woven carefully into the care the school provides is additional support from community initiatives, such as the Community Learning Association and local family support and child guidance centres. Professional support from external agencies is also interlinked quickly and appropriately in the care plans the school puts into place for pupils with problems.

31. Very good use is made of assessment information provided to target support, advice and guidance for pupils. All staff can and do access and share assessment data and all have received training in its effective use in meeting the pupils' changing needs. Through regular and frequent reviews, evening meetings and diaries, parents and pupils are aware both of targets and progress made. Pupils have frequent opportunities to take part in the evaluation of their work. Their achievements are celebrated in many different ways. During assemblies, through a clear system of rewards that includes merits and treats, by contacts with the home and, most obviously, in the many attractive displays of work and activities which enhance the rooms and corridors, the school reflects its strong focus on achievement.

32. Arrangements for settling pupils into the school are very well managed and the extensive links with the main local primary schools are very well used to ensure a smooth and less stressful transition for pupils into secondary education. Girls are known as individuals before they arrive in year 7 and the first day at their new school is carefully designed to make them feel happy and comfortable in their new surroundings. The inspection found no justification for the concerns expressed by some parents about the induction arrangements for new pupils.

33. Very good care is taken to inform and guide pupils and parents in the choice of course to be followed in Years 10 and 11. Appropriate time is allocated to careers education and guidance from Year 9 onwards and, as a result, pupils have a very clear understanding of the issues and processes involved. They benefit from the very good arrangements made for work experience, the school having developed many very productive links with employers. Links with colleges and other schools are similarly well developed so that the high proportion of pupils moving into further education have detailed and impartial information regarding the opportunities available. In such ways, the school strongly counters the limited perceptions within the area of what girls should seek to do in life and ensures a smooth transition to this next stage of education. Pupils seeking employment and/or other forms of training are supported very effectively by the 'Connexions' service.

Example of outstanding practice

The school implements outstandingly effective procedures for responding to the pastoral needs of individual pupils and for assuring the welfare of all pupils

The school has established an excellent, sophisticated and very responsive network of support for pupils. The management of pupils' care and the assessment of their needs are comprehensive, yet allow for a very flexible response so that the identified needs of individual pupils are met very successfully and even extended to include support for their family. All staff assign a very high priority to their pastoral responsibilities and they are very well supported by the headteacher and senior staff in the school. Wise use is made of the additional support that is available from outside agencies and community initiatives to extend the care provided directly by the school. The result is that all pupils feel extremely well supported, safe and sure that staff care greatly about their well being and their achievement in school and beyond. Pupils know that their needs and also their views about their school community are valued and are confident that they are known and respected as individuals.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The very strong relationship with parents has continued and links are very well developed. A key feature of the school is the exceptionally effective links that exist between the school and the local community and other schools and colleges. These links are used very well for the support and benefit of all pupils and their families.

Main strengths

- Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children are making.
- Excellent support programmes are in place to involve parents in their children's learning.
- Extensive range of community links, via departments and the whole school are used exceedingly well to promote achievement and provide support for pupils and their families.
- Excellent links with local schools and colleges.

Commentary

34. The school has maintained very good and effective links with parents since the last report. Parents are very pleased with all aspects of the college, except settling-in arrangements, where 32 per cent thought the arrangements were good and 48 per cent disagreed. Sixty seven per cent of parents thought their children were not bullied at school, but 14 per cent disagreed and 19 per cent did not know. The inspection found the settling-in arrangements for Year 7 pupils to be excellent. The liaison arrangements with primary schools are very well developed and induction visits to the school and the first days in school for new pupils are sensitively arranged to minimise any strangeness or stress new pupils might feel. The inspection also concluded that any incidents of bullying are well handled and this was also supported by pupils when they were interviewed. The school and all staff value close contact with parents and work very hard to maintain and extend the links they have developed. Through community education programmes, parents can gain extra skills, such as computing, so that they can support their children and the work they do. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are very informative and have improved since the last inspection. They now provide very helpful information for parents. Equally informative are the annual reports on progress. These reports have recently been reviewed and are about to be redesigned so that reporting is more consistent between subjects and gives parents a more specialised perspective on their child's progress and achievement. The school deals with any complaints or concerns very well.

35. The school's links within the community have been extended since the last inspection and are excellent. The extensive and supportive network of associations around the school is of immense benefit to pupils, staff and the local community. The school ethos is deeply rooted in providing a broad educational experience for all, which does not stop at the end of the school day. Pupils have a vast range of opportunities to extend their learning and personal experiences through visits and excursions from school, including residential visits, work experience in a range of local venues including primary schools, attendance at plays and events and exhibitions in the local area and the City of Birmingham. A large assortment of links and visits is organised by individual departments. Pupils join in national and local competitions with considerable success. For example,

pupils were winners at the Birmingham Trade Fair and came fourth in the national competition. Pupils have helped with local projects such as improving the environment at a local residential home for the elderly, and regularly raise money for charities. Such varied opportunities are of enormous value to pupils through promoting their achievement in subjects of the curriculum. They contribute to their personal development and maturity, and raise their awareness of the world outside school and the contributions pupils can make towards improving the lives of others.

36. The school provides a leisure base for the local community and this is well used for clubs and activities. Through the Community Learning Association (CLASS), the school provides an educational link into the community, providing opportunities for courses in healthy living, literacy and computer literacy and a range of other classes of value to parents wishing to support their children in their learning. Through parent workers, the school is linked to the local community and these workers, together with the very committed and enthusiastic community education development co-ordinator, maintain a strong partnership with the school. A range of local agencies and agencies such as Connexions, the community police and industries provide specialist skills, advice and guidance which are skilfully and appropriately used by the school to support pupils and promote their progress and achievement.

37. Liaison with local primary schools is excellent. An impressive range of exchanges enables primary pupils to visit, to see school productions and even to join in projects such as the extra-curricular design and technology club. Currently, Year 8 pupils are working with Bellfield School pupils to design light and portable football nets for playtime. Staff and pupils visit primary schools to work with the children and to share subject expertise with teachers. Year 7 pupils often visit their old school to answer questions about their secondary school. The transfer arrangements are good and induction days carefully organised by a very experienced and understanding Head of Year 7 so that Year 6 pupils can begin the process of being integrated into their new school in a relaxed and confident way. The school enjoys equally well-developed and valuable links with the sixth form colleges to which the majority of pupils transfer after Year 11. Through the local network of schools, and under the umbrella of the South West Area Network (SWAN), a strong professional support network helps schools develop together and share resources, expertise and staff for their common benefit. Staff links with local sixth form colleges are being extended. In some curriculum areas, teachers often work both in school and in a local college forming a valuable bridge between the two stages of education.

38. Support for parents of pupils with special educational needs is a major strength of the school's provision, enhanced by the shared commitment of all staff. External agencies are used effectively to develop the school's work. Relationships with other providers are good, particularly the liaison with other child-centred agencies or those which help individual pupils improve their learning or behaviour. Intensive guidance has been provided for several pupils with significant behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Example of outstanding practice

The school maintains a very wide range of links with and beyond the community that significantly benefit the girls' learning

The school has developed and sustained a rich and extensive network of community links and initiatives which are excellent. Learning extends well beyond the school day and embraces the needs of the whole community. A strong and effective partnership with the Community Learning Association as well as an extensive programme of visits, speakers and participation in local and national initiatives in subject departments provides an immensely rich tapestry of learning experiences for pupils. Parents are encouraged to use the leisure and learning programmes within the school and parent workers help identify the learning needs of the local community. Recent classes have included, How Children Learn, Healthy Eating, Computer Literacy, Understanding Your Teenager and parent and pupil literacy classes. Links with local industries and employers are used very effectively to support the pupils and the school. The use of a range of local agencies is likewise highly effective in extending the care and support provided by the school and the benefits for pupils are immense.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides **excellent** leadership. Senior managers are very effective. Governors give very committed support and guidance for the school.

Main strengths

- The headteacher's clarity of vision and sense of purpose have created a caring environment which stimulates and supports pupils' achievement.
- Leadership and management of subjects are very good overall.
- Leadership and management of design technology and engineering are outstanding.
- The governors contribute very well to shaping the direction of the school, and they hold it to account effectively.
- Financial management is good and supports the school's priorities for improvement.

Commentary

39. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She runs a school that is very popular with parents and achieves good standards. She is passionate about the welfare of the girls in her charge and has an excellent vision for the school's improvement that is understood by the staff. Very good relationships between staff and pupils and the willingness of teachers to respond to suggestions to improve their work show that the vision is effectively shared. In a very purposeful partnership with the deputy head, she has steered the school through several changes including achieving the status of Technology College. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades has more than trebled since her appointment. At all times she has stuck to her principles of high expectations of pupils and staff, high standards of discipline and ensuring that all pupils are treated equally. She is committed to making sure all pupils achieve their maximum potential and this can be seen in the flexibility of the school curriculum and the high level of vocational courses designed to meet the pupils' needs. Through her untiring support of staff, she has built a very effective team that shares her determination to drive standards up. She has retained the human touch and pupils talk warmly of her. The headteacher has the support of a senior management team, whose skills and expertise complement each other very well. The leadership of the key staff in the school is very good.

40. Management of the school is very good. Senior managers have drawn up a thoroughgoing plan for improvement that is being implemented in a caring and sensitive way. They ensure the school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The management of pastoral care is excellent. Senior managers have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The overriding principle that teachers appointed to the school should enjoy working with and respect young people has led to the development of the mutual respect between staff and pupils that contributes very much to pupils' willingness to learn and the very good working atmosphere in classrooms. Management at subject department level is generally good, with many heads of department and pastoral leaders sharing the same emphasis on improvement as the headteacher.

41. Leadership of departments is very good, overall. It is excellent in design and technology, history and religious education. The design and technology department is a model for the whole school in all of its work. The teachers work very effectively as a team, sharing the enthusiasm of the head of department in their drive to improve standards and to make the most of the opportunities afforded by Technology College status. Much of the work of the department is highly innovative, such as all pupils using computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment regularly from Year 7. Leadership is very good in English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. Management of subjects is very good, overall. Leadership and management of music are poor, but the headteacher is taking firm steps to remedy this. She has ensured that examination pupils are well supported and that extra-curricular opportunities in music remain good.

42. Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The SENCO provides detailed documentation which identifies pupils' general learning needs. All learning support staff are aware of the pupils' difficulties and areas for improvement. Current documentation, which is extremely useful, easy to read and produced in a common format, emphasises particular targets to maximise individual pupil's learning. The procedures for supporting pupils' learning across the whole school are developing well but some pupils' targets are not reviewed and revised soon enough.

43. National initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, have been welcomed and purposefully implemented. This has led to an increased focus on how pupils learn and reflective thinking about teaching styles. The school has very good procedures for the regular review of departments to ensure that school policies and development initiatives are being consistently implemented. When problems are identified, the actions taken to investigate and put things right are very thorough.

44. The governors are very enthusiastic and dedicated. The governing body contains a good mixture of long-standing governors and newer appointments. Governors have a very clear knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand their strategic role and contribute significantly to the school's planning. They are not afraid to challenge the headteacher. Governors scrutinise results and hold the headteacher to account. They exercise their critical role in an informed and constructive way.

45. Financial management is good and supports the school's development priorities well against tight budgetary constraints. Governors are well briefed at regular meetings of the finance sub-committee. Spending is prioritised very much in line with the school improvement plan and the school applies the principles of best value well to all it does. Standards have improved and performance targets have been met. The deficit budget is being carefully managed. The school does not benefit from many of the national financial initiatives because its pupil profile does not fit the bill. Nevertheless, finances are used well and what money is available is spent wisely. Given the funding the school receives and the quality of education provided, it is providing very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2569859
Total expenditure	2571974
Expenditure per pupil	3295

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	33727
Balance carried forward to the next	-18348

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is often very good and is a significant factor in the very good progress made by pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their relationships with teaching staff are consistently very good.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the further development of teaching and learning.
- Developing procedures for pupils' self assessment are already having a positive impact on learning as pupils set their own targets for improvement.
- Inconsistent application of the department's marking policy is not always providing pupils with appropriate information to effect improvement.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Examination Results

46. Results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE in 2003 have maintained an upward trend since the last inspection. At the end of Year 9, results were above the national average, with a high proportion of pupils reaching Levels 6 and 7. GCSE results in English language were close to the national average for grades A* to C and were well above average in English literature.

Standards and achievement

47. Inspection evidence confirms that standards achieved in lessons and over time reflect most test and examination results. The exception to this is in English language where standards in lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11 were above those indicated by 2003 results. Standards of pupils on entry to the school are average. Current standards in years 9 and 11 are above average. Pupils' very good achievement reflects the quality of teaching they receive and their increasing awareness of what they need to do to improve in all areas of their work. Standards of speaking and listening are high for pupils of all abilities, although lower-attaining pupils in all years misuse grammar. The majority of pupils are confident speakers and very responsive in oral work. By the end of Year 9, they reach good standards in reading and interpreting literary and non-literary texts. Towards the end of Year 11, good appreciation and understanding of writers' styles are evident in their response to a range of genres when they explore the use of language in complex issues. Lower-attaining pupils use background information very well. Writing skills are good overall with higher-attaining pupils reaching high standards. Their work is well crafted. They use a range of sentence structures and a sophisticated vocabulary to create some very good narrative writing and to analyse and review texts. In all years, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

48. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. The planning of lessons is very thorough, and teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and interesting resources to very good effect. Teachers' awareness of pupils' prior attainment is thorough and pupils' knowledge of examination requirements is good. Many pupils evaluate their own work constructively to identify where improvements are required. This is a significant factor in the very good progress many pupils make. However, teachers do not apply the department's marking policy consistently to written work to ensure that all pupils receive full guidance on how to improve their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and this results in lessons where the pace is very fast and pupils of all abilities are very well challenged. Teachers consolidate work very effectively at the end of lessons by reviewing what has been tackled and checking pupils' understanding with very thorough questioning.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides a clear vision for developing teaching and learning further and increasing pupils' responsibility for their own learning. Day-to-day management of the department is very efficient and ensures that the committed team of teachers fulfil their responsibilities thoroughly and sustain the consistently good teaching. The department is well monitored. Assessment data is used very effectively to help in the planning of teaching and learning and to ensure that pupils are achieving appropriately. Good practice in the department is identified and there are developing procedures to ensure that it is shared throughout the department.

Progress since the last inspection

50. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. Lessons now contain a very good range of activities for pupils of all abilities. ICT is now a planned activity in all year groups and is constructively and regularly used as a teaching and learning resource.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. Pupils enter school with average literacy skills and attain above average standards by the end of Year 9. This is because of the strong emphasis in the English department on the development of all aspects of literacy together with the work of the literacy co-ordinator in disseminating good practice across the school. A significant feature is the developing efforts of all departments to include literacy targets in their planning and day-to-day teaching. This is already having a significant impact on the standards pupils are attaining across the curriculum. Pupils use good oral skills in their work and listen attentively. Good use of subject-specific vocabulary contributes to pupils becoming analytical readers with a good understanding of key concepts in different subjects. The literacy co-ordinator shows very good initiative and has a clear vision for the development of literacy across the school. She has co-ordinated the modification of all schemes of work to include literacy targets and ways of achieving them. Literacy is being very successfully promoted through the school focus on developing teaching and learning. Good monitoring and review procedures are used to help plan further improvement.

Modern Languages

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils promotes achievement.
- Pupils are conscientious and want to succeed.
- Timetable arrangements are a barrier to pupils' progress.
- Monitoring, evaluation and the use of data are insecure.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

52. Results in teacher assessments in Year 9 are consistently in line with the national averages at Level 5. Results in French in the combined full and short course examinations are average, but few pupils attained higher grades in 2003.

Standards and achievement

53. Pupils benefit from the school's strong focus on literacy, and from good support. They contribute willingly to their own learning, take pride in organising their work and make good use of opportunities to learn independently. Language skills are average, but higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 do not have enough time to develop and consolidate a command of tenses to enable them to reach the higher levels. Over time, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 gain confidence and competence in handling complex vocabulary and ideas in listening, reading and writing activities, but are given fewer opportunities to work at a similar depth in speaking. Middle and lower-attaining pupils progress in reading and listening and communicate their ideas satisfactorily but have difficulty in using verb forms and tenses. The 70-minute length of lessons, their arrangement on consecutive days for nearly half the pupils, to accommodate the availability of part-time staff, and the sharing of textbooks are barriers to achievement.

Teaching and learning

54. Teaching has some good features especially when ICT is used both in active teaching and in tracking progress. Pupils learn well in practical activities when these are used systematically to step up the level of challenge. Pupils' work is regularly tested and their new workbooks are an effective aid for homework. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by caring teachers. Marking is regular but not linked purposefully to National Curriculum levels to guide pupils. A lack of awareness of the 2001 changes to norms in teacher assessments affect appropriate target-setting and, to some extent, expectations.

Leadership and management

55. Suitable progress has been made in tackling the key issues of the previous inspection especially in developing listening activities and the use of ICT. Good new textbooks are being introduced. Monitoring and evaluating the work of the department to spread best practice are not rigorous enough to guarantee future improvements and some departmental documentation is disorganised.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning have improved which has led to good achievement.
- The effective assessment system identifies realistic targets which enables pupils to have a secure understanding of their progress.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good and provides a clear vision for improving standards.
- Pupils make only a limited use of ICT by pupils.
- The skills involved in problem solving are not fully developed.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

56. Results in the GCSE examinations and the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were broadly average, with the exception of grades A* to C at GCSE, which were below average.

Standards and achievement

57. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is average when they enter the school. Standards of work seen were average overall but in Years 7 to 9 standards are improving faster than the national rate. Pupils' achievement is good over the whole range of ability, including those with special educational needs. Mental skills have improved, mainly due to the emphasis placed on these activities at the start of lessons. Pupils' approach to calculations is more methodical than previously reported. Graphical skills and skills in geometrical constructions are developed well. However, the application of mathematical skills to solve problems is not developed to the same extent. The standard of mathematical investigations is sound, but the use of ICT is limited.

58. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 gained better than expected results in the 2003 GCSE examinations. The recent introduction of a modular approach to teaching in Years 10 and 11 has made a significant contribution to improving standards. Consequently, achievement is good.

Teaching and learning

59. Lessons are structured well with effective mental starters followed by the main part of the lesson offering an appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities. For example, high attaining pupils in Years 7 responded enthusiastically to demonstrations developed on the interactive white board before investigating sequences using graphical calculators. However, the use of ICT is not incorporated sufficiently into lessons. Pupils learn well and respond with a good level of interest to the careful teaching they receive. At present pupils are not developing independence in their learning because not enough emphasis is placed on problem-solving activities. Classes are managed well and lessons generally proceed briskly and at a pace that suits the ability of the pupils. The final part of the lesson reviews the content but does not always check pupils' efficiency of learning enough. A comprehensive assessment system linking the results of tests to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades is firmly in place, identifying any underachievement and providing pupils with an accurate knowledge of their progress. In this way pupils and teachers are aware of the level of achievement.

Leadership and management

60. The head of department provides very clear vision and direction with a commitment to improve standards that is shared by the whole department and the pupils. Day-to-day organisation is efficient. Standards have risen since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and achievement is now good.

Numeracy across the curriculum

61. The potential for using mathematical operations across the curriculum has been recognised and pupils show a good standard of mathematical competence in most subjects. Their mathematical skills are used well in geography and the link between ICT and numeracy in Years 7 to 9 is particularly strong. Calculations are performed accurately and pupils' graphical skills are used well throughout with data plotted and analysed effectively. Pupils are given targets to show them where they need to improve their competence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. As a result pupils learn well and achieve well.
- Results at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were above average.
- The curriculum is very good and promotes high achievement.
- Leadership is very good and management is good. As a result, standards have risen significantly in recent years.
- There is insufficient use of ICT by pupils and this limits the range of learning opportunities.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

62. Results at the end of Year 9 improved in 2003 and were average. GCSE results have improved markedly in recent years and in 2003 were above average and significantly above those in similar schools.

Standards and achievement

63. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average in science. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average, for example in understanding the stages in the human life cycle and the reactivity series of metals. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average, for example in understanding calculations relating to the cost of electrical energy, the ability to use the wave equation and knowledge of the absorption of heat by different surfaces. Throughout the school, pupils respond well in lessons. As a result they make good progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills and they achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

Teaching and learning

64. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. Occasionally teaching is excellent. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and good expectations. Explanations are clear.

Lessons are well planned, conducted at a good pace and involve a suitable variety of activity to engage pupils. Relationships with pupils are positive and teachers make good use of praise. There is a good provision for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills but insufficient attention is paid to promoting pupils' speaking. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning activities, including practical work, research, writing for a purpose, sequencing and matching activities and some mind-mapping tasks develop pupils' investigative skills well. The use of ICT by pupils has increased but remains insufficient as a result of a lack of resources. Pupil tracking and target setting procedures are very good but assessment is not used consistently to ensure a high level of challenge in all lessons. In some lessons judged satisfactory, the level of work does not challenge all pupils enough. Too long is spent on basic tasks and the teacher introduction is sometimes over-lengthy.

Leadership and management

65. Since the last inspection, as a result of very good leadership and management, standards at GCSE have risen significantly and investigative work has been strengthened. Thinking skills have been introduced in the lower school and applied science in Year 10. Pupils are responding well to this assignment-based, vocationally-oriented course. The curriculum is enriched well through science days, master-classes for the gifted and talented and a science club in the lower school. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a clear impact but is not yet implemented fully and consistently.

Example of outstanding practice

An example of excellent teaching with a lower ability set in Year 11

The teacher related the new topic of rates of reaction to earlier work on fermentation using brisk questioning to elicit key ideas from the pupils. Short demonstrations were used to develop the concept of rate of reaction, how this could be slow or fast, and the effect of key variables. Clear visual aids were used to illustrate how particle theory explained this. Good questioning encouraged pupils to make predictions about the effect of key variables and reinforced technical language such as concentration and pressure. Pupils investigated the effect of concentration on the rate of a reaction and the teacher probed pupils' understanding of the key pattern in the results. Very good written extension questions required pupils to apply their knowledge to a range of contexts, including some everyday ones such as cooking vegetables and other more scientific ones. In a brisk plenary the teacher used questioning to elicit the key points from the pupils, who showed a good grasp of the effect of key variables such as concentration, temperature, pressure of gases and surface area of solids on reaction rate. A very good homework activity, consisting of further extension questions, was set to consolidate pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Curriculum opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are increasing because of the good leadership and participation in the National Strategy for ICT.
- Teachers use assessment information very well to set targets and to monitor achievement.
- The progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 in using ICT across the curriculum is insufficiently monitored.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average (GNVQ)
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

66. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were below average. In 2003, results in the GNVQ examination were above average but below average in the GCSE course.

Standards and achievement

67. Pupils enter the school with skills that are below average. In Years 7 to 9, they are presented with a well-structured series of exciting and interesting topics that relate to useful everyday situations and experiences of computers. They have a good experience of using computers to produce attractive presentations and spreadsheet-based topics because the department has enthusiastically implemented the new ICT National Strategy. Higher-attaining pupils' access software confidently and move information from one application to another, manipulating images and text as necessary. Lower-attaining pupils are familiar with the use of the Internet, simple word processing and databases, but the progress of some is restricted by their low level of literacy skills that prevents them from reading or entering information accurately. By the end of Year 11, the pupils following the GNVQ course produce good quality presentations and have well-developed skills that they use to work out spreadsheet and database problems. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates because teachers match the work well to their needs. Pupils receive a satisfactory range of experiences across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, but this provision is inadequately co-ordinated and monitored at present.

Teaching and learning

68. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very keen to try out new technology and resources for the benefit of pupils. Lessons reflect the best aspects of the new National Strategy. All lessons start with a sharing of what teachers expect the pupils to learn and end with a summary to consolidate the work done. Very good use is made of interactive white boards for demonstration. Teachers give useful individual attention that helps all to achieve well. Year 10 and 11 pupils have become good independent learners. In the best lessons, teachers keep pupils focused by ensuring that lesson content is interesting and moving rapidly from one task to the next. It is this high pace of learning combined with the exciting and imaginative topics that ensures pupils achieve well overall. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good because they thoroughly enjoy using computers. Assessment and marking procedures are now very good. All pupils know how well they are doing, have clear targets and know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

69. The leadership and management of the department are good; a strong sense of direction and aspiration for improvement is clear. This has resulted in the department going from one of the least successful subjects to one of the best. The focus for improvement has rightly been in Years 7 to 9. Exciting schemes of work have been developed to incorporate the National Strategy, match the pupils' needs and quickly move them forward. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards are much higher, teaching is better and pupils now receive specialist ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9.

ICT across the curriculum

70. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is generally good in Years 7 to 9. Many subjects use computers well, ranging from excellent use of ICT in design and technology, where computers are used very well in design and manufacturing work, to music, where computers are not used at all in Years 7 to 9. The lack of formal planning for ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 leads to inconsistency of development for some pupils, although all pupils gain good experiences, for example through their use of computers in design and technology.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to the very good and challenging teaching.
- Pupils effectively develop the skills for independent learning and have many opportunities to develop their literacy and number skills.
- The very good marking provides information that helps pupils improve their work.
- Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils encourage confidence and benefit learning.
- The contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and citizenship.
- There remain too few opportunities for pupils to apply and practise ICT skills.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Excellent

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

71. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were average in 2003. GCSE results were significantly above the national average in 2002. Unconfirmed results for 2003 were similar and show pupils to do better in geography than most other subjects.

Standards and achievement

72. Pupils join the school with average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are above national expectations and achievement is very good. When Year 9 pupils were preparing an enquiry into migration in Egypt, they showed a good understanding of the processes involved and a range of skills that enabled them to work well independently. Their recently completed work on population shows that they appreciate the inter-relationships between man and the environment and understand the processes that can effect change. They express themselves clearly using the correct terms. A particular strength of their learning is the quality of their written work. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers are aware of their different needs.

73. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well and standards are well above the level expected at this stage. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. Their work is very well organised and presentation is very good. In Year 10, they produce coursework of a very good standard. Well-planned fieldwork in the Malvern Hills had enabled them to develop a very good range of skills. They explain in appropriate terms how processes are inter-related, for example in their study of demographic change. Literacy and number skills are practised frequently. Pupils produce well-structured answers to practice examination questions.

Teaching and learning

74. Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well. The teaching observed in Years 10 and 11 was excellent. Lessons were well planned and moved at a brisk pace so pupils produced a substantial amount of work of good quality. Such planning enabled pupils to build upon their existing

knowledge to extend their understanding. The specialist teacher used her very good subject knowledge to enrich the lessons with good examples and to make links with other topics. In an excellent lesson, clear explanation, very good resources and expert demonstration were combined as pupils learned how to draw and annotate sketch maps. The teaching of non-specialist teachers was very good because of thorough preparation, very good support and teachers' awareness of pupils' needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and make these very clear. As a result, pupils accept a good level of responsibility for their learning. Considerable progress has been made in using assessment information to match work to the needs of individual pupils and to monitor their progress. Marking is thorough and provides much useful information towards improvement. Assessment is now closely linked to national and examination criteria. An appropriate emphasis is placed on developing literacy skills, including speaking and listening, and good use is made of the library where pupils access the Internet for research. As at the time of the last report, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT.

75. Relationships are very positive. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to the lively and challenging teaching that includes a wide variety of activities which match different learning styles. Pupils are confident and willing to ask as well as answer questions. Teachers challenge pupils to give reasons for their answers. Homework supports learning and is set regularly. The subject makes a very considerable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and citizenship.

Leadership and management

76. The head of department leads with enthusiasm and manages the department very effectively. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in higher standards. The department has both the commitment and capacity to achieve further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

Main strengths

- Significant improvement in results since the last report.
- The inspirational leadership of the head of department and her excellent management of the subject.
- Pupils' very good attainment and achievement.
- Very good teaching overall, and excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11, that stimulates pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
- The very important contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and citizenship.
- Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils that encourage confidence and support the learning.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Excellent

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

77. Examination results were above the national average and the average for the school in 2002. Unconfirmed results for 2003 show a further significant rise. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were above average.

Standards and achievement

78. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is average. At the end of Year 9 standards are markedly above average and achievement is very good. Pupils currently in Year 9 are working above the level expected. They have sound knowledge and understanding of different periods in history and the relative importance of events and individuals. They are well practised in gleaning evidence from sources. Year 8 pupils showed a developing understanding of interpretation as they reviewed sources relating to Elizabeth I. Higher-attaining pupils made judgements regarding the usefulness and reliability of evidence. The work on the outbreak of the Great War completed by pupils in Year 9 shows a secure understanding of cause and effect. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve very well and the standard of work is well above that expected. Year 10 pupils, studying 'Bloody Sunday', showed a good factual knowledge of the underlying causes of the events and those involved in the conflict in Ireland. They developed respect for evidence and recognised that events and actions may be interpreted in different ways. Year 11 pupils showed very good recall of prior learning and used this in identifying reasons why people voted for Hitler. Essay work shows that teachers insist pupils' support inferences with evidence.

Teaching and Learning

79. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and excellent in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' subject knowledge, understanding of course requirements and enthusiasm ensure that pupils are interested, attentive and capable of sustained concentration. Teachers provide rich descriptions, relating one period or event to another and providing interesting details about important figures. They have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of their work and behaviour. Expert and challenging questioning encouraged pupils to show their knowledge and understanding, and this contributed significantly to their learning. The methods used and the work set met the needs of all pupils. The good planning of learning opportunities and detailed preparation of lessons ensures pupils develop their subject skills and have frequent opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Teachers deal sensitively and objectively with controversial issues, as when Year 11 pupils studied Nazi Germany. In such ways and in the context of the value-laden topics studied, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Good progress has been made in integrating the teaching and learning of citizenship. Pupils' work is marked regularly, promptly and to a high standard. They are aware of their level of attainment and are able to check this against information provided. They know what they must do to improve. Homework is set regularly. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers have relevant information about their requirements.

Leadership and management

80. The head of department provides inspirational leadership and manages the department most effectively. Much has been achieved over the past four years to raise standards. Improvement since the previous report has been excellent. The department has the commitment and capacity to achieve further improvement.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in all years.
- Teaching is very good.
- Management is very good and leadership is excellent.
- ICT is not used in lessons.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

81. Results in the 2003 GCSE full and short course examinations were well above average.

Standards and achievement

82. Pupils enter the school with average standards in religious education. They gain a very good knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the main religions in British society. In Year 9 lessons, pupils used their knowledge and understanding of the Christian calendar to discuss food, customs and colours of Christian festivals. Very good attention is paid to the development of pupils' literacy skills as seen in one Year 8 lesson on Islam.

83. Pupils' oral skills are often good and there are opportunities for them to express their own thoughts in lessons and in work seen, for example in Year 11 on 'the sanctity of life'. Pupils maturely discuss moral issues, such as prejudice, drawing perceptively on their own experiences to exemplify their views. The very good relationships amongst the pupils enhance the quality of discussion because the pupils listen to and responsibly consider points of view other than their own.

Teaching and learning

84. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all, including those with special educational needs. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour. These qualities result in pupils' good application to their work, with very good concentration and pace of learning in most lessons. Teachers are very well informed about the courses they teach. A strong feature of the lessons is the way in which pupils respond, listen and concentrate.

Leadership and management

85. The head of department provides excellent vision and direction. The department is well established and responsibilities are shared amongst teachers. Much effort has gone into the examination courses for Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work and writing frames in class and for homework are detailed and meet the needs of all pupils. Assessment systems are thorough. The department makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual development of pupils in all years. Although pupils are encouraged to use ICT, opportunities are not yet provided within religious education lessons.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.
- Excellent planning, organisation and assessment which lead to very good teaching.
- An excellent curriculum, with very good links with industry, and very good extra-curricular provision.
- Excellent leadership and management.
- Consistency in day-to-day marking to ensure that pupils know how to improve the quality of their work.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Excellent

Commentary

Examination results

86. Results in the GCSE examinations held in 2002 were well above the national average. The results for 2003 continued this rising trend.

Standards and achievement

87. Attainment on entry to the school is average and at the end of Year 9 is well above average. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Girls' achievement rapidly improves in Years 7 to 9 because of good planning and teaching. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above average, again representing very good achievement. There were no significant differences in attainment of minority ethnic groups, or girls with special educational needs. The quality of design folders and practical work produced in all specialist areas in Year 11 is very high for many girls. Lower-attaining girls and those with special educational needs make very good progress, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

88. Teaching was very good overall and ranged from satisfactory to excellent. The quality of learning matches that of teaching. All lessons were planned well, but in the best, a very good range of teaching and learning styles was used and girls were challenged and remained engaged in their work throughout the lessons. In a Year 9 graphics lesson, girls worked hard on the completion of point-of-sale display stands for mobile telephones. In this lesson, the quality of work was high, with a wide range of graphic skills evident. In a Year 7 food technology lesson, a lower-attaining group produced a very wide range of bread-based products as a result of the teacher's good planning and preparation. Relationships between girls and teachers are very good, as are relationships amongst the girls. Long and medium-term planning are excellent. The quality and range of curriculum opportunities are excellent, with very good extra-curricular opportunities. Links with industry and the community are very good and these are used well to enhance learning. Methods of assessment are excellent, and the information gained is used very well to inform subsequent teaching. Day-to-day assessment lacks the total consistency required to ensure that pupils know how to improve the quality of their work. ICT is used widely and effectively to support teaching and learning and there have been very good developments in literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management

89. The leadership and management of the head of faculty are excellent as is the work of the assistant head of faculty. Exceptional effort is made by all staff to ensure that all aspects of the subject are as good as they can be. Standards in design and technology are high because of the hard work and commitment of staff, and pupils respond accordingly. Accommodation is of very good quality, but teaching and storage space is insufficient to meet curriculum demand. Provision of resources is excellent, and enhances pupils' learning. Progress in meeting technology college targets has been very good. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is very good. Teaching is very good overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching. All pupils make very good progress and GCSE results are well above average. The use of ICT is much improved. Very constructive use is made of performance data.

Engineering

Provision in engineering is **excellent**.

The school offers a GCSE course in applied engineering. This course will be examined for the first time in the summer of 2004. No comparisons with previous years are possible.

	Year 11
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent

Commentary

Standards and achievement

90. Standards of work seen in lessons, and in the sample of work were well above average, with examples of very good work from higher-attaining pupils. In one lesson, girls used computer software in a very effective manner to model electronic circuits, and used technical terms with confidence.

Teaching and learning

91. Three engineering lessons were seen and in these the quality of teaching ranged from good to excellent. The quality of learning matched that of the teaching. In an excellent lesson, girls worked with a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm on planning of their practical tasks and made very good progress. Standards of work in this lesson were very high.

Leadership and management

92. Engineering is part of the design and technology faculty. The judgements on leadership and management also apply to engineering.

Child development

93. Two child development lessons were sampled. Overall the teaching and learning in these lessons was good and pupils achieved well. Examination results are average. The quality of work in the sample provided was good, with some higher-attaining girls producing work of a very high standard.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high because of good teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes well-developed strands of critical studies and ICT as well as a good range of two and three-dimensional studies.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' observational drawing skills are not as well developed as other aspects of their work.
- Resources are insufficient to enable whole-class discussion analysis of artworks to take place.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

94. GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average. They were also above the average for girls nationally. This has been maintained relatively steadily over recent years.

Standards and achievement

95. Pupils enter the school with standards in art that are below average. By the end of Year 9, they have average knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject. This represents good achievement over time, given their standards when they join the school. Pupils work competently in a broad range of media and processes. Painting and colour work are particular strengths of the work. Observational drawing is less well developed. Pupils' individual written research studies of art and design are capably produced and show a good level of interest in the subject. Pupils with special educational needs or those pupils who come from a very low starting point in the subject achieve very well over the key stage and narrow the gap between their performance and others'. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills are well developed and they produce work of high quality. They work confidently in developing their individual studies in both two and three dimensions. The use of colour and the quality of design are very strong features of the girls' work in general. Written research, annotations of sketches or studies and critical reflection are also highly developed. Pupils' show a high level of personal interest in their work and invest much creative effort in bringing their work to fruition. The work of talented pupils is of the highest quality and shows a heightened sensitivity to the visual and expressive qualities of the media used.

Teaching and learning

96. Pupils achieve well because of the high quality teaching and their very positive attitude to learning. Teachers have a good command of the subject and are well informed about the requirements of the examination courses. They plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils and engage their interest. Clear teaching and learning objectives are shared with the pupils. Teachers use a good range of strategies within their teaching including drawing and demonstrating. Less well developed generally is the use of whole-class discussion to explore and analyse works of art and design. Resources for this aspect of the course are inadequate. Assessment is very thorough and this enables pupils to have a clear idea of their progress and what they should do to improve further.

Leadership and management

97. The department is managed well. Schemes of work have been established that provide a well-structured teaching programme. The department has successfully tackled the issues highlighted in the previous inspection. The curriculum is now broad and balanced. It includes well developed strands of critical studies and ICT, as well as a good range of two and three-dimensional work. The programme of visits to art galleries and museums provides significant enrichment for the pupils.

Music

Provision in music is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are enthusiastic and encourage pupils in lessons.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory because tasks are unchallenging and not appropriate for the age of pupils and the range of ability within each class.
- Lessons do not contain sufficient meaningful musical experiences.
- Pupils' understanding is not checked by questioning or evaluative marking.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Poor	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Poor
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Poor

Commentary

Examination results

98. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were not available.

Standards and achievement

99. Pupils' standards in music when they enter the school are average. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum. Standards of performing and composing are well below expectation. Year 11 pupils have satisfactory performing skills as singers and instrumentalists. However, their performing and composing skills are well below average for the stage in the course. Overall, pupils' achievement during the courses and in relation to their abilities is poor.

Teaching and learning

100. In lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, teachers have good relationships with classes and give encouragement and individual support. However, lessons are poorly planned because tasks are well below what might be expected for the age and ability of the pupils. Some tasks were preceded by long explanations and did not provide pupils with an appropriate musical experience. Teachers gave supportive individual help to pupils but the challenge and expectation were well below what the pupils were capable of. Pupils behaved well and were willing learners. The poor range and condition of classroom instruments further limited their progress. GCSE pupils in Year 11 were well taught by a teacher recently appointed on a part-time basis. The lesson observed was well taught. Pupils' needs had been well analysed and the task was appropriate for their varying needs and aptitudes. However, learning was unsatisfactory because previous experiences had not equipped them for composing and arranging music confidently. The range of performing skills demonstrated was in line with course expectations.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership of the department is poor. Day-to-day management is orderly, but planning is not linked to realistic standards for these pupils, and expectations within the department are far too low. For the first time in many years, too few pupils have opted for GCSE music in Year 10. A good range of opportunities for extra-curricular music is provided, mostly with the help of visiting teachers. Instrumental lessons are available and this aspect of provision is well managed. Good opportunities for social and cultural development are provided through visits to concerts and other musical events

in Birmingham. The school's senior management is aware of the present deficiencies in provision, which result from problems in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. The arrangement for improving the GCSE teaching in Year 11 in 2002 and 2003 has been beneficial. The very good provision noted by the last inspection has deteriorated significantly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well by the end of Years 9 and 11 in the compulsory course and the GCSE course because of the very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very good and provide a clear sense of purpose for the subject.
- Poor accommodation restricts standards and development of provision.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour result in a very good atmosphere in lessons.
- Very good provision is made for the support of pupils' basic skills, particularly literacy skills.

	Year 9	Year 11 compulsory/GCSE
Standards	Average	Average/Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good/Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

102. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were above the national average and continue a rising trend over the past three years.

Standards and achievement

103. No lessons were observed in Year 9. However, very effective departmental assessment procedures indicate that the majority of pupils are attaining standards in line with course expectations. Achievement is very good because standards on entry were below what was expected for pupils' ages. In dance, pupils' choreographic skills are secure and the more capable know the importance of timing, and vary pathways and levels to improve the quality of their performance. In gymnastics, the less capable plan basic routines, using balances, but the quality of their performance suffers somewhat because of weak body management. The very good standard of teaching and learning has led to good improvement for the great majority who are working at appropriate levels for their age.

104. In lessons seen in Year 11, standards are average in the compulsory course. In basketball, for example, basic skills are secure for the majority. In relation to their physical capabilities, pupils have been enabled to make very good progress since joining the school. Hence, their achievement is good. No practical GCSE lessons were seen in Year 11. In their theory lessons, the majority have a good understanding of factors affecting performance in sport and are presently developing well their knowledge and understanding of moral issues surrounding fair play in sport. Pupils use ICT well to help them in the presentation of their coursework projects as well as class work. In the junior sports leaders award (JSLA) course, Year 11 pupils were successfully learning to teach and coach in preparation for their future sessions with primary school children.

Teaching and learning

105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years and results in very good progress for pupils. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught and expect a high standard of behaviour. Pace, challenge and the full involvement of pupils in learning are particularly strong features of teaching. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson, well-planned and structured activities ensured pupils were all actively involved throughout and improving the skills and techniques required for canon and unison. All were thoroughly on task throughout, as well as being purposefully involved in peer evaluation. As a result, they deepened their knowledge and understanding well. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons. Thus, they know what is expected of them. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, which enhances the quality of learning, and enables all to achieve well. Teachers circulate very well in lessons, and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils aware of their capabilities. However, the marking of GCSE theory work shows some inconsistency. Some comments are not followed up and pupils are not always being told what they could do to improve the quality of their work further.

Leadership and management

106. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Staff work very effectively as a team, with clear vision and direction for the subject. However, poor quality accommodation means it is difficult to raise standards even further and limits the range of activities that can be taught, for example, racquet sports and track athletics. The compact nature of the gymnasium also restricts pupils' standards in basketball. Shower facilities are unsatisfactory. Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends pupils' learning experiences, and enables the more capable to represent the school in competitive fixtures. As a result, individual pupils have gained representative honours at county level in a variety of sports, and one pupil is a member of the national development squad for netball. Year 7 and 8 netball teams are currently district champions, the under-14 cross-country team are Birmingham schools' champions, and the Year 10 athletics team has had local success. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Drama

107. All pupils have drama lessons in Years 7 to 9, leading to a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results for 2003 were above the national average. Two drama lessons were observed and teaching was very good in both. A stimulating range of activities effectively challenged pupils of all abilities. They responded very well and made very good progress in the developing oral and expressive skills. Standards were above average and pupils in a Year 11 GCSE lesson developed their characterisation skills through very good improvisation and through their evaluation of the work of others in the group. The subject is well managed and clear procedures for assessment and review of teaching support the high standards of teaching and learning.

Media Studies

108. Media studies has just been introduced into Year 10 as an optional course for GCSE. One lesson was observed. Teaching was good. The lesson was well planned and a good range of activities was successfully used to introduce pupils to a variety of film-making techniques. The course has been well planned for this first year and the volume and quality of work completed by pupils indicates effective learning by very well motivated pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Visiting speakers make a good contribution to pupils' understanding.
- The introduction of citizenship was well planned as part of PSHE and other subjects across the curriculum.
- The school council is active and effective.
- Pupils do not recognise citizenship as a separate subject.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

109. Form tutor time includes citizenship and careers, and supplements contributions from other subjects to the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils' developing discussion skills mean that, despite the informal nature of citizenship as a subject, pupils attain average understanding in the relevant topics they discuss. They are developing a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others through their participation in school and community activities. Their knowledge and understanding of government, law and economics are average.

110. During the inspection, several lessons were seen which incorporated aspects of citizenship. Though teachers did not explicitly link these aspects with citizenship, pupils achieved well because of the good teaching.

111. Where teachers make links with citizenship, pupils make valuable connections. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, pupils were working out real-life problems involving money, which led to stimulating discussions on the reasons why people save and the advantages and disadvantages of credit cards. They were aware of the importance of these topics, and that they formed part of learning about citizenship because the teacher had made this clear to them.

112. The school prepared for introducing citizenship a year ago by planning which subjects would contain elements of the course and incorporating relevant topics in PSHE. Planning in PSHE is very good overall and a comprehensive scheme of work guides the teaching.

113. Visiting speakers enrich the provision and some opportunities are provided for pupils to assist in the community. PSHE is very well led and several teachers manage aspects of the course well. All teachers contribute to the evaluation of the course and this has resulted in improvements. Schemes of work are regularly revised to include relevant and topical trends, for example alcohol abuse in young people. The school council and older pupils have opportunities to make suggestions in respect of citizenship. Monitoring, to ensure that all the elements of the course have been covered, and to evaluate the quality of the teaching is planned as part of the regular departmental reviews. In PSHE, positive and supportive assessment identifies key learning points for improvement, particularly in pupil self-evaluation pieces.

114. The school council provides the pupils with an opportunity to voice their views, and is most effective. Meetings have been frequent and pupils feel that their views are acted upon well.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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