

INSPECTION REPORT

CONNAUGHT SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Leytonstone, London

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103095

Headteacher: Miss Pat Barford

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 March 2004

Inspection number: 264325

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	Miss P Barford
School address:	Connaught Road Leytonstone London
Postcode:	E11 4AB
Telephone number:	020 8539 3029
Fax number:	020 8558 3827
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr N Patterson
Date of previous inspection:	5 – 9 October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a popular 11 to 16 comprehensive school for girls serving its immediate local community. It has a high reputation. It is smaller than average with 601 girls on roll. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. This reflects the fact that Leytonstone is situated in an area of East London characterised by social deprivation. The school is very ethnically diverse. The main ethnic groups are: 20 per cent are Pakistani, 15 per cent are white UK with a further four per cent of any other white background including Irish. Fourteen per cent Indian, four per cent are Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi and a similar percentage Asian or Asian British or have other Asian background. Fourteen per cent are Black British Caribbean, 12 per cent are Black British African. Six per cent are dual Caribbean white heritage. The percentage of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is very high. There are 22 refugees and asylum seekers. Forty-one pupils are supported through the ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG). Most of the bilingual girls are second or third generation and speak fluent English.

The school attracts the full range of ability but overall attainment on entry to the school is below average, particularly when compared to girls' performance nationally.

The percentage of pupils with special educational needs including those with statements is broadly in line with the national average. The mobility of pupils, that is the percentage joining or leaving the school is broadly average. The school is a Beacon School and is also a Specialist Language College. It has been awarded Investors in People status. The school is member of the Goldman Sachs consortium of London schools. (Goldman Sachs is the school's sponsor for the Specialist Language College.) It is a partner in a Leading Edge Programme¹ and is federated with another local school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

¹ This is part of the school's links and collaborative programme with other schools.

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Special educational needs
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32708	Helena Renfrew-Knight	Lay inspector	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
18065	Susan Dutson	Team inspector	Design and technology
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31673	John Gywer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music Performing arts
27719	Paul Metcalfe	Team inspector	Mathematics
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science
16007	Paddy Orr	Team inspector	English
14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	Art and design
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
23449	Howard Seymour	Team inspector	History
7636	Anil Sinha	Team inspector	English as an additional language Spanish
23004	Christopher Taylor	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
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2710	David Young	Team inspector	Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Connaught School is a very good school with some excellent features. Girls achieve well and often very well to attain high standards in GCSE examinations. This is achieved by; the high proportion of good and very good teaching, the development of girls' excellent attitudes, clear structures, high aspirations and excellent ethos. The girls' achievement is supported further by the very high quality of care and support they receive. The school is a strong, friendly community with shared values based on mutual respect. Above all, the school stimulates, to an excellent degree, the girls' desire to learn. As a consequence they too add significant value to what they are taught through their own learned self-motivation. In relation to its basic income, the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, supported very effectively by senior staff, provides very good leadership, which is both challenging and supportive; she is reflective, knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to continue to take the school forward. She is supported by good management and leadership across the school.
- The very good relationships with the pupils and the teamwork of the school foster a unity of expectation. The school uses its small size and the fact that it is single sex to particularly good effect to raise girls' aspirations.
- What is taught is interesting, providing a breadth of good experience supplemented by very rich opportunities to extend pupils' learning.
- Members of staff display a manifest commitment to the girls' success.
- Areas for further development are: the introduction of citizenship; improvement in aspects of information and communication technology (ICT); sharing the good practice seen in some departments particularly in the use of assessment; enhancing the learning resource centre – all these elements are identified within the school improvement plan.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has addressed the key issues well. Standards have risen.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

When Connaught's GCSE results are averaged over three years they are well above the national median for girls. When compared to similar schools, performance at GCSE is in the top five per cent of schools. Overall progress is very good because attainment on entry, although comprehensive in nature is below average. The trend at GCSE is rising at a faster rate than nationally. **The girls achieve well and often very well.**

The performance in English, mathematics and science in the Year 9 tests is close to the national median for girls in their age group when averaged over the three years 2001 to 2003. Overall results in 2003 were below the national average but were very high when compared to similar schools-in the top five per cent. The trend for improvement is below the national trend. The school sets realistic but appropriately challenging targets at GCSE based on very good data. The trend for improvement at GCSE is above the national trend. The school monitors performance of individuals very carefully and is quick to pick up on individuals who are underachieving. It monitors the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds carefully; numbers taking examinations are often relatively small and results change year-on-year. In lessons, all groups made similar progress. Pupils with English

as an additional language, those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils achieve well and often very well - most exceed their examination targets.

A factor in the girls' good examination performance is that they develop good skills in literacy and numeracy and competence in ICT. Homework is used well to extend learning opportunities and to develop independent study skills so that girls are able to cope well with the demands of coursework.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and their behaviour is very good. **The provision for the spiritual moral and social development of pupils is excellent.** In 2002/3 pupils' attendance was excellent. The school works extremely hard and successfully to ensure that overall attendance is very high in comparison with other schools. This high rate of attendance is an important factor in pupils' overall achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good with very good features. The quality of teaching is good. It is often very good. It is the regular experience of good and very good teaching that reinforces the ethos and values of the school and provides the momentum for girls' desire for learning. Teachers' relationships with the girls are very good. What they are taught is interesting and relevant and girls have a broad experience, enhanced by their experience in languages. The provision for careers education is outstanding and fuels girls' high aspirations. There are rich learning opportunities, which occur outside the framework of lessons. There is high quality care; members of staff are very committed to the girls and in fostering their success.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance of the school is good. The school is not meeting the requirements for citizenship and in this specific regard governance is unsatisfactory. Because of the influence of the headteacher **leadership and management are very good**; leaders are very good role models. Communication is open; members of staff are supportive of each other. There is a strong sense of teamwork. The school operates with integrity. The school challenges the possibility of becoming complacent very well through its involvement in initiatives such as being a Beacon school, a Specialist Language College and through its work as part of a federation with another school. A high priority is placed on staff development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has a high reputation, deservedly so, in the local community. It serves its local community and is oversubscribed. The parents' responses to the questionnaires sent out were positive. Almost all thought that the school expected their child to work hard and do her best. About a fifth of respondents thought that there could be more information about their child's progress. The school does seek parents' views through its parent association 'Connaught Connections' and has consulted them about the reporting system. Attendance at the parents' meeting to discuss pupils' work is high.

Pupils speak warmly about the school and the support they receive. The oldest pupils stressed that: they felt secure, they considered the school friendly, liked attending and one girl- with a self-deprecating gesture, recognising the possible cliché- thought that the school was 'family'.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has a clear idea of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. These are the introduction of citizenship, improvement in aspects of information and communication technology (ICT), sharing the good practice in the use of assessment and enhancing the library resource centre. These are articulated in the school improvement plan. The provision for citizenship is rightly given high priority.

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Meet the full requirements of citizenship education.
- Whilst the school does not meet the requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship, the governing body has a clear rationale to explain this.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well and often very well and attain high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE are well above average in the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades and A* to G grades and in overall average points² per pupil.
- In Year 9 tests in English, mathematics and science standards are below average but are very high - in the top five per cent of schools when the results are compared to similar schools.
- The progress that pupils make from Year 7 to Year 9 is in the top five per cent of similar schools and the progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is well above average.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is comprehensive in nature but is overall below average, particularly when compared to girls nationally. The performance in the core subjects in the Year 9 tests is close to the national median for girls in their age group when averaged over the three years 2001 to 2003. When the results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 are compared to those nationally they are overall below average. However, the value added by the school from the girls' starting point is very high- in the top five per cent of schools in that category- so that their results compared to similar schools are very high- again, in the top five per cent of schools. Girls are making very good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 and achieving well and often very well. That said, the average points score per pupil shows a decline from a high point in 2001 so that the trend in the school's average point scores is below the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.9 (33.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.7 (32.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.0 (33.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 120 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Over the past three years standards at GCSE have been well above the national average and also above the average for girls. The trend in the school's average total GCSE points score per pupil is above the national trend. The percentage gaining five or more A* to C grades and five A* to G grades, including mathematics and English is well above average. The pupils make well above average progress from Year 9 through to their GCSE examinations. They achieve well and often very well.

² Average points score per pupil is another method of analysing examination and test results. Essentially each grade or level is given a numerical value. These are totalled and divided by the number taking the examination or test. In a sense it is a fairer method of comparing examination results in that the results of all pupils are taken into account – not just those who reach a particular threshold.

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	64 (63)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.4 (41.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 129 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards in almost all subjects in 2003 were above the national average, many significantly so. The exception was in art where the results were much lower than anticipated. The art results account for the slight drop in overall average point score. The school sets and meets realistic but appropriately challenging targets based on very good data. This applies to the whole group and individuals. The school monitors performance of individuals very carefully and is quick to pick up on individuals who are underachieving.
- The local education authority produces detailed analyses of examination and National Curriculum tests. Numbers in particular ethnic groups at Connaught are often small which can give rise to significant swings and changes year-on-year. In the Year 9 tests, Asian Bangladeshi and Asian Indian (there is a clear rising trend with these two ethnic groups), Chinese, Black other, white Irish, white UK performed above school average. Asian Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean performed around the school average. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, Black African, Black Caribbean, Dual heritage and white UK girls performed below the school's average. However the numbers in these particular groups were small – about ten and the previous year produced a different pattern. What is important is that the school monitors the progress of all individuals carefully.
- Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and often very well making similar progress to their peers. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs also do well, often very well making very good progress against their targets.
- Pupils communicate effectively in their writing. They write well for a wide range of purposes, with due attention to content, organisation and meaning. Most learn to be confident in using Standard English and the formal language required in examinations. Standards of spelling, punctuation and presentation vary considerably, but are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Standards of reading are good as are standards of speaking and listening. The school has a long history and success in participating in formal local and regional debates which build on the skills developed in classroom presentations. Pupils' mathematical skills are good and ensure that their learning in any particular subject area is not held back by lack of mathematical ability. All girls have a basic competence in ICT and take full advantage of the computer clubs to extend their skills or conduct their research.
- The remainder of the report explores the factors that are leading to the girls achieving so well and attaining well above average standards at GCSE.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school has a strong ethos, which fosters excellent attitudes to learning and excellent personal development amongst the girls. There is an overall excellent provision for the girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The standard of behaviour is very good and the level of attendance is very high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' high aspirations.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for attending school and desire to learn.
- Pupils' maturity, co-operation and respect for others.

Commentary

8. Pupils demonstrate high aspirations. Most go on to further education. The school plays an important role in fostering these aspirations through encouraging participation in extra-curricular activities and fostering respect for involvement and effort. It provides the girls with opportunities through its participation in schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, the Excellence in the Cities (EiC) Aim Higher Initiative and the Gifted & Talented Programme at Warwick University. Girls participate in and frequently win competitions such as the English Speaking Union public speaking competition.
9. Pupils like coming to school and attendance at the school is consistently well above the national median. Attendance continues to be very high in Years 10 and 11 and this very high rate of attendance is an important factor in pupils' overall achievement. The very high levels of attendance and low levels of unauthorised absence are a result of the school's very good systems to monitor attendance and follow up absence that includes first day calling. Punctuality is very good although a small number do arrive late, some frequently.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.4
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	1.1

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

10. The school is seen as providing stability and consistency. Pupils have an excellent desire to learn which is reflected in their strong participation in class and additional activities, attentiveness and willingness to listen to others.
11. Pupils demonstrate maturity and respect for each other's performances in class and in assembly. They are self-confident and frequently take the initiative, for example, developing a behaviour contract which all staff and pupils signed or requesting a special assembly to reflect on the Turkish earthquake as many pupils are from Turkish families. The colleges that girls move onto comment upon the girls' maturity and capacity to work hard.
12. The school draws upon its multi-cultural composition to foster respect and understanding for different backgrounds, customs and beliefs. Different festivals are marked within the school calendar and in assemblies. Bilingual girls are entered to take GCSE in their home language and their success celebrated.
13. There are some individuals with difficult problems, which result in poor behaviour, and the pupils' questionnaire and bullying survey indicate that there are incidents of bullying in the school. However, the school and pupils work hard to combat these incidents through peer mentoring, the prefects scheme, the behaviour management contract, discussions in personal health and social education and the work of the tutors and heads of year. Girls believe that bullying will not be tolerated within the school and any incidents will be dealt with swiftly.

14. The school uses temporary exclusion as part of a tariff of sanctions – a 'short sharp shock'. Given their numbers in the school there was in 2002/3 a very high incidence of exclusion of mixed white Caribbean heritage and Black British Caribbean pupils, 24 out of 46 exclusions relating to 15 girls. Whilst the incidence of re-offending is low with other ethnic groups- the 'short sharp shock' is obviously effective- this is not the case with Caribbean heritage pupils. The school monitors exclusions carefully, including by ethnicity and the reasons for temporary exclusion are clear and relate to the actions of the individuals concerned such as fighting. Exclusions are reported regularly to the governing body.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	89	5	0
White – any other White background	19	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	36	11	0
Mixed – White and Asian	10	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	17	5	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	85	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	122	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	22	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	22	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	85	13	0
Black or Black British – African	73	5	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	1	0

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

15. How these very positive outcomes in terms of pupils 'attitudes and behaviour are achieved is not that easy to explain because of the close inter-relationship of a number of factors. The school has a very powerful ethos, which generates a momentum for learning. In part this stems from a historical tradition. The school has had a high reputation for a significant number of years. Parents regard it as a good school and they value the fact that their child attends. Year 7 pupils talked about the fact that it was a good school and they knew that they would get a good education there. In a sense they knew what was expected of them and they shared its values.
16. There are a number of members of staff who have been at the school for a lengthy period, bridging the generations of girls who have passed through the school. The sense of former generations of girls who have attended the school and achieved success remains very strong. The school has a strong sense of its own identity forged through its history. It has a degree of what might affectionately be described as quirkiness in, for example, its retention of some of its history, the formality of desks with lids, coats hung outside classrooms, its sense of formality which sculpt a sense of tradition.
17. Members of staff also have a very strong, properly professional but nevertheless emotional commitment to the school and to the girls. Members of staff talk about the 'Connaught way' and clearly this is now founded on a very genuine sense of expectation of mutual respect for the girls. It goes beyond courtesy, kindness, support and encouragement, though clearly all

these elements are present, to a community expression of high expectations. Members of staff are very good role models for the pupils. Parents discussing what they liked about the school spoke of its clear structure and the clarity of its high expectations. It is the constant, and consistent reinforcement of these structures and expectations by all staff, which goes towards understanding the effect of the 'Connaught way'.

18. The other very strong factor is the overall excellent provision for the girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although, it is not codified into a policy –somewhat irritatingly from an inspection standpoint, because some form of codification is usually required to ensure that it happens – it is a powerful and integral to the community's values. The school uses its single sex nature very well. There is a consistency in the way staff develop girls' sense of self-identity, worth and sense of purpose. In part, it links back to the school's traditions of teaching young women to aspire and to achieve- a thread very apparent in the assemblies seen during the inspection marking International Women's Day and in the displays around the school, but it is also linked to an enthusiastic pursuit of learning seen in lessons, coupled with an assumption that the girls can and will succeed and the level of support to ensure that they do.
19. This consistent fostering of self-belief and recognition of the girls' hopes, ambitions and their inner life, including their often deep religious convictions, fosters a very strong sense of spirituality. The chair of governors, struggling to find the words for these difficult concepts talked about the aspiration of the school not just lying with academic success but also developing the personality and character of the girls - developing a feeling of value and self-worth in the girls so that they want to learn and feel able 'to make a difference'. A Year 11 pupil talking about the school and in an attempt to find the words to sum up her feelings eventually described it as being a very '*aspirable*'. The linguistic invention is apt. It is a school where you are *able to aspire*. It is a school where the structures and support allow girls to thrive, to grow and to discover their potential. The 'Connaught way' - perhaps is summed up by being a school, which provides the space and opportunity, the means and the support for girls to develop that potential.
20. There are two further facets to this ethos. One is the very strong sense of security that the school engenders which goes beyond the physical protection of the locked doors and the close circuit television monitoring - important as that these are. When you enter the school there is a tangible sense of order and structure, which act as a barrier to the trauma and difficulties that some girls experience outside school. This is created carefully, through the emphasis of the displays, of the artwork and the flowers on the windowsills being carefully tended after the half term holiday. Girls appreciated this sense of security – threatened only by the seagulls at break and lunchtime. They also appreciate the small touches that go to make it a pleasant environment.
21. The final very powerful element in the school's ethos is the girls themselves. Older girls are very positive role models and peer pressure to succeed and do well works as by osmosis on all girls. Year 11 pupils are powerful ambassadors of the school's success. The result of this excellent attitude is that the girls themselves add value to what the school is trying to do. They bring their interest and capacity for work to the learning. Older girls appreciate the early formal structures that ensured, for example, that they did their homework and appreciate how and why the structures are relaxed as they get older. They learn to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.
22. To summarise the reasons why the school is so successful in developing such positive attitudes, it is appropriate to use the words of the headteacher in her self-evaluation of the school written as part of the inspection process:

'We have created within our school a calm centre of enjoyment of learning and a community where our young people are safe to pursue their interests and personal ambitions and where they are shown the wealth of possibilities open to them.'

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good with very good features. Teaching is good and often very good. It is the high proportion of good and very good teaching that reinforces the ethos and values of the school and provides the momentum for girls' desire for learning. In this school good teaching often results in very good learning over time. What they are taught is interesting and relevant and girls have a broad experience. It is enhanced by their experience in languages. The provision for careers education is excellent. There are rich learning opportunities, which occur outside the framework of lessons. There is high quality care; the formal network of support is extended further by the very strong informal support guidance. Members of staff are very committed to the girls and in fostering their success.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good. It is often very good. The attitudes of the girls add significant value to their learning so that over time learning is very good across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- It is the high proportion of good and very good teaching that reinforces the ethos and values of the school and provides the momentum for girls' desire for learning and which adds value to the quality of teaching.
- The quality of learning is enhanced further by teachers' very good relationships with the girls. Teachers know them well and are extremely supportive.

Commentary

Judgements about teaching are made on more evidence than simply the statistics of the sample of lessons seen.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 118 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	25 (21%)	62 (53%)	26 (22%)	3 (3%)	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 percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding

23. Teaching is good across the school. Pupils get a good experience in classrooms and it is the regularity of that good experience which reinforces, not only the values of the school but also constantly reinforces good learning. Pupils themselves add value to the quality of teaching so that learning over time is enhanced by their own efforts particularly in the GCSE classes.
24. There are a number of characteristics of the good and very good teaching leading to good and very good learning and pupils' good and often very good achievement:
 - Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
 - There are clear classroom protocols and routines established so that time is used well and that there is a clear code of conduct.
 - Planning is very effective.
 - Lessons are usually conducted at a demanding pace and learning is built up logically.
 - Teachers are skilled at using specific activities to 'hook' pupils' interest.

- There is a very good understanding of the Key Stage 3 Strategy³ particularly in English and mathematics but the application of the strategy is not consistent in these and other subjects.

The key elements, which make a particular difference at Connaught, are:

- Teachers know the pupils particularly well and they work hard to meet their needs, formally and, as importantly, informally. This knowledge is reflected in their support for pupils with additional needs so that they often make very good progress.
- There is an engagement with pupils at a properly professional but nevertheless emotional level- the girls' success matters and this underpins teachers' high expectations, which is matched by the pupils' response. This is reflected in the many informal and extended opportunities that staff provide for the pupils to support and extend their learning. The good relationships that exist between members of staff and pupils buttress the girls' learning.
- The pace of lessons is demanding- pupils are expected to keep up. Questioning in science, for example, is described as being 'pacey'; pupils are expected to defend their decisions and this rigour, where superficial answers or work are not accepted, is seen across the school. There is often an urgency about the work and learning which comes from the repeated experience of good teaching.
- Teachers not only have very good subject knowledge they also know what works in examinations.

25. The result of this good and often very good teaching is that pupils develop the self-motivation and the academic disciplines necessary to achieve success. Homework is used well to extend the learning opportunities. Roughly nine out of ten parents think teaching is good, as do pupils. Eight out of ten pupils and parents thought homework to be worthwhile and set regularly. The same proportion of pupils thought that assessment was helpful.
26. Overall, the quality and regularity of marking are satisfactory. Good practice exists in science and languages where marking makes good use of levels and grades leading to target setting. However, in some subjects, teachers provide insufficient subject specific detail to help pupils understand how their work compares with national standards and what they need to do to improve. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall and teachers have a very good informal awareness of their pupils. There is very good practice with the school which has the potential to be shared across the curriculum.
27. In general, teachers ensure that the curriculum for pupils with additional needs is appropriate. Additional support, when it is available, is often well used. For example, in English, collaborative planning and monitoring with the literacy support assistants are very good. More emphasis needs to be given to the strategic role and use of both the special educational needs co-ordinator and English as an additional language co-ordinator so that they monitor the quality of provision and the pupils' progress towards their targets.

The curriculum

The curriculum supports very good achievement. What pupils are taught is interesting and relevant and girls have a broad experience, enhanced by their experience in languages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides equal access to a broad range of curricular opportunities.
- There are rich opportunities to extend pupils' learning beyond lessons.
- Careers education is excellent.

³ The Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy and helping pupils who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation and providing professional development and support to teachers.

- There is extensive provision for modern foreign languages and at least good provision in English mathematics and science.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for citizenship education, which the school has definite plans to improve, and those for a daily act of collective worship, where co-ordinated provision is not made on those days when there are no assemblies.
- The Key Stage 3 strategy has been introduced successfully but needs to be consistently applied across subjects.

Commentary

28. The school is currently undertaking a major review of its curriculum with a view to building on provision that is already effective overall. The school provides a broad range of subjects with very good opportunities for enrichment. The review covers the structure of the school day; the movement of pupils round the site; and developments for the 14 to 16 age-range. Other aspects being reviewed include: the time allocations to several subjects in Years 7 to 9, where there is some unevenness, largely as a result of historical circumstances; the use of the Learning Resource Centre and improvements to the effective provision for pupils with additional needs.
29. Careers education is excellent. Discussion of a wide variety of topics prepares girls well for the world of work, for example by evaluating what they had learnt on work experience. In Years 10 and 11, a minority of girls are taught a non-examination course 'Individual and Society'. This provides them with a very good knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the citizenship programme of study such as the criminal justice system and a free press. Some other elements of citizenship such as human rights and international understanding are partially covered in subjects such as history and geography. The personal, social and health education programme is sound. It is taught in tutorial time and covers themes such as bullying, personal organisation, sex and drugs education. Overall, teaching of personal, social and health education is variable but overall satisfactory. Currently there is not a co-ordinator for this aspect.
30. The school acknowledges that it does not meet statutory requirements in citizenship, and it is currently carrying out a consultation exercise to determine how it can best meet requirements by providing citizenship, personal, social and health education and careers education as a co-ordinated programme from September 2005. This priority is identified within the school improvement plan. There is sound provision for personal, social and health education.
31. The school has responded to the previous inspection by introducing alternative provision to reduce the pressure of the high level of commitment to GCSE courses expected of most pupils; in addition, development of vocational courses is envisaged for the near future. Provision for ICT has improved and further improvement is planned through extended opportunities in Year 9. Provision for physical education has been improved and National Curriculum requirements for this subject are now met.
32. Whilst there are difficulties with accommodation, particularly in physical education and some classrooms are cramped, overall the accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school works hard to ensure that it is as attractive as possible and this is an important aspect of the school's ethos. Further investment is required in the fiction and non-fiction stock in the learning resource centre to enable it to function effectively and some subjects lack facilities or access to ICT, which is limiting the range of experiences that can be provided. Members of staff are well qualified to teach their subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Overall the school provides very high quality care for the pupils. Very good academic and personal support and guidance are provided. The school works hard to create a positive secure environment in which all pupils have the opportunity to learn.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Tutor and head of year system provides consistency and detailed knowledge of the pupils.
- Wide range of extra support is available through lunchtime and after school clubs.
- Advice about courses and careers is excellent.

Commentary

33. Formal and informal procedures work very well in ensuring the care of pupils. Pupils speak warmly about the school and the support they receive. They feel that the teachers really care about them, are supportive and push them to achieve to their full potential. They recognise that the school creates a positive, safe and secure environment. Pupils, staff and visitors alike appreciate the attention paid to detail such as flowers, plants and displays.
34. The arrangements for child protection and for pupils in public care are very good. Heads of Year have a high level of awareness of procedures and some have recently attended child protection training. The school has adopted local child protection guidelines but does not have its own policy. Daily first aid and care for pupils who are unwell are good. Good systems ensure members of staff are made aware of all pupils with medical conditions. The school is a safe place. Regular informal checks of the site and premises occur and action is taken where needed. The Health and Safety policy is being updated.
35. The tutor and head of year system is a particular strength of the school. Over the pupils' five years at the school, their tutors and heads of year stay with the same group and develop a close knowledge of the individuals and their parents. They monitor performance and deal with issues as they arise, involving parents as appropriate. Targets are set and pupils are tracked well and supported through the pastoral programme, so that underachievement is picked up quickly. Multiple strategies have been developed to deal with issues depending on the needs of the individual e.g. incident referrals, tracking cards, girls writing about their issues. Valuable support is available for individual pupils to help them build their self-esteem from the learning mentor, a counsellor and a drama therapist.
36. The opportunities for all pupils to participate in extra curricular activities and opportunities to support and extend their classroom work programme are extensive and rich. The opportunities to gain personal success in a wide range of artistic and sporting as well as academic areas feed pupils' sense of self-esteem. Year 11 pupils bubbled with enthusiasm recalling their expedition work for the Duke of Edinburgh award. Lunchtime clubs provide support for pupils. Extensive support for gifted and talented children is provided in an intentionally low-key manner through extra-curricular activities, Saturday schools and the opportunity to take GCSE Classical Civilisation in one year.
37. The School Council meets regularly and provides some opportunities to share ideas on how to improve school facilities. A large number of pupils is involved in the running of the school as prefects or peer mentors. These roles are seen as important by staff and girls. Parents valued the work of the prefects and their links with and support for younger girls. Training is provided to ensure that the girls have the skills needed to carry out their roles effectively. Pupils' involvement in the school's work and development is good.
38. The oldest pupils enthused about the careers guidance they had been given and the "passionate" advice of the school careers teacher. The school hosts on an annual open evening for girls to meet with the local post-16 providers and has negotiated for the provision of psychometric testing to help pupils make careers choices.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents and the school work together effectively. Parents are positive about the school and its expectations for the girls. Links with the community are good and the school is over-subscribed. Very good partnerships with other educational institutions bring opportunities for professional development and sharing of best practice in teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Positive relationship with parents.
- The school's Language College, Beacon, Federation and Leading Edge Partnership work brings many benefits.
- Extensive valuable visits and visitors.
- Some weakness in reporting pupils' progress to parents.

Commentary

39. The school is held in high regard by parents who at the parents' meeting and in questionnaires indicated that they appreciate the clear structure, high expectations, challenge and support. Attendance at annual parents' evenings is very high and the heads of year and tutor system provides a good interface between the school and parents. The diary system allows weekly communication with parents and the requirement for parents to sign and return the confirmation slip on the bottom of all letters home provides the school with assurance that they have been received. There is no shortage of parents willing to work with the school as parent governors. However support for the Connaught Connections parents group appears limited.
40. About one fifth of parents responding to the questionnaire indicated that they would like more information about their child's progress. The school has conducted a consultation exercise with regard to reports in which parents were of the view that reports should be simple, without extended comments. Parents receive two written brief reports per year, consisting of two grade sheets and a short tutor's report. Parents do not receive detailed subject reports that provide information on gaining the knowledge or skills of a subject, or give information on strengths and weaknesses but these issues form the agenda for the meeting with parents. What is less clear, and is an aspect for development, is the setting of subject specific targets for improvement.
41. The school has a high reputation in the local community and it is over-subscribed. Former pupils send their daughters to the school and there are about 30 siblings in each cohort. The school's facilities are made available to the local community, for example, the lettings to Woodcraft Folk and the Saturday Theatre Group. The school has run Family Learning Days for ICT and ICT classes for parents of children at the school. The school makes extensive use of the cultural opportunities offered by the school's London location – such as theatre, opera, gallery and ballet visits.
42. The school has been very successful in extending its horizons and obtaining additional funding. It has been able to invest in ICT to support language teaching and shares these facilities. Goldman Sachs has sponsored the school as a Specialist Language College and provided additional funding to support gifted and talented pupils and an entrepreneurship project. The school provides language teaching to partner schools offering a second language at GCSE for two secondary schools and classes in French and Spanish in three local primary schools at lunchtime and after school.
43. The school has taken on a leadership role through its Beacon status, providing professional forums for colleagues to meet and practical support such as the creation of a CD-Rom of the schemes of work for Science. The Federation and Leading Edge work, offers teachers the opportunity of peer review and the sharing of best practice.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Girls' achievement and success lie at the heart of the school and is the focus of the leadership and management of the school. Overall leadership and management are very good because of the influence of the headteacher.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good governance except in relationship to Citizenship education.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management supported very effectively by the senior leadership team. Leadership and management across the school are generally good.
- Involvement in Beacon status and Specialist Language College status and other activities ensure that the school is outward looking, ambitious and that members of staff are given very good opportunities to develop their skills.

Commentary

44. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and bring a range of personal and professional expertise. They are kept well informed through headteacher reports, presentations on key issues by the senior leadership team and through their developing allocation to key areas of the school. They review the school's academic performance and set examination targets. They are involved in determining the strategic direction of the school through the school improvement plan. There has been a good improvement in strategic planning since the last inspection. The committee structure is effective. There are very good relationships between the governing body and the senior leadership of the school but the relationship is not a cosy one; acting in its non-executive director role, the governing body does question and challenge the school. The governing body, working appropriately with a sub-set of the governing body sets performance management targets for the headteacher.
45. The school meets its statutory obligations except in two areas. The governing body is fully aware that it is not meeting its statutory duty to ensure a daily act of collective worship. The reason is linked to shortage of accommodation. It does expect assemblies to reinforce the values of the school and explore spiritual and moral issues pertinent to the multi-faith commitment of the girls. It expects assemblies to be important occasions, to be planned and for there to be theme for the week. It takes the view that further co-ordination is not practicable. The inspection team was of the view that the planning already undertaken with regard to assemblies and the 'theme of the week' it would be possible to provide additional opportunities within tutorial time to meet the requirement for collective worship to enhance further the very good emphasis in the school on developing pupils' spiritual development. The team fully recognised the difficulties with regard to accommodation. The second aspect relates to Citizenship. Aspects of citizenship are taught within the personal, social and health education programme but the school is currently not teaching all the elements of the programme and the school is late in its full introduction. In this specific respect governance is unsatisfactory.
46. Overall, the leadership and the management of the school are very good. This is because of the very strong influence of the headteacher. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The headteacher has a keen awareness of the strengths of the school and those aspects which require development. There is clear planning for improvement. She has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. Recognising that 'the Connaught way' could lead to insularity and complacency she has led developments which enable the school to look outward through initiatives such as Beacon status and the language specialist status. She has fostered a strong community of shared values based on respect for pupils. The recognition and cultivation of the school's powerful learning ethos and the way it has been shaped and developed in recent years stem from her. Pupils' achievements lie at the heart of the school. The headteacher's management is also very good. It is based on open and shared information. There is integrity about the way matters are handled. There are very good tracking systems in place to monitor pupils' academic achievement and to compare performance. She is both loyal to and supportive of staff. She is very committed to the school but retains a self-critical perspective.
47. The senior leadership team supports the headteacher very effectively. They share her vision and ambitions for the school. They provide very good professional models. They have clear roles and responsibilities and bring a range of diverse skills. The use of specific grant has

enabled the school to increase the size and the effectiveness of the senior leadership team and it is embarking on the Working Together for Success programme to develop their capacity at senior leadership level. They work very effectively as a team. The school functions very well on a day-to-day basis. Across the school at departmental level, whilst leadership and management of subject areas is generally at least good, aspects of management, for example, in the use of data, development of consistency with regard to assessment and perhaps what can be best described as 'standing back' from their intense involvement in the school to critically reflect on the quality of provision could be developed more.

48. There is a very good performance management system in the school, which is effectively led by the headteacher. The cycle of lesson observations and the use of data to develop targets for staff are well embedded. There is a high level of concern and care for all the school's staff and pupils. The professional development of staff is very well managed and matched well to the needs of the individual and the school. This is currently extending to embrace all personnel and the school has been successfully reassessed for 'Investors in People' recently. There is a commitment to high quality training and support within the school and as part of its Beacon and Federation outreach work with other partner schools. Newly qualified and trainee teachers are extremely well supported at the school and there are regular weekly meetings, lesson observations and visits to other schools as part of their professional development programme.
49. The school applies principles of best value very well. The school sets high standards for itself, which has resulted in very good achievement by its pupils. Consultation with parents and pupils takes place regularly. The school council works effectively but more use could be made of it to consult pupils' attitudes to the quality of education they receive. Financial Planning and Control are good. The school has worked hard to access other sources of funding. Budget priorities are clear and support the school's strategic planning. There is clear justification, for example, for the higher proportion of the budget spent on staffing. Procedures for financial control are well documented. The last audit report had only minor recommendations for improvement. However it is not clear, from the school development plan, how the cost-effectiveness of spending is measured.
50. The headteacher identifies two particular aspects, which act as barriers to developing the school. One is funding, particularly difficult in a relatively small school. It means that the school has to rely on bidding for funds for school improvement projects. The second relates to accommodation issues, particularly associated with physical education and canteen facilities.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2578,056.00	Balance from previous year	108,106 ⁴
Total expenditure	2675,998.00	Balance carried forward to the next	87,000
Expenditure per pupil	4,386.88		

⁴ The budget for that year included a variety of additional funding, for example, a DfEs capital grant and give an inflated picture.

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

The quality of provision⁵ in English is **good**, with some very good features, and has improved considerably since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils respond very readily to the challenging teaching and achieve well.
- The teaching is mainly good and often very good.
- Leadership and management are good and have some very strong features.
- Many pupils do not know enough about their strengths and weaknesses and what they should do to improve.
- The English department makes a very significant contribution to pupils' linguistic, social and cultural development.

Commentary

51. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Despite a dip in 2003, GCSE results have improved in recent years and are well above the national average for all pupils and above the average for girls. Overall, pupils do slightly less well in GCSE English language than they do in science and mathematics. National Curriculum test results in Year 9 have fluctuated: overall, they are above national figures and close to the national figures for girls. Standards in the work seen in all years, and in all aspects of English, were good. Pupils achieve well overall, and in Years 10 and 11 often very well because of very effective teaching in relatively small classes.
52. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and willingness to work productively are important factors in their good achievement. They are supported in this by the very good relationships which exist between staff and pupils. This picture is broadly consistent for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds except that the most able sometimes do not always achieve as well as they should: they occasionally mark time in the mixed ability classes when the work does not fully match their learning needs. Also, the low attaining pupils are occasionally left behind when they have no additional support and the work is too complicated for them. That said, in general, the most able achieve well and pupils with special needs and those learning English as an additional language make very good progress.
53. In all years, pupils' knowledge and understanding of language use and of literature are developing well. In addition, they benefit greatly from teachers' guidance in helping them to see the social, cultural and moral implications of the texts they study and discuss.
54. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in a significant proportion of lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject expertise and make increasingly effective use of the teaching approaches recommended by the Key Stage 3 strategy to raise standards. Even so, learning objectives are not used as well as they should be, and review at the end of lessons is not always well managed.

⁵ This judgement is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision for a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared to like.

55. Overall, teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are high. Most lessons move at a fast pace and pupils are expected to keep up. Pupils learn well in all aspects of English, with many older pupils learning very well. Teachers organise classes effectively to enable pupils to support one another. Pupils are articulate and, as a result of challenging teaching, by Year 11 most learn to use spoken English confidently in formal situations. High attaining pupils develop a wide vocabulary and a good sense of style and organisation in written work. Average pupils learn to grapple with difficult ideas and many use them effectively, for example in drafting coursework in Years 10 and 11. Most low attaining pupils make good progress as a result, mainly, of thoughtful and well-informed teaching. Those with special educational needs get off to a very good start in Year 7, benefiting from literacy support of good quality.
56. Leadership and management are good overall, with many strong features. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been largely overcome. The scheme of work is now very thorough and staff work very well as a team. Even so, more monitoring is needed to achieve consistency and coherence in lesson organisation throughout the department. Assessment has improved and pupils are learning to evaluate their own work. However, many pupils, particularly younger ones and lower attaining pupils, do not know enough about what they should do to improve their work. Marking sometimes gives insufficient guidance. Drafting is good, particularly with GCSE classes, and ICT is often used well for this purpose. The department has appropriate plans to extend the use of ICT for teaching and to raise the profile of media education in the English curriculum. Members of staff collaborate very well in planning professional development. This is a strong department, well placed to raise standards further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Because of good provision overall, by Year 11 most pupils learn to communicate effectively in writing for a wide range of purposes, with due attention to content, organisation and meaning. Standards of spelling, punctuation and presentation vary considerably, but are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Standards of reading are good overall and most pupils use reading satisfactorily in their learning. Independent reading for pleasure is promoted well in Years 7 to 9. However, pupils receive insufficient guidance in choosing progressively more demanding texts. Standards of listening and speaking are good. Most pupils develop well as competent speakers in a variety of contexts.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average overall by the end of Year 11.
- Very good leadership at all levels gives languages a high status in the school.
- Good teaching in French and German and very good teaching in Spanish is leading to at least good achievement overall.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to study a wide range of languages.
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching.
- The assessment and marking of pupils' work do not consistently ensure that pupils are clear about their learning.

Commentary

French and German

58. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average in French and German by comparison with all pupils nationally, average by comparison with girls. However, because the

proportion of pupils entered for an examination in a modern foreign language was well above the national average these results are commendable.

59. Pupils did not do as well in French and German as in other subjects but the difference in performance was broadly in line with national differences. Even though results in 2003 were not as good as in previous years the trend in results is one of improvement since the last inspection.

French

60. Standards in Year 11 are above average in French and achievement is good. High attaining pupils have developed a wide vocabulary and use complex structures and tenses to add variety to their writing. While average and below average pupils progress well overall there is some variability in their performance.

German

61. Pupils make good progress in German, which they start as a second language in Year 8. Standards in German are well above average and achievement is very good. Pupils speak with confidence and give extended responses. Almost all pupils in Year 11 have a secure grasp of the structure of the language, which they use accurately.

French and German Years 7 to 9

62. In work seen during the inspection in French and German, standards by Year 9 are at an average level. Overall achievement is good. Pupils, who in Year 7 often find it difficult to spell individual words correctly, are all at least able to write accurately in paragraphs giving personal details by the end of Year 9. High attaining pupils show good command of the main tenses. There is particularly good achievement by high attaining pupils in Year 8.

Spanish

63. Pupils' high achievement in Spanish is reflected in their GCSE results, with a steadily rising trend, that are well above the national GCSE A*-C scores in Spanish. Pupils' standards in Spanish at age 14 are above national expectations. They demonstrate a very good grasp of the grammar as well as familiarity with a range of relevant vocabulary for the age group. They have acquired very good reading skills and a confident approach to the pronunciation of Spanish. Their writing is developing well, with many using complex grammatical structures and a range of tenses. Their progress in two years since they started learning Spanish in Year 8 is very good.

Urdu

64. Standards in GCSE examinations in Urdu are high with all pupils gaining a grade within the five A* to G range and over 80 per cent gaining an A* to C grade in the last few years. Pupils' knowledge of spoken Urdu in both key stages is at least good, with most demonstrating a sound grasp of the spoken language. The teaching of Urdu focuses on the written aspects of the language, which builds on pupils' knowledge of the spoken language. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate their knowledge of complex tenses and a wide range of vocabulary relevant for this age group. Many have attempted writing involving larger texts and letter writing.
65. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have learnt the basics of written Urdu, namely, its alphabet and have progressed to learning more complex skills, such as the rules for joining of letters and the formation of words. In lessons observed and the written work seen, pupils produce a variety of writing in accordance with the scheme of work.

Teaching French and German

66. Teaching is good overall. It is very good in German in Years 10 and 11. Pupils learn well because of the very positive relationships that exist in all classes. Teachers know their pupils very well and are able to meet their needs. As a result pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good in lessons. The frequent and varied contacts with France and Germany also mean that their cultural development is also very good. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear objectives in many lessons. Very good resources enhance learning, in particular ICT, and the very good support that foreign language assistants give in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the quality of support they receive. Pupils learn well in most lessons because teachers have high expectations, which lead to challenging work.
67. In one Year 7 class seen, for example, pupils, having been introduced to school subjects in the previous lesson were expected to use extended sentences to express and justify opinions about them. In the best lessons, as in one Year 10 German lesson, teachers use targets, linked to GCSE grades, to raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve in the lesson. In many lessons teachers use French and German extensively and so help pupils develop their listening skills. A good variety of activities in many lessons ensures that pupils maintain their interest. However in some lessons there are not enough opportunities for oral practice. Teachers assess and record pupils' progress thoroughly but they do not spend enough time sharing this information with pupils. Teachers mark work regularly and give encouraging comments but they do not set targets for improvement based on National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria. As a result pupils, with the exception of German pupils in Year 11, are not clear about the progress they are making. Overall there are some inconsistencies in teaching. Where teaching is less effective it is because teachers' expectations are not high enough.

Teaching Spanish

68. Teaching in Spanish is very good. Teaching techniques encourage acquisition of all the four language skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading. Teachers integrate successfully the learning of Spanish grammar with Spanish structures and sentences. As a result, pupils show a very good grasp of both the grammar of Spanish and its structures. Lessons are organised to challenge and to involve all pupils, with effective strategies to support individual needs of pupils. Consistent and adequate assessment and feedback by teachers in Spanish have raised pupils' self-awareness of the standards they need to achieve to progress in their studies. High teacher expectations combined with very good class management motivate all pupils to be attentive in lessons and to undertake tasks and homework with enthusiasm. Teaching thus leads all pupils, in both key stages, to make at least good progress with a number making very good progress, both during lessons and over time.

Urdu

69. During the inspection the school's Urdu teacher was absent. A very experienced specialist teacher acting as a supply teacher, taught the lessons for the period of the inspection.

Overall Leadership

70. Leadership is very good at all levels. There is a very clear vision based on the Language College development plan that has given the cluster a high profile in the school and the local community. There is a strong team of teachers who support each other very well. Management is good. Information about pupils is well used to keep track of pupils' progress. There is a very good record kept about the progress made by different ethnic groups, for example. However this information is not effectively used to evaluate the cluster's overall performance. Documentation is clear and helpful. Display is also good. The cluster has begun to develop systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching outside performance management and these are beginning to lead to improvements in the quality of teaching. By

maintaining its good examination results and the quality of teaching there has been good progress since the last inspection.

71. Specialist Language College status is benefiting all pupils in the school. They have a wide choice of languages and time allocation is generous. All pupils study a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. A higher proportion of pupils study a second language in Years 10 and 11 than is the case nationally. A small number study three. The four languages taught in the school have very good resources including ICT equipment in many rooms, though resources for Urdu are not as well developed. There are strong links with the local community. Pupils at local schools benefit from extra tuition and there is strong support for community languages. However further development is needed in supporting other areas in the school so that they can develop international links and benefit from the expertise, for example in ICT, within the languages cluster.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- On the basis of their prior attainment, pupils' achievement in mathematics is very good.
- Examination results, in the GCSE examinations, are well above national averages.
- Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their pupils.
- Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge.
- The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient account is taken of the spread of ability to cater specifically for individual needs.

Commentary

72. In the 2003 national tests in Year 9, results were well below national averages. They were well above similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment in the Year 6 national tests. Results fell in 2002 but improved in 2003. In the 2003 GCSE examination, results were well above national averages and well above similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment in the Year 9 national tests. Results have continued to increase and comparisons show that pupils do as well in mathematics as in their other subjects.
73. On the evidence of the work seen, standards in Year 9 are now in line with national averages as a result of the department's improved focus on the curriculum and improving levels of attainment on entry. Standards on entry are below national averages so achievement is good although less marked in Year 7 where too much work repeats that already covered in the primary school. Pupils in Year 9 can calculate measures of average and spread while able pupils can confidently formulate sequences including quadratic sequences.
74. Standards in Year 11 remain well above national averages and, on the basis of their prior attainment in Year 9, this represents very good achievement as a result of teachers' sustained focus on examination requirements, additional classes outside of lessons and pupils' positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils in Year 11 can calculate lengths and angles in right-angled triangles while able pupils can successfully solve quadratic equations by factorising or else using the formula.
75. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons start quickly and make good use of a variety of starter activities to engage and involve pupils. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and there is an appropriate emphasis on examination work especially in Years 10 and 11. The pace of lessons is fast and activities are time constrained to maximise curriculum time. Homework is regularly set and builds well upon the work of the lesson.

76. Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with pupils. However, there is not enough evidence of teachers' catering for the spread of ability in the class and gifted and talented pupils are not specifically targeted in class. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in the mathematics classroom. Marking is regular with useful and supportive comments. Pupils have a good idea of their target grade but less idea of what they must do to achieve it.
77. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. They work well, concentrate hard and want to do well. They enjoy productive relationships with the teacher and harmonious relationships with one another. In a very small number of lessons, pupils lack commitment and engagement in their work resulting in unsatisfactory behaviour.
78. The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory. The department makes insufficient use of computers. The provision for literacy is satisfactory but inconsistent across the department. Subject specific words are suitably identified in lesson planning but not always highlighted in the lesson.
79. Leadership and management are good. There is a good team ethos within the department and a clear direction for mathematics. The recently appointed head of department has a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. However, monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to identify and act upon weaknesses. Departmental documentation, including schemes of work, is still being developed.
80. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved and achievement is now very good. Investigative work is still a strength of the curriculum and numeracy skills have improved as a result of the department's focus on this work. Pupils' attitudes remain positive and are encouraged by the supportive relationships with their teachers. There is a commitment to high achievement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is good. The department has a numeracy policy, which audits provision in other departmental areas. Number work is developed well in careers education for costing exercises and languages for time and timetables. Algebraic skills are used in ICT for creating formulae in spreadsheets and in science for formulae. Spatial awareness is used across the curriculum including scale and measurement in design and technology as well as for diagrams, graphs and charts in geography. Data handling skills are used well in food technology for surveys and in geography to analyse population statistics and identify links between increases in the use of water and population size.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well. They have a strong drive to learn.
- Teaching is good with excellent features to enrich further the quality of learning.
- Thorough analysis of test and examination results keenly judges performance and tracks progress well; all pupils have yet to refer routinely to their targets to check their own progress.
- High quality comments on class work substantially help pupils in their learning, especially when acutely focused, but skills of investigation are not developed fully during class experiments.
- Challenging questioning enlivens learning; unimaginative endings of lessons do not creatively involve pupils in reflecting about it.

Commentary

82. Year 9 test results were below the national average in 2003. They were above the average for similar schools and, compared with these pupils, show that very good progress has been made. GCSE results at grades A*-C were well above the national average which represents good achievement for many pupils compared with their Year 9 test results.
83. Current standards in Year 9 are, overall, average and achievement good. The progress made is substantially related to pupils' strong drive to learn, nurtured by perceptive teaching. Year 7 made speedy progress in learning how to measure acidity of a solution, because they keenly responded to penetrating questions, which always required detailed replies. Low attaining pupils in Year 9 made very good progress in learning about hydraulics, because complicated ideas were illustrated well. The actual rate of progress is linked to how deeply teachers expect pupils to understand ideas; books show that, occasionally, topics are either treated too superficially or repeated at the same level. There is scope for more independent investigative work to improve understanding of experimental method.
84. Standards, overall, in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Work is well presented and the quality is very good. Predictions, based on work and test results, show that a significant core of pupils could eventually achieve very well with above average results. In a Year 10 class dealing with the structure of the Earth, pupils knew well the main processes which have changed the composition of the atmosphere over time, because of their teacher's expert questioning which drew out their suggestions and forced them to think through and explain ideas. Their work ethic was impressive. There is scope for more debate and challenge throughout lessons. All know how to plan investigations, record results and identify patterns. The highest attainers critically analyse results well and their conclusions are consistent with evidence, but the majority need to increase the sophistication of observations and clearly justify conclusions during class experiments.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranges from excellent to satisfactory. Strength is the pacy questioning technique. Very good teaching causes pupils to defend their decisions; superficial answers are not accepted if more is possible. From analysing test information well, perceptive teachers know that different pupils learn in different ways so plan accordingly. Repeating an idea through different activities made sure that a Year 8 class deepened their understanding about the behaviour of light. Through skilful planning, excellent teaching made complex ideas about atomic structure 'come alive' so that pupils could 'see' them in their 'mind's eye'. By making models, low attainers in Year 11 made excellent progress in understanding the transfer or sharing of electrons in chemical bonding, so that they could predict formulae of compounds. Although a focus is not selected, marking is consistent. High quality comments help pupils in their learning; the best practice routinely checks that they are acted upon. Pupils' eagerness to learn and achieve well plays a major part in raising standards even in dull sessions. Lessons too rarely have an interesting ending to consolidate learning in an imaginative way.
86. Leadership is very good. The head of department has a clear vision and high expectations for future developments. In a climate of close teamwork, she motivates and supports staff who respect her. Classroom observations now need to penetrate sharply links between teaching behaviours and learning. Management is good. Assessment information is used well in identifying targets for the pupils and the department but pupils have yet to effectively use this information to check their own progress. Technical support is of a high quality. Office space for tightly managing the department is limited. Progress since the last inspection has been good through improvement in marking, assessment and the meticulous tracking of performance of individual pupils. There has been significant work undertaken within the local education authority through the Beacon programme. There are still too few chances to use computers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** with many good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers of ICT are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Pupils work with pace and are skilled in using ICT.
- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive ICT lessons leading to a qualification.
- The department is not organised well; leadership is sound but management is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

87. Although 2003 teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils' work indicate that most pupils are working below national standards with 55 per cent below level 5, standards observed in classes and scrutiny of work indicate that standards are presently much higher. The low attainment in 2003 was caused by a lack of suitable opportunities for pupils to gain higher levels. There are now greater opportunities but there is still scope for improvement. GCSE short course examination results reveal that 28 percent of pupils gained grade C and above. This is below the national average. Again, the picture within the classroom and in the work seen shows that pupils are achieving much higher levels of attainment than the exam results show.
88. Good achievement takes place in lessons owing to the fast pace and high expectations of the teachers. Pupils are enthusiastic and accomplished in using their ICT skills. They work very well independently and are often seen using the computing facilities in the library and ICT rooms outside lesson times. There is strong commitment by the pupils to use ICT resources. Teaching is consistently good because teachers have established a strong working relationship with their pupils resulting in a rapid pace of learning and the interesting content of lessons. Pupils' attitudes are very good and this inevitably leads to an ideal learning environment. Pupils are not set targets for achievement but they are aware of their attainment level. The assessment process is underdeveloped. Pupils are consequently not stretched to maximise their potential within ICT.
89. The department is not well organised. There is an ICT development strategy but it has yet to have an impact on the use of ICT particularly across the curriculum. There have been significant changes to the ICT rooms, which are now air-conditioned and have plenty of room. However, the recent changes did not include data projectors and there is no separate network room. Outline schemes of work are in place and are mapped to the national strategy but clear lesson objectives and consideration for utilisation of resources are not well thought through. The network manager, technician and head of department have a good relationship but they do not meet regularly enough to review progress and as a consequence the network is not maintained to a high level of effectiveness. There is a backlog of faults affecting the provision of ICT learning.
90. Since the last inspection the ICT department has met National Curriculum requirements in terms of delivery in all key stages. They have increased standards in the classroom, but this has yet to be reflected in examinations and Year 9 assessments. The provision of ICT facilities is partially improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. Cross-curricular provision of ICT is satisfactory due to the good programme of staff development but ICT remains underdeveloped in mathematics, science, music and art in

particular. The pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities to take part in computer help sessions and computer clubs.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good emphasis on fieldwork in the local area ensures that girls learn how to conduct their own investigations effectively.
- The development of ICT skills for research and presentation is integrated well into lessons.
- Girls' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through class work, coursework and homework.
- Existing textbooks need supplementing and there are very few geography books in the school library.

Commentary

92. Standards are generally below average when girls join the school and are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement. Girls improve their knowledge of settlements and development issues by studying examples in the local area, Italy and Brazil. They develop their atlas and map reading skills well. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE are broadly average. This represents good achievement for girls in the current option group. Girls with special educational needs receive suitable support and achieve well, as do higher attaining pupils. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are fully included in discussions and activities, and all achieve well as a result. In 2003, standards in GCSE were well above average as there was a higher proportion of able girls in this group.
93. Teaching is good in all year groups and this promotes effective learning. Pupils benefit from warm relationships with knowledgeable teachers. They are well motivated by teachers' very high expectations and behave very well during lessons. Their very good attitudes to work help them to learn quickly. Pupils benefit from careful lesson planning, which ensures that girls of all abilities are suitably challenged. They enjoy carrying out fieldwork projects in the local area, and this provides them with the skills needed to complete their own coursework successfully. Opportunities to use and develop ICT skills are built into the scheme of work. Pupils in Year 8, for example, were confident in using search engines to locate information on the Aswan Dam quickly, and then used word processing and desktop publishing skills well to produce attractive newspaper articles outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the irrigation scheme. Homework is set regularly in all years and is used effectively to reinforce and build on work covered during lessons.
94. Leadership and management are good. The subject is well organised by an experienced head of department. Regular promotion of a wide variety of different writing styles, including diaries, newspaper articles, letters and extended reports, helps to develop pupils' literacy skills, while frequent discussions in small groups and summaries given to the whole class help to develop girls' speaking and presentational skills. Numeracy skills are developed well when measuring distances and using scales on maps, and by drawing and interpreting graphs and charts. Pupils' work is monitored carefully and assessment of their progress is good overall. It is particularly good in Year 8 where pupils are provided with individual targets so they know how to improve their work. Accommodation is satisfactory, but there are too few resources for individual research. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection as there is no longer an over-reliance on worksheets. However, there remains a need to supplement existing textbooks and there are not enough geography books for research purposes in the school library. The development of resources in geography has already been identified as a priority in this year's school improvement plan.

History

Provision in history is **good** with some very effective features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong, effective leadership of the head of department.
- Good teaching with some very effective features, which motivates pupils and is raising standards.
- High levels of attainment and take up in examination courses.
- Good pupil/teacher relationships, which foster positive attitudes to the subject.
- Greater use could be made of ICT and historical resources to enrich learning.
- There is a need to extend the opportunities for historical visits and fieldwork.

Commentary

95. Teacher assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with expectations. Work seen during the inspection confirms this judgement. From a low base on entry, this represents good achievement for most pupils. They acquire an appropriate body of knowledge and learn the importance of making balanced judgements. Pupils demonstrate empathy with events and can understand the implications and consequences of situations. Written work and individual projects show care and commitment.
96. GCSE results are well above the national average. Standards have risen steadily in recent years with a significant number of pupils opting for the subject. This represents very good achievement for the pupils and is an indicator of the thorough, carefully targeted examination preparation pupils receive. At this level pupils are able to handle historical concepts with maturity and make links between different areas of knowledge. Year 11, when working at the case study on the former state of Czechoslovakia could understand expressions such as 'Prague Spring', 'peaceful coexistence' and 'socialism with a human face'. All work in history is effectively supporting the development of literacy and study skills.
97. The standard of teaching is good overall with some evidence of highly effective classroom practice. Expectations are high and these are matched by the pupils' response. Relationships are good and the atmosphere in lessons is relaxed without any loss of rigour and challenge. To take the subject methodology forward, greater use needs to be made of artefacts, resource based learning and ICT, but the cramped teaching accommodation, lack of storage space and the problems of access to computers and technical support inhibit this at present. Considerable effort has been made to meet pupils' needs by careful planning of work and by giving extra support where required.
98. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear sense of commitment, which has brought about satisfactory improvements since the last inspection – notably in the raising of standards and pupils' achievement. Current schemes of work meet National Curriculum requirements but they are being reviewed in order to improve the interface with the new GCSE course. It is to be hoped that in spite of the pressure of time, more opportunities will be provided for pupils to experience first-hand historical encounters in the form of fieldwork and visits. History is a successful department. From this position it is ready to move forward – consolidating strengths and developing new ideas.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress by the end of Year 9 as a result of good teaching.
- Results in the GCSE short course at the end of Year 11 are above the national average for the subject.
- There is a high level of challenge in the learning opportunities provided, particularly during Years 9 to 11.
- Lessons are well planned to an appropriate structure although the intended outcomes are not always clearly expressed.
- There is insufficient time in the GCSE lessons for pupils to discuss the deeper issues in themes studied.

Commentary

99. Results in the GCSE short course are above the national average for the subject and achievement is very high in comparison with similar schools.
100. By the end of Year 9 pupils make good progress and attain standards, which are, overall, above the national average for the subject. The decision to start the GCSE course during Year 9 ensures there is a sufficient level of challenge in the work to extend the highest attaining pupils. By the end of Year 11, very high achievement is evident with results which demonstrate very good progress for the majority of pupils. All pupils are given the opportunity to enter the examinations. All but a small number do so with above average results at the highest grades. All pupils who entered in 2003 achieved a graded result.
101. Pupils are engaged in their work and interest is evident. They respond willingly to opportunities to read aloud, to answer questions and to some extent to ask their own questions. They work well in pairs and small groups and are supportive of each other. The desire to work is stimulated by teaching which is generally good and always at least satisfactory. In the best practice, teachers convey enthusiasm for the subject and expectations are high, particularly in terms of the use and understanding of religious language and ideas. Pupils are clear about the tasks they are expected to do, although there is less clarity about what they should have achieved by the end of each lesson. The range of resources available, and skilled management by teachers ensure that all pupils are able to succeed in the subject. Those with individual learning needs are sensitively supported, with some excellent contributions from support teachers and learning assistants.
102. A wide range of appropriate resources is provided to support pupils' learning, including current material from website sources. Many pupils make very good use of ICT in the production of their work, including the use of PowerPoint presentations. Much of the best work is on display and available to pupils as exemplars of good practice. There is less evidence of learning through pupils' oral work, expressing opinions and presenting coherent justifications for their views. Teacher voice sometimes dominates lessons to the exclusion of opportunities for pupils to engage in lively dialogue.
103. The leadership of the subject is good with non-specialist teachers well supported by appropriate planning and resource provision. Programmes of work are managed effectively within a limited timetable allocation in Year 9 to 11. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, largely through the introduction of the current GCSE course which is producing very good results.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- Teachers' planning is detailed and thorough.
- Range of staff expertise is very good.
- Quality of teaching is good, in textiles it is very good.
- Teachers need to make more use of assessment information.

Commentary

104. GCSE results in 2003 for textiles, resistant materials and graphics were above national averages and the school results show a gradual improvement year on year. Pupils do particularly well in the coursework component of their examinations.
105. Teacher assessment of pupils at the end of Year 9 shows that standards are good when compared with national expectations. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is considered to be below average but the school does recognise and value the work that some of the pupils have previously experienced in design and technology in their primary school.
106. Achievement is good; pupils of all abilities are able, because of clear and carefully thought out teacher explanations, to take part in all the practical requirements of the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs do particularly well and technology lessons make a significant contribution to their social development because they benefit from the opportunity to talk about what they are doing and share their ideas and concerns in small and supportive groups.
107. The quality of teaching is good; in textiles it is very good. Pupils benefit from the breadth of knowledge that teachers have and the fact that the individual strengths of each teacher have been recognised and used to maximum effect. The result is a technology department that has a very well balanced curriculum and a good range of activities that interest and motivate the pupils. For example the younger pupils were making picture frames from recycled metal cans. They had based their designs on African and Chinese fabric patterns that they recorded as 'tiles' for possible design considerations. They were able to translate their paper designs to metal using a range of embossing skills and techniques.
108. In all lessons seen there was a strong work ethic and relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers were good. Teachers are very good at explaining and helping pupils with designing and making skills and the department as a whole has a sensible and manageable approach to pupil recording. For each unit of work pupils are provided with a well thought out and appropriately sequenced notebook that provides a secure framework for their ideas and designs. There is a realistic written requirement that incorporates their opinions and evaluations of the work that they have done. The evaluation process works best when pupils are required to compare and share what they have done with each other.
109. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers always use positive comments but insufficient use is made throughout the department of marking that challenges pupils' thinking and asks them for suggestions as to how they might improve their work.
110. In Year 10 pupils are able to select one technology subject as a GCSE option, all enjoy their work producing coursework of a very high standard that reflects care, interest and attention to detail from the pupils and committed and enthusiastic teaching.

111. Pupils' work is well presented and supported appropriately by the use of ICT. The department as a whole makes very good use of ICT and has some excellent ideas for its incorporation into the curriculum. In a textiles lesson, for example, pupils' freehand designs were scanned onto disk for use as an embroidery template. In a resistant materials lesson pupils use CAD/CAM software to produce a template for cutting vinyl as part of their 'shaker' style light project. Some particularly good examples of computer generated graphical displays showing the results of taste surveys that the pupils had carried out were seen in the food department. This department also produced some good quality questionnaires that challenged pupils' view about the work that they had done. The use of i Book laptops provide pupils with valuable support in their graphics projects.
112. Very good use is made of the digital camera to document, sequence and celebrate pupils' work. Further expansion of the technology department's ICT potential is limited because many of the school's computers are not sufficiently well maintained to be viewed as a valuable and dependable resource.
113. Literacy across the curriculum is promoted well. For example all pupils in Year 7 are provided with a list of relevant technical vocabulary on their notebooks. Numeracy within technology is less well co-ordinated but some good examples of its use were evident, for example textiles work on industrial processes required them to consider tolerances on seam allowances.
114. The very effective and efficient management of the department means that some of the requirements of the Key Stage 3 strategy have been addressed – for example the three-part lesson but more detailed consideration of its use would enable the department to make refinements that would enhance its teaching and learning provision still further.
115. Very good use is made of high quality support staff. They are an asset to the department, which has made good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are well informed and possess good subject knowledge and use questions well to challenge pupils.
- Little evidence of effective use of modern technology, photography and ICT at Key Stage 3.
- Pupils' drawing skills are not well developed.
- Most pupils respond positively to the set tasks.
- Computer resources are very limited in the art studios.

Commentary

116. Teaching is good overall. An effective team, including technical help, has been created and both the teachers and the technician use their good subject knowledge to offer sound advice and provide good support for pupils. They often use questioning well in lessons and this provokes interesting responses from pupils. The teaching engenders very good attitudes in pupils and very good relationships. The management of time and resources is good, but greater use could be made of technology to improve introductions to lessons and stimulate learning.
117. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is below national expectations. By the end of Year 9 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations with a minority of pupils working above

these levels. Standards of work seen were appropriate to the GCSE course. In the 2003 GCSE art and design examination standards were significantly below average. Attainment in art and design was lower than in most of the other examinations girls took that year. The school gives the reason for this sudden drop in examination results (standards in the two previous years were above average although pupils did not do as well in art as in other subjects) because of a change of emphasis on the examination criteria; according to the school the sudden drop in results was a feature in a number of local schools. The head of department has organised professional development with other art teachers in the area to meet with the chief examiner to come to an understanding as to the reasons.

118. Year 7 pupils enter the school with very weak drawing and painting skills, but through a series of appropriately designed projects they make good progress during their first year. Almost all pupils work with good levels of concentration, acquire knowledge and develop new skills in the use of various media and materials. The work produced by Year 9 pupils is nearing national expectations, with a minority working above. However, drawing skills do not always match the level of artistic thought displayed by pupils and are still relatively weak. Despite the hard work and commitment shown by pupils many of them have low regard for their skills and feel that they are not capable in the subject. There is little opportunity for pupils to use computer technology in their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Progress from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is good.
119. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 enjoy the subject and the majority display a positive attitude to the tasks that are set by their teachers. There is good evidence in the pupils' sketchbooks that they have the capacity to carry out independent research and develop ideas. Pupils are supported well by the technician in using technology to develop their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Progress from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 is good. Most have a good understanding of how to develop ideas, from initial research studies, through to the production of final paintings or 3D objects. Although one group of pupils in Year 10 was seen to be producing very good work based upon direct observational drawing, the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 possess more limited drawing skills. This can be seen in their sketchbooks where there is much development of ideas but little evidence of drawing studies.
120. Much of the work for pupils in all year groups is based upon secondary source material from covering artists such as *Paul Klee*, *Wassily Kandinsky* and *Roy Lichtenstein*, and insufficient work is based upon direct observation and first-hand research.
121. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the department that is outlined in the departmental development plan. She provides a very good role model for other members of the department, and also for pupils. There are systems in place to monitor and record pupils' performance but at present these lack rigour. For instance too little evidence exists as to why there was a fall in examination results in the last year. More detailed records are required to provide feedback to pupils and to enable the setting of more accurate subject specific targets for individual pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory. Storage of work, equipment and resources is a problem for the department. There are only a small number of computers in the art department, many of which are outdated, which places severe restrictions on the production of images using computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers within the art studios. Displays in the studios and around the school, such as those based on the work of *Matisse*, are good.
122. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards in attainment in art at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations and progress is now good between the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 9. This reflects the improvement in teaching and learning from satisfactory to good.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes of the pupils towards the subject are very good.
- Very good teacher subject knowledge promotes learning.
- Detailed schemes of work need to be developed to ensure a broad balanced musical curriculum.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to promote learning in the department.
- The department needs to explore strategies for raising achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

123. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are in line with national averages for 2003, but standards seen during the inspection suggest that standards are above national averages. This represents good achievement. Standards at GCSE for 2003 are well below average and standards seen during the inspection suggest that it remains below average. In a Year 11 lesson, some pupils performed confidently with the rest of the class making suggestions how to improve their performance using limited musical vocabulary. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils made good progress singing a medley of songs from '*Oliver*' and confidently performing a two part arrangement of '*Truly Scrumptious*'. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils made good progress developing their notational, performing and ensemble skills in a vocal and instrumental arrangement of '*Skye Boat Song*'.
124. The use of electronic keyboards is limited and the lack of computers in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE level limits pupils' experience of creating and developing music using this medium. Teaching is generally good with the most successful lessons having high teacher expectations, secure subject knowledge and a commitment to developing pupils as musicians. The planning of lessons and the use of homework to reinforce and extend learning are areas for development. Assessment strategies are developing but need linking to National Curriculum programmes of study. Assessment is not used enough to inform departmental planning and to assist target setting for pupils.
125. Leadership of the department is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory due to the lack of detailed and comprehensive schemes of work and other important departmental documentation. Schemes of work need developing to include balanced activities for pupils that include opportunities for individual, paired, group and whole class work, which is embedded in National Curriculum programmes of study. The curriculum needs to be broad and balanced to reflect the cultural diversity of the pupils and identify opportunities for the use of ICT. Greater opportunities for composing activities need to be addressed in Years 10 and 11. Departmental development plans need to clearly reflect the department's priorities for development.
126. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning facilitate their achievement in music. Accommodation is good and resources are adequate, other than the lack of computers. The department has a new recording studio that has yet to impact on standards in the classroom. The number of pupils learning instruments is growing and this is an encouraging development as is the number of extra-curricular activities on offer in the department. The school choir performs to a very high standard and the Gospel Choir is outstanding. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The female physical education inspector was taken ill immediately prior to the inspection and was replaced by a male colleague. Because of the religious sensitivities it was decided that this inspector should not observe lessons. A female non-specialist lead inspector sampled lessons. A specialist inspector saw the dance elements.

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of the positive attitudes of the pupils and good teaching the pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' depth of knowledge and skill levels are limited by the below average time for physical education.
- Leadership and management have overseen good improvement in this subject.
- Assessment requires further development to track more closely the progress of pupils in all areas of the subject.
- To guide teachers' planning more effectively programmes of study require more guidance on expected levels of work.

Commentary

127. Achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment. Assessment data and lessons sampled indicate that by the end of Years 9 and 11 the pupils remain below average. There is evidence of a significant minority of more capable learners being in line with expectations. In such areas as dance and in their knowledge of personal fitness these pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, are achieving very well.
128. The availability of only one gymnasium and one playground area contributes to the underdevelopment of pupils' knowledge of how to use space in the context of games. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work hard to produce their own personal fitness programmes. The pupils co-operate well and support each other in lessons and this makes a major contribution to their achievement. The pupils track each other's performances and encourage each other as they carry out circuit training.
129. In lessons sampled, including dance, teaching is never less than satisfactory, with good and very good teaching being observed. Very good use of subject knowledge helps motivate the pupils. Specialist subject teachers ensure that pupils experience good coaching and are clearly briefed on tasks and expectations. In particular teachers plan lessons that give careful attention to progression and continuity, and this helps explain the good achievement levels. There are inconsistencies in the degree to which teachers plan opportunities for pupils to demonstrate and evaluate their own and others performance. Positive relationships exist in lessons, and the teachers deal very sensitively with pupils who face difficulties in this subject. Pupils' learning is inconsistently reinforced by effective summary sessions at the end of lessons.
130. A well-organised curriculum delivers a satisfactory breadth of experience. However curriculum time is below the national expectation despite a valuable input from dance. This adversely affects the ability of the subject to deliver the necessary depth of skills and knowledge to pupils.
131. The leadership and management of the subject are shared between two experienced specialists. In the short time since their appointment they have shown satisfactory leadership and management overall, although good aspects are apparent even at this early stage. Wisely, attention focused on the need to produce effective programmes of study. To guide further teachers' planning the programmes require a closer identification of expected levels of work. Very good levels of on-going communication help to ensure the smooth running of the

subject. This is particularly relevant given the split site. Development planning has highlighted some areas for improvement, but no attempt has yet been made to prioritise and judge progress against success criteria. Assessment procedures are now good and include pupils in end of module self-evaluation and target setting. The use of data to inform planning is underdeveloped – there is no benchmarking of standards on entry to the school, and the subject is not yet assessing all the different aspects of the National Curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall, particularly in the areas of assessment, the provision of extra-curricular activities and in leadership and management.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

132. **The Business Enterprise NFTE Module 1** course was sampled. Standards achieved were above average. Learning was very good because of the teacher's high expectations. Pupils made good presentations necessary for a pass in the topic. Pupils' achievement was very good because of the very good teaching and very effective support teaching challenged the pupils to think about the use of language and to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentations. The objectives of the lesson were explained very clearly and pupils given tight deadlines to complete the work. As a result, the pace of the work was demanding. Very good use was made of the ICT resources and the pupils used the Internet sensibly to research material suitable for their project.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 'Individual and Society' course provides a very good introduction to many elements of citizenship for a minority of girls in Years 10 and 11.
- The school does not cover all the aspects of the statutory National Curriculum citizenship programme of study.

Commentary

133. Pupils' standards and achievement in Citizenship are unsatisfactory, overall, because the school does not teach all the aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme of study. The school delivers a good understanding of some aspects of citizenship through assemblies, when promoting its caring ethos, and through its careers education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes. In weekly PSHE lessons taught in tutorial groups, for example, girls discuss individuals' rights and responsibilities, law and order and homelessness. In Year 10, they discuss politics and government, and hold their own 'mock' elections. During the inspection week, assemblies about 'International Women's Day' encouraged girls to model their aspirations on women who have made an outstanding contribution to society.
134. In Years 10 and 11, a minority of girls are taught a non-examination course in 'Individual and Society' that provides them with a very good knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the citizenship programme of study such as the criminal justice system and a free press. Some other elements of citizenship such as human rights and international understanding are partially covered in subjects such as history and geography. The school acknowledges, however, that it does not meet statutory requirements in citizenship, and it is currently carrying out a consultation exercise to determine how it can best meet requirements by providing citizenship, personal, social and health education and careers education as a co-ordinated programme.

135. Citizenship was not a separate National Curriculum subject at the previous inspection and the school has been comparatively slow in introducing it. The school is well aware of this and a review of the provision of citizenship has been identified as a priority in the School Improvement Plan as part of its curriculum review.

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education is excellent.
- Teaching is variable but overall is satisfactory in personal, social and health education; it is very good in careers and in the Individual and Society course.
- The programme covers themes such as bullying, personal organisation, relationships and sex and drugs education.

Commentary

136. The school's programme for personal, social and health education, taught in tutorial time, is satisfactory. Discussion of a wide variety of topics helps girls develop their thinking about the personal choices they have to make and their personal organisation; careers education prepares girls very well for the world of work, and useful practical exercises include writing applications, interviews with employers and work placements. In a careers lesson in Year 10, girls discussed aspects of health and safety at work, while girls in Year 11 evaluated what they had learnt while on work experience.
137. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory in PSHE and is very good in careers education and in the 'Individual and Society' course. Pupils benefit from warm relationships with teachers. In careers lessons, they are very well motivated by the teacher's infectious enthusiasm and her very high expectations. As a result, they have very good attitudes to work that help them to learn effectively. Girls with special educational needs receive good support. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are fully included in all discussions and activities.

Leadership and management in Citizenship and personal, social and health education

138. Leadership and management in citizenship are unsatisfactory, overall, as there is currently no co-ordinator for the subject, and research into the proposed citizenship programme is being carried out by a temporary post holder. There is no formal assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding in citizenship, and pupils' achievement is not reported in their annual reports.
139. Careers education and the 'Individual and Society' course, however, are very well organised by an enthusiastic and experienced head of department. Year heads take responsibility for the teaching of the personal, social and health education programme within their year group.

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

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