

INSPECTION REPORT

ARDEN SCHOOL

Knowle

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104111

Headteacher: Mrs A Green

Lead inspector: Mr R Palmer

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th May 2005

Inspection number: 268336

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
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1216

School address: Station Road
Knowle
Solihull

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Smart

Date of previous inspection: 1st – 5th February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Arden School is larger than most other secondary schools. It has about 120 more pupils than at the time of the previous inspection and is over-subscribed. Boys outnumber girls in Years 7 to 10. The school has had status as a specialist language college since 1996. It received the School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills in 2002, gained the Sportsmark Gold award in 2003 and the Artsmark Gold award in 2005. Pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well above average. Boys and girls come from social and economic backgrounds that are well above average overall. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is well below the national average. About one in 15 pupils is of minority ethnic background. Four pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, about one in 11, is below average. Most of these pupils have special or moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3758	A Barringer	Team inspector	English
18447	R Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education Business studies
2628	J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
8873	C Evers	Team inspector	Geography History
33324	J Fullwood	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
18846	P Priest	Team inspector	Music
21803	L Ramsay	Team inspector	Design and technology
3937	J Seed	Team inspector	Science
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
2626	M Thompson	Team inspector	Work-related learning English as an additional language
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	9
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18
Work-related learning	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	36

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This **very good** school provides **very good** value for money. It has some excellent features. Pupils' achievement is very good by Year 11. Standards are well above average throughout Years 7 to 11. Boys and girls of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds receive a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good, as are leadership and management.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average and represent very good achievement by Years 9 and 11.
- Very good teaching and very effective use of assessment help pupils to achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management lead to continued good improvement.
- The outstanding ethos and excellent relationships enable pupils to develop a strong sense of personal responsibility.
- Very good care and excellent support and guidance focus on the differing needs of every pupil.
- Very good enrichment activities enhance pupils' academic and all-round development.
- Excellent attendance, very good behaviour and very positive attitudes assist pupils' learning.
- Design and technology lacks a stimulating environment for learning.

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1999 is **good**. GCSE results are higher. Teaching is even better now. Very successful development as a specialist language college has a positive effect on curricular developments. Very good leadership and management tackled the previous key issues well and have sustained and built upon the many previous strengths.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools*
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C

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

* *Similar schools* are ones in which pupils achieve equally high standards at the end of Year 9. In this context, the C grading reflects very good progress, which the pupils maintain throughout the school.

Standards are well above average by Year 11. They indicate **very good** achievement for boys and girls of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds. Results in the national tests for English, mathematics and science, taken in Year 9, and in GCSE examinations, are consistently well above average. In 2004, results in the national tests show very good achievement for Year 9 pupils, compared with their attainment on entry. GCSE results, in 2004, matched those of other similarly high-attaining schools and were much higher than expected from predictions based on pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7. Nine out of every 10 pupils in Year 11 gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C and a third of all grades awarded were A* or A. GCSE results, though high, are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. Pupils who are gifted or talented make very good progress. Standards in Year 9 are currently well above average and indicate very good achievement in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. Currently, standards by Year 11 are well above average and indicate further very good achievement in English, mathematics and science. Achievement by Year 11 is good in design and technology, Spanish and citizenship and is very good in all other subjects. The very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English achieve well, overall.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good** overall. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are very good. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**.

Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is very good in most subjects and at least good overall in all subjects. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good teaching and support that enable them to make the same very good rates of progress as other pupils. Those pupils identified as gifted or talented achieve very well because they usually receive work matched very well to their capabilities. Procedures for assessment have improved considerably and are very good. They play an important part in raising standards even higher. Marking is generally good, although it lacks consistency. Teachers' very high expectations and very good management of classes ensure that pupils work productively and at speed. Pupils are very keen to achieve high standards. They enjoy working hard and do so with great interest and much enthusiasm. Their well above average standards of literacy and numeracy, and their increasing competency in using information and communication technology (ICT), assist their work and progress in all subjects. Teachers use their subject expertise very well to explain the work clearly and to conduct very good discussions. In the few lessons that were judged as satisfactory, the teaching gave too few opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and the work was occasionally too easy for many pupils.

The curriculum is very good. A very high level of participation in very good out-of-class activities enriches pupils' learning and personal development. The quality of care is very good. Support and guidance are excellent. Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Governance is **very good** overall, even though the school does not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and set suitably ambitious targets. The very good leadership of the headteacher sets a very clear direction for continued improvement. Very effective senior and middle management guard against complacency and are succeeding in raising standards even higher. Financial management is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents like the school's high expectations and standards and its deservedly good public image. A few feel that the school does not keep them well informed or consult them sufficiently. However, the quality of information and reports to parents is very good and procedures for taking account of parents' views are better than those found in many schools. Pupils express pride and support for their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that leadership in design and technology provides a consistently high quality of teaching and accommodation that presents a stimulating environment for learning;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- make provision for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good by the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were high and show very good achievement for pupils of all capabilities.
- In 2004, results in national tests taken in Year 9 indicated very good achievement.
- Pupils' very good competence in literacy, numeracy and ICT promotes very good achievement.
- GCSE results are well above average and are rising faster than the national trend.
- GCSE results in Spanish in 2004 were below those of other subjects.

Commentary

1. The school's continuing status as a specialist languages college since 1996 and its receipt of the School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills in 2002, indicate its success in adding value to the academic achievements of boys and girls by the end of Year 11. Good improvements in teaching and the curriculum have helped pupils to raise achievement. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment are higher and the achievement of boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds and different capabilities continues to improve. Even though pupils' standards are well above average when they enter in Year 7, comparisons with national data show that the school adds very good value to pupils' academic standards both by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11.
2. The results in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 9, have been consistently well above average over the past four years. The difference between the performances of boys and girls in these tests broadly matches the national difference. In 2004, the overall results were in the top five per cent of those attained in similar schools and indicate excellent achievement. They show that boys and girls of all capabilities attained even higher results than those predicted from their well above average levels of attainment when they joined the school in Year 7. Results are improving at the national rate of improvement.
3. The GCSE examination results have also been consistently well above average over the past four years and match those of similar high-attaining schools. The results are rising faster than the national rate of improvement. In 2004, the overall results show that boys and girls added very good value to their academic performances, both from Year 9 to Year 11 and from Year 7 to Year 11. Because of pupils' very good performance in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the similar schools with which the school is compared for academic performance at the end of Year 11 consist largely of selective grammar schools. In 2004, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C and grades A*/A were well above average in nearly all subjects and the school exceeded its challenging targets for performance in the GCSE examination. Nine out of every 10 pupils in Year 11 gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C. The high proportion of A*/A grades, one in three, shows that higher-attaining pupils achieved very well. GCSE results and achievement in Spanish, in 2004, were well below those of other subjects, mainly because of staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Girls usually attain higher GCSE grades than boys, as they do nationally. In 2004, however, boys' results improved considerably and the

gap between the performance of boys and girls was much narrower than the national difference. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieved equally very well.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.2 (38.4)	33.5 (33.4)
Mathematics	42.0 (42.8)	35.7 (35.4)
Science	39.2 (40.8)	33.2 (33.6)

There were 263 pupils in the year group, 140 boys and 123 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	91 (89)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	59.1 (57.0)	41.4 (40.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	48.1 (47.5)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 231 pupils in the year group, 118 boys and 113 girls. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Current standards of work in Year 9 are well above average. They show that boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds are achieving very well. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects, except in citizenship where they are above average and in design and technology where they are average. Achievement by Year 9, compared with pupils' attainment in the subject when they joined the school, is very good in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects apart from citizenship and design and technology in which it is good.
5. In Years 10 and 11, standards are currently well above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are well above average in all other subjects, apart from design and technology and citizenship, in which they are above average. Standards of work indicate that boys and girls of all capabilities, including those identified as gifted and talented and those who have special educational needs, are achieving very well. Compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement by Year 11 is currently very good in English, mathematics, science and, as befits a specialist language college, modern foreign languages. Pupils studying the GCSE courses in music and physical education achieve outstandingly well. Pupils achieve well in citizenship and design and technology and very well in all other subjects inspected.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards their individual targets. Very effective help from the learning support assistants and sensitive teaching enable these pupils to achieve very well across subjects in Years 7 to 11. Very good procedures for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils identified as gifted or talented help to ensure that they also achieve very well.
7. Pupils of different ethnic groups achieve equally very well, overall. The very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English achieve well. They have sufficient language skills to cope with the curricular demands of most subjects. However, they occasionally find difficulty in keeping up with the other pupils when discussion or written work requires well

above average oracy or literacy skills and there is no additional support available. They achieve very well in practical subjects such as art and design and design and technology, and when withdrawn for specific support.

8. Pupils make at least good progress in the vast majority of lessons throughout Years 7 to 11, because teaching is often very good and sometimes excellent. They use their well above average literacy and numeracy skills very competently to develop their work in the different subjects. Pupils make very good use of their well above average computing skills to support and enrich their learning across subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Pupils' personal development is **very good**, especially in the areas of social and moral education, which are excellent. Pupils' attendance is excellent and their punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a serious commitment to learning and are keen to achieve their full potential.
- The school is outstandingly successful in teaching pupils to respect others, to have high moral standards and to develop a strong sense of personal responsibility.
- Attendance is exceptionally good and has a very positive effect on pupils' achievement.

Commentary

9. Because pupils behave well consistently and have mature and positive attitudes to learning, they achieve very well. In lessons, they are always eager to participate in discussions and practical activities. They are not afraid to ask questions or to risk giving an adventurous answer, because they genuinely want to learn. They listen attentively, concentrate on their work and try to do their best. Excellent relationships between pupils help them to co-operate well in paired or group tasks and to learn from one another. Pupils are ambitious for themselves and keen to please both their parents and their teachers. As a result, they make strenuous efforts to succeed in all they do. The school emphasises that success can be achieved in many ways. It offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to shine in activities other than lessons. Most pupils take part in something extra, be it sport, music, drama, contributing to the school magazine or running house events. Such involvement contributes considerably to their confidence and self-esteem, while at the same time enabling them to develop social and organisational skills. Pupils are rapidly becoming articulate and self-assured young people. The very few pupils at an early stage of learning English integrate easily into classes.
10. Compared with those in schools of similar size, the number of fixed-term exclusions is below average and the number of permanent exclusions is broadly average. The exclusions that do occur are appropriate responses to the misdemeanours. Arrangements to promote racial equality meet statutory requirements. Racial harmony is very good.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Exclusions in the last school year	
		Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1123	26	2
White – Irish	5		
White – any other White background	19	1	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	11		
Mixed – any other mixed background	7		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	13		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	9		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	4	1	
No ethnic group recorded	10		

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

11. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. An emphasis on strong moral values and social awareness pervades all aspects of school life. Teachers serve as very good role models for pupils by showing them how to treat other people with consideration and respect and by having high expectations of their conduct. Through assemblies, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship lessons, pupils learn about global issues and are encouraged to explore their own reactions to them. The school emphasises the importance of personal responsibility in relation to the immediate and the wider community. Pupils’ response is outstandingly good. They have no difficulty in putting the needs of others first, whether it be a simple matter of showing politeness and friendliness to those around them, or substantial fund raising for local and national charities. Within school, relationships are excellent. Pupils take pride in their school and display a strong feeling of loyalty to their peers and to staff.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.9	School data	0.2
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

12. Although the school adopts a low-key approach to promoting attendance, figures are exceptionally good, compared with those found nationally. Certificates and house points are motivating for the younger pupils, while older pupils understand the intrinsic value of attending school regularly. Very good monitoring procedures ensure the quick identification and investigation of any lapses in attendance and lead to appropriate remedial action. Most parents

recognise that good achievement is closely linked to good attendance, so they ensure that their sons and daughters do not take time off unnecessarily. The very small amount of unauthorised absence is due to those few parents who insist on taking pupils on holiday in term time, in spite of the school's strenuous efforts to discourage this. Most pupils arrive at school on time. A recent crackdown by senior staff has improved the punctuality of the very small number of pupils who habitually arrive late.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good** throughout Years 7 to 11. Teaching, learning, the curriculum and the quality of care are all very good. Guidance and support are excellent. Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high expectations and the setting of challenging tasks motivate pupils to do their best.
- Very good use of assessment helps pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils help their own progress greatly by working very hard and enthusiastically in class.
- Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and pupils have too little time to think for themselves.

Commentary

13. Teaching and learning are very good, overall, throughout Years 7 to 11. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching observed has increased. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 133 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
12 (9%)	59 (44%)	48 (36%)	14 (11%)	0	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.

14. The quality of teaching is very good throughout Years 7 to 11 in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art and design, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education. Teaching is at least good in all other subjects. The most prominent features of the large number of very good and better lessons are the very high expectations of teachers and pupils and the challenge and excitement that pupils find in the work set. As a result, pupils are very willing to ask searching questions. A key feature that ensures good or better progress in most lessons is that pupils know exactly what they should learn by the end of the lesson and see the relevance of the work to past and future learning. Teachers use their very good expertise in their specialist subjects to give clear and detailed explanations. Through carefully constructed discussions, in groups or as a whole class, they help pupils to review and reinforce what they have learned.
15. The very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs ensures that these pupils make equal, very good progress in class as other pupils. Teachers and the learning support assistants

work in close collaboration and very effectively to provide sensitive, additional help when needed for pupils who have learning difficulties or have fallen behind in their work. Staff in all subjects have a very good awareness of the needs of the pupils identified as gifted or talented. Consequently, these pupils receive work in class and through out-of-class activities that stretches them and enables them to achieve very well.

16. Pupils play a very important part in ensuring that they add very good value to their standards in subjects. Boys and girls arrive at lessons very eager and ready to learn. They enjoy excellent relationships with teachers. Pupils of all capabilities work quickly and productively because they find most of the work challenging and full of interest. They carry out homework tasks diligently and thoroughly. Pupils respond very positively to good or better teaching by participating conscientiously. They display a very mature manner in such class activities as group work and investigations. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, very good teaching ensured that pupils discussed issues relating to puberty and sexual matters in a sensible, articulate and suitably inquisitive way that would have done credit to a class of much older pupils.
17. Pupils make rapid progress in most lessons because they make very competent use of their well above average skills in literacy, speaking, numeracy and ICT to support their work. Teachers provide many interesting activities for pupils to practise, apply and develop these skills. As a result, pupils develop very good skills in research and in collecting, interpreting and representing information. The generally good implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategies for learning has helped to develop teaching and learning well across all subjects.
18. In the lessons that were satisfactory rather than good or better, spread across a few subjects, pupils found the work dull at times. This was because, although planning was good, the teacher spent too long talking and directed too much of the work. As a result, pupils had too few opportunities to think for themselves. In a few lessons, too much dependence on the use of worksheets resulted in a few pupils finding the work too easy. A few lessons in design and technology provided a restricted range of activities.
19. Very good procedures for assessment, including those for pupils with special educational needs, play a prominent part in helping pupils to improve their work. Teachers' assessments are accurate and lead to very effective target setting. Pupils know clearly how well they are doing and what to do to reach their potential. Systems for the collection of data are very good. Staff make very good use of information about pupils' attainment, progress and potential to identify and very quickly remedy any underachievement in a subject. The marking of pupils' work is generally good. Although pupils' books sometimes contain few written comments to inform them what they need to do to improve, pupils acquire a very good understanding about how to improve through oral feedback from teachers and through detailed feedback about their work on projects and in tests. The use of homework to support learning is good.

The curriculum

The curriculum and extra-curricular provision are very good. The quality and amount of accommodation and resources for learning are good, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils have equality of access to a curriculum that matches their needs very well.
- Curricular provision in modern foreign languages is excellent.

- Very good extra-curricular activities greatly enhance pupils' academic and personal development.
- Very good careers education prepares pupils very well for later life.
- Design and technology lacks a stimulating environment for learning.

Commentary

20. The curriculum has improved substantially since the previous inspection. It is now very good, fulfils statutory requirements and meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils. A rigorous curricular review has resulted in a programme that provides breadth, balance and flexibility. Excellent opportunities for pupils to study a wide range of foreign languages, including French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Latin and Italian, reflect the school's status as a specialist language college. As a result, the vast majority of pupils achieve very well in two foreign languages by the end of Year 11. Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs includes activities in reading and spelling clubs to improve their literacy skills.
21. Very good inclusion of all pupils is a strength. All pupils have access to the National Curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, teachers make very effective use of national strategies to improve learning, for example to improve the writing, reading and mathematical skills of the lowest-attaining pupils. Very good curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs and the careful deployment and use of learning support assistants help these pupils to achieve very well. Subject departments make very good use of the analysis of data to plan the teaching to meet pupils' individual needs in all years. Very good provision for gifted or talented pupils includes opportunities for them to take part in summer schools in science and art and design. In mathematics, these pupils achieve high results in the national Mathematics Challenge event. In ICT, they study the AS-level course in Year 11 and take the GCSE examination in Year 9.
22. In Years 10 and 11, the very good achievement and high standards in GCSE examinations reflect pupils' motivation and interest in the courses provided. The development of vocational courses, including part-time college placements and extended work experience, meets very well the needs of the small number of pupils who do not enjoy a mainly academic curriculum. These pupils respond very positively and achieve very well on the 'slimmed down' curriculum. In design and technology, the curriculum is narrow because of the low uptake by pupils.
23. The good programme for PSHE meets statutory requirements. Effective teaching of the sex education programme enables pupils to consider and discuss sensitive matters, such as unplanned pregnancies, in a mature manner. Appropriate external agencies, such as the medical profession, contribute well to the teaching of sex and drug education. Very good careers education ensures that pupils prepare very well for the next stages in their education and future careers. Pupils value the work experience opportunities that help them to acquire a very good understanding of the world of business, commerce and industry and of life beyond school.
24. Very good opportunities for pupils to extend and enrich their academic and personal development are a considerable strength of the school. Pupils and parents are appreciative of the wide range of activities provided. The school's recent success in gaining the prestigious Artsmark Gold award to add to its existing Sportsmark Gold award recognises the very good quality of the extra-curricular provision. Outstanding extra-curricular activities in music involve large numbers of pupils in producing work of high quality, for example in the bands and the choir. Through participation in a very wide range of sports, many pupils improve their skills in physical activities, particularly in team games. In drama, pupils tackle challenging and difficult work, such as the recent production of *The Crucible*, confidently and with considerable

competence and enthusiasm. Many subjects help to raise achievement further by offering good support outside of lessons and through many clubs. The wide range of house-based activities, for example producing a newsletter for other pupils and charity work, promote pupils' social development. Activities such as the annual 'prom' for Year 11 pupils add colour and excitement to school life. They provide very good learning experiences for the pupils who organise them, as well as contributing to pupils' social development. Staff are careful to seek activities to engage the very small number of pupils in each year group who do not participate readily in out-of-class events.

25. Specialist status as a language college has promoted pupils' active participation in a good range of educational visits and exchanges, involving a number of subject departments. These events make an important and considerable contribution to pupils' cultural and social awareness. As well as links with Europe, the school has well-established links with China, including an exchange and a teacher placement, which provide a valuable extra dimension to the curriculum.
26. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The quality and amount of support staff are good. Resources for teaching and learning are good. They range from excellent in modern foreign languages to satisfactory in design and technology. Facilities for ICT have increased considerably and provide very good support for pupils' learning in most subjects. The library is an attractive and well-managed area that many pupils use well to research and develop their work. However, there is a current shortage of books of suitable challenge for the highest-attaining pupils in a few subjects such as geography and history.
27. The school houses many more pupils than its original design envisaged. Efficient and effective use of the improved and good accommodation meets curricular needs and provides a generally good environment for learning to take place. The accommodation is now very good in science but, as at the previous inspection, it remains unsatisfactory in design and technology. Further work to provide better access for pupils with physical difficulties is under way.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Support and guidance, based on monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development, are excellent. Very effective systems ensure the close involvement of pupils in the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent pastoral and academic support assists pupils' very good all-round development.
- Excellent relationships between pupils and adults enhance pupils' learning.
- Pupils' views are sought and valued, so that they influence the school's decisions.

Commentary

28. The pastoral system is extremely successful in meeting pupils' individual needs, whether personal or academic. Staff know pupils very well and show genuine concern for their welfare and well-being. They are very conscious of the close link between personal development and educational achievement. A comprehensive structure involves staff from all areas of the school in identifying any problems that pupils may have. This then triggers an effective response, either from within the school or from the wide range of external agencies that provide support. In this way, staff ensure that all pupils are included and helped to achieve as well as they can. Pupils themselves contribute very positively to the supportive, caring environment, by acting as peer

mentors. Trained volunteers help new pupils to settle into the school and provide a listening ear when needed.

29. Alongside the pastoral support procedures is a carefully structured mentoring system, which helps pupils to review their progress towards achieving their set targets. Pupils greatly appreciate this highly effective system, because it ensures that they know what they need to do to improve their work. This is an area where academic and pastoral support dovetail. If, for example, a pupil is not making as much progress as expected, the mentoring system will identify the cause of the problem and arrange for appropriate help, either from a subject teacher or from someone who can offer the kind of personal support that is needed. Very good careers education and a comprehensive PHSE programme, both of which pupils value highly, supplement the excellent support systems in school. Specially arranged programmes of study, based on pupils' abilities and inclinations, make it possible for each individual to achieve his/her potential.
30. A considerable strength of the school is the excellent quality of relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. In most classrooms, a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere promotes purposeful and productive learning. Teachers treat pupils as young adults and they respond accordingly. The mutual respect, which is evident across the school, both in and out of lessons, is an important factor in helping pupils to give of their best. Because staff handle difficult personal issues very sensitively, pupils are confident to approach them for help of any kind.
31. Pupils with special educational needs know that the school recognises their individual achievements. They feel valued members of the school community. The special educational needs co-ordinator takes time to get to know these pupils whilst they are still at their primary schools. This helps them to settle quickly and well into their new school.
32. The school consults pupils widely, by means of formal surveys and informal discussion, and, more importantly, through the highly successful school council. The council is headed by senior pupils, who meet weekly with the headteacher to represent the views of their peers. The elected members of the council give serious, mature consideration to issues that affect pupils directly. As a result of their deliberations, many changes have been made in school. For example, there has been a review of the policies on racism and bullying, healthy options have been introduced at lunchtimes and the format of the homework diary/planner has changed. Council members are very conscious of the personal responsibility that they carry. They believe firmly in the value of the consultation process in contributing to the smooth running of the school community. At the same time, they are developing social and organisational skills and demonstrating real citizenship in action.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the local community and other schools and colleges are all **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality and range of information provided for parents are very good.
- The school's high profile in the local community enhances pupils' learning and personal development.
- Strong links with other schools and colleges are mutually beneficial.

Commentary

33. The wide range of information for parents covers everything from routine day-to-day matters to detailed accounts of pupils' progress. Written communications, such as the prospectus and newsletters, are clear, attractively illustrated and presented in a friendly, welcoming style. Information on pupils' progress is available to parents through interim reports, parents' evenings and a full annual report. Throughout the year, the homework diary shows how pupils are achieving in relation to their set targets. Teachers and parents use the diary as a good means of communication. Staff are always willing to make themselves available to deal with any queries that parents may have.
34. Questionnaires completed before the inspection show that some parents do not feel that they are consulted enough or that they are kept sufficiently well informed about pupils' progress. However, surveys undertaken by the school at parents' evenings do not show matching concerns. There are numerous examples of changes that have been made in school as a result of seeking parents' views and there are many ways in which parents can keep track of how well pupils are achieving. Annual reports are of high quality and accompanied by an extremely clear, helpful leaflet that explains in detail how the reports should be interpreted. The consistently high numbers of parents who attend consultation evenings and open days suggest that parents find these a valuable means of finding out what they need to know. Parents of pupils with special educational needs attend review meetings.
35. Because most pupils live in the local area their actions are very visible to members of the local community. Accordingly, staff and governors make a point of trying to ensure that the very good attitudes and values that pupils show in school are also reflected outside of school. Pupils make very good contributions to community life, for example by giving musical performances and visiting elderly people to distribute harvest produce. They are also extensively committed to a range of activities, which they share with local people, such as membership of sports clubs, adult education classes, youth organisations and the church. Local businesses show their support for the school in many ways, such as providing sponsorship, placing advertisements in the school magazine and contributing to careers and business studies lessons. The school's description of itself as 'at the heart of the community' is, indeed, accurate and typified well by the spectacle of hundreds of well-wishers lining the streets to watch Year 11 pupils arriving for their end of school 'prom'.
36. By forging close links with other schools in the area, both primary and secondary, Arden makes the most of its specialist language college status. Its staff share their expertise with colleagues by providing advice and training. By teaching languages, drama and physical education at the feeder primary schools, staff are extending their own professional development, as well as preparing the way for primary pupils to make a smooth transition to the secondary sector. Primary headteachers confirm that very good relationships with Arden School result from joint activities within the local cluster of schools. In addition, transition modules begun in English and science help to provide curricular continuity between Years 6 and 7. Equally good relationships exist with the schools and colleges to which pupils move at the end of the secondary phase.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is **very good**. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Senior and middle management are very good overall. Governance is very good, although the school does not fulfil one statutory requirement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rigorous self-evaluation and accountability ensure that staff treat every pupil's achievement and welfare as important.
- Very good leadership and management result in high expectations and improved achievement.
- Governors provide very good support and challenge, which help the school to improve.
- Very good financial management helps the school to achieve its priorities.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

37. The very good leadership of the headteacher ensures that expectations of staff and pupils are very high and that the school continues to improve. She promotes a strong emphasis on the continuous improvement of teaching. This contributes to the positive and challenging learning that pupils experience. Supported by a very effective senior team, she has succeeded in developing a culture of reflective self-evaluation, devolved responsibility and accountability, in which the achievement and welfare of every pupil are valued. The well-informed and supportive governing body assists the school in setting a clear direction. As a result, improvement since the previous report, when the school was already performing very well, is good. Standards continue to rise, teaching has improved and the GCSE examination results in 2004 were the highest ever. The second three-yearly renewal of its specialist status as a language college indicates that the school continues to meet the challenging targets set.
38. Opinions expressed in questionnaires and at the parents' meeting endorse the view that the school is led and managed well and that the community holds it in high regard. The school's over-subscription reflects much parental confidence in its overall performance.
39. Senior management is very good overall, and, despite the school's very good achievements, lacks any sign of complacency. The analysis and use of data have improved considerably over recent years. Teachers use assessment particularly well to identify any underachievement of individual pupils or groups of pupils. They make successful use of a variety of approaches and interventions to help pupils to overcome any lack of progress. Senior staff use the information gathered from the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance to plan very well for short-term and long-term improvements. Planning keeps a tight focus on the key priority of further improving learning. The senior team works closely and actively with staff and governors in setting sensible priorities and realistic but ambitious targets for improvement. Performance management and arrangements for professional development have a very positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning.
40. The school's policy of devolved leadership helps middle managers to operate very well, as seen, for example in the excellent leadership in subjects such as English and science. Team leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and provide a clear sense of direction for raising standards. The consistent and effective implementation and monitoring of whole-school policies, such as that for assessment, play a key role in pupils' very good academic achievement. The capable and efficient management of specialist resources and the very effective use of ICT assist teaching and learning in all subjects. The effective sharing across other subjects of the very good methods of teaching found in modern foreign languages is a positive outcome of the

school's status as a specialist language college. The very good leadership and management of special educational needs ensure the very careful deployment and use of resources. Very effective pastoral management ensures that pupils receive a very good quality of care.

41. The governing body carries out its responsibilities very well, apart from ensuring the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Governors are very active in support of the school. They have a very good understanding of what the school does well and what should be improved. They act as critical friends, for example challenging the headteacher to justify extra staffing in mathematics. They have an ambitious vision for the future, which includes the development of post-16 provision.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3 927 884	Balance from previous year	92 418
Total expenditure	3 861 389	Balance carried forward to the next	158 913
Expenditure per pupil	3163		

42. Financial management and planning are very good. Systems for day-to-day management work well. Financial planning is very effective in ensuring that the school achieves its priorities. Careful spending, linked to whole-school planning, has moved the budget recently from a position of a sizeable deficit to a position of balance. The money currently carried forward is earmarked for appropriate priorities, including a small amount for purposes of contingency. The school makes efficient use of its quite low budget to support its educational priorities. It has succeeded in correcting the previously too high proportion of spending on staffing. Appropriate procedures are in place to achieve best value. The latest available audit of the school's finances in June 2003 reported that financial administration was both 'effective and efficient'. The minor issues raised have been resolved effectively.
43. Several factors contribute to raising pupils' achievement. The most important ones are a high proportion of very good teaching, high expectations, very good leadership and management, pupils' very positive attitudes and very good enrichment opportunities. One particular barrier to raising achievement is the uninspiring environment for learning in design and technology.
44. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of pupils and the current quality of education and achievement, the school provides very good value for money.

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school prepares pupils well for their working life after school.

Commentary

45. Pupils acquire a good awareness of the world of work through a one-week placement on work experience in Year 10. A few pupils have more extended placements when it matches their particular needs. Preparation for work experience is thorough and well organised. Very detailed debriefings by learning mentors help pupils to make realistic assessments of the value of the placement. Most pupils value and benefit from their work experience. They reflect carefully on what they do, through keeping a daily diary. Pupils are proud of the bronze, silver and gold certificates that they receive for successful completion of their placement.
46. Learning about work is through a number of specific activities such as the 'World of Work Taster Days', held at the end of Year 9 or the beginning of Year 10. Representatives of a wide range of employers provide workshops that encourage and help pupils to develop work-related skills. The visiting team from the Royal Air Force, for example, set tasks which motivated pupils to develop their leadership and problem-solving skills.
47. Pupils learn about the requirements and responsibilities of the world of work through very good careers education, taught in every year through the general studies programme. Pupils on vocational courses, in Years 10 and 11, enhance their knowledge of the workplace through a range of visits to well-chosen firms and other places. For example, pupils following business studies increased their knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding the car industry, through visits to the work plants of firms such as Land Rover and Jaguar.
48. The development of work-related skills is satisfactory. Pupils who follow vocational courses, such as business studies or leisure and tourism, develop the skills required in the workplace through their courses. Other pupils develop skills, for example, economic awareness, through activities such as organising charity events. The PSHE programme and work in citizenship provide good activities for pupils to learn about the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. Suitable plans are in place to track every pupil's development of work-related skills across subjects, in order to identify and remedy gaps appropriate to each individual pupil's needs.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 national tests and in the GCSE examination are well above average.
- Very good teaching results in pupils' very good achievement and behaviour.
- Excellent leadership contributes to very positive relationships between staff and pupils.

Commentary

49. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were consistently well above average over the past four years. In 2004, they were above the results of similar schools and represented good achievement, compared with pupils' well above average attainment on entry to the school. Girls did better than boys. The results have improved markedly since the previous inspection. Standards are currently well above average by Year 9 and indicate that pupils of all capabilities, including the few with special educational needs, are achieving very well. The proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C or A*/A in the GCSE examination in 2004 were, as usual, well above the national average for both language and literature. The overall GCSE results represented very good achievement. Boys did marginally better than girls when compared with their respective national averages. Standards are currently well above average by Year 11 and indicate very good achievement for pupils of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds.
50. Standards of speaking and listening in all years are well above those found in many schools. Pupils listen very attentively and answer questions articulately and accurately. Boys and girls are equally confident in speaking. By Year 9, almost all pupils are very articulate in using standard English. As a result of very positive working relationships, pupils know that other pupils and the teachers will respect their ideas. Consequently, they speculate and take risks. A class in Year 10, for example, studying *Romeo and Juliet*, held a very mature, perceptive discussion about deeper levels of meaning in the play.
51. Overall, standards of reading are well above average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make particularly good progress in reading because they regularly encounter literature of high quality during the ten minutes set aside for private reading at the beginning of each lesson. Teachers monitor carefully pupils' choice of books and pupils keep a reading log. Pupils study in detail a range of important literary texts. For example, pupils in Year 8 were sensitive and understanding in their response to William Blake's use of symbolism in his poem *The Tyger*. By Year 9, pupils use confidently and accurately the language of literary criticism. In Years 10 and 11, pupils sustain well-informed discussions of complex texts. A Year 11 class, for instance, conducted a penetrating analysis of key themes in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.
52. Standards of pupils' written work by Year 9 and by Year 11 are well above average. Writing is, in the main, carefully presented. Pupils write effectively for a wide range of purposes. Some of the best writing is in response to their study of literature. In their work on *Macbeth*, for

example, high-attaining pupils in Year 9 demonstrated very thorough knowledge of the play in accurately written accounts of character, plot and themes. The best written work in Years 10 and 11 is of a very high standard. It is carefully planned, skilfully crafted and accurate in sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.

53. Teaching and learning are very good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers' very thorough planning of lessons ensures that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers use questioning skilfully and robustly, drawing the best out of pupils. A wide range of teaching methods stimulates a lively response. A class in Year 7, for example, made excellent use of computers in planning their own choice of television programmes. The setting of time targets and keeping to them motivate pupils to work enthusiastically and at pace. Relationships in class are outstandingly warm and trusting, resulting in high levels of achievement. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils in both behaviour and academic work. Marking is conscientious and consistent, with clear target setting and advice for improvement.
54. All members of the department share the same sense of vision and expectation, ensuring that standards are consistently high. The department provides many after-school support classes and runs regular theatre visits. There is a very strong ethos providing support for all, especially recently appointed colleagues. The great success of the department springs largely from its very good management and excellent leadership. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Results in national tests are higher, teaching has improved further, and the revised schemes of work provide relevant and interesting courses, including much more effective use of ICT to promote learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Pupils make very good use of their well above average skills in language and literacy to develop their work in subjects across the curriculum. Boys and girls listen very attentively and respond articulately in class. Group work plays an integral part of learning in most subjects and pupils respond eagerly to the encouragement to feed back to the class. Pupils' reading aloud is practised less widely. The very high standard of oracy is a great strength of the school. The general standard of reading comprehension is well above that generally found. Teachers encourage pupils to extend reading and to retain information well, but a few departments do not ensure that pupils use the well-managed library sufficiently to encourage research and the extension of knowledge. Overall, pupils develop their writing skills well. However, despite the common marking scheme, the lack of a whole-school language and literacy policy means that teachers are inconsistent in providing help for pupils to structure and extend their written work. Pupils develop good skills in note taking in most subjects, which provide much help in their preparation for examinations.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject expertise and use of excellent resources promote high standards.
- Use of a very good variety of teaching methods assists very good achievement.
- The excellent curriculum encourages pupils to succeed in the study of foreign languages.
- Marking does not sufficiently show pupils in Years 7 to 9 how to improve.

Commentary

56. Nearly all of the pupils enter the school without having studied a modern foreign language previously. After studying either French or German in Year 7, all pupils, apart from the small number with special educational needs, study this and an additional foreign language to GCSE level. They choose from a list that includes Spanish, Italian, Chinese and Latin, as well as French and German. This excellent curricular provision reflects the school's very successful development as a specialist language college, over the past nine years.
57. Teachers' assessments and work seen show that standards are well above average by the end of Year 9. They represent very good achievement in two foreign languages for boys and girls. Results in GCSE examinations, in 2004, were well above average for the very high number of candidates in French and German. The proportion of A*/A grades was double the national average. They show that boys and girls, of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds, including the gifted pupils, achieved very well in both languages. Although the results in Spanish, taking into account the large entry, were average overall, they were below average at grades A*-C. This was due mainly to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Standards are currently well above average by Year 11 across all the languages taught. They show that the vast majority of pupils are achieving very well in two modern foreign languages. The small number of pupils with special educational needs study one foreign language and achieve very well.
58. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. In Years 7 to 9 teachers make very effective use of a wide variety of stimulating activities that help to reinforce learning. Pupils are active learners and assess their own performance. The careful planning of lessons ensures that pupils know exactly what they should learn. Teachers set the work in logical learning steps and use the three-part lesson to sustain interest, to challenge pupils and to cater for pupils' different needs. Teachers have high expectations. They set good examples for pupils to copy in their speaking. However, in a few lessons, the teacher relies a little too much on English and makes insufficient use of the foreign language. Relationships in class are pleasant and good-humoured, resulting in a harmonious environment, which encourages pupils to work enthusiastically and productively. Exercise books reveal pupils' pride in their work. Although the checking of work in pupils' books is regular and frequent, the marking of work in Years 7 to 9 does not often explain clearly enough how pupils could improve.
59. In Years 10 and 11, pupils learn how to study and read for meaning. Detailed marking gives pupils clear pointers about how to improve and provides challenging and practical targets. A contributory factor in pupils' very good achievement is the very detailed information that teachers provide for pupils about requirements for succeeding in the GCSE examination. In all years, large numbers of pupils benefit from many opportunities to go abroad on exchanges, activity holidays or cultural visits.
60. Very good overall leadership and management have a clear focus on raising standards and further improving the quality of teaching. Good procedures for assessment are in place. Teachers use data very well to track pupils' progress carefully and to remedy underachievement. Well-presented and thorough schemes of work support teaching. The monitoring of teaching and the scrutiny of pupils' books are increasingly helpful in attempts to standardise practice across the department. Teaching and foreign language assistants provide good support to pupils' learning. The department is at the forefront of professional development and ICT training in school. It teaches in the primary schools and partner establishments.

61. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are higher. More foreign languages are on the curriculum. Teachers and pupils now make very good use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching helps pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils get on very well with their teachers, increasing their confidence to learn.
- Very good leadership underpins a strong team approach to teaching.
- Marking is of inconsistent quality and not always frequent enough.

Commentary

62. Pupils enter Year 7 with well above average standards. In 2004, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and significantly above those of similar schools. Current standards of work are well above average by Year 9. They represent very good achievement over Years 7 to 9 for boys and girls of all capabilities. In 2004, GCSE results were well above the national average, with a large proportion of grades at A*/A. They broadly matched those of similarly high-attaining schools. Current standards of work in Year 11 are well above average and represent very good achievement across all aspects of the syllabus for boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds. The few pupils with special educational needs and those who are identified as gifted make equally very good rates of progress.
63. Pupils learn very well in lessons because of very good teaching. All of the teaching seen was good or better. Pupils respond very well to the demanding challenges of their work. As one Year 11 class entered the classroom, the teacher asked pupils to work out the equation of a quadratic curve without providing them with any help. The pupils enthusiastically set to work and succeeded in solving the problem. In the best lessons, pupils explore ideas eagerly and conscientiously. Year 8 pupils were very creative in designing a package for table tennis balls. A feature of this excellent lesson was the way in which pupils used their previous learning to solve problems. They worked out how to calculate the length of an arc. They had never done this before. Pupils make rapid progress in lessons because the very good planning ensures that the careful structuring and timing of activities motivate pupils to work productively and at pace. Time is not wasted. Once something has been learnt the class moves quickly on to something new. Very good relationships between pupils and their teachers mean that pupils seek help with confidence when needed. Sensitive use of humour helps to put pupils at their ease.
64. Assessment is good overall. Pupils know the progress they are making because they receive good oral feedback in lessons and learn how to correct mistakes made in tests. They use well-designed booklets to build up a picture of progress after each test. However, the marking of many exercise books is not as frequent as it should be to ensure that pupils always learn quickly from mistakes. Some teachers give pupils helpful comments on the next step for improvement. Not all do.
65. Very good leadership and good management have established a strong and effective team approach to teaching. The department analyses pupils' results carefully and well to find out what aspects of teaching have gone well and what should be better. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are higher. Accommodation has improved. The use of ICT to assist learning has increased. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in the quality of marking remain.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Pupils use their well above average mathematical skills very competently to assist their work in all subjects. The teaching of numeracy across subjects is good. In many lessons, pupils have good opportunities to practise and develop their computational, statistical, graphical, interpretational and measuring skills. They produce graphical work of high quality in subjects such as science and geography. They apply principles of proportion well in art and design. Accurate measuring assists pupils' work and progress in topics and projects in design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are high and have improved further since the previous inspection.
- Very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
- Excellent assessment helps pupils to improve.
- Excellent leadership has ensured very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils have too little experience of data-logging techniques.

Commentary

67. In 2004, the results of the national tests taken in Year 9 were well above average and well above those of similar schools. Over recent years, the results have been well above the national ones and rising at a faster rate. There has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results in the GCSE examinations were consistently well above average in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades, in 2004, was very high compared with the national average. Pupils of all capabilities achieved very well. The proportion of pupils gaining A* or A grades was three times greater than that found nationally. Boys performed slightly better than girls. Pupils did better in science than in most of their other subjects.
68. Pupils enter the school with well above average standards. They achieve very well and improve their work across all aspects of the schemes of work, as they move through the school. By the end of each of Years 9 and 11, standards are well above average and rising. Pupils develop well above average skills in practical investigations. Their very good numeracy skills enable them to perform scientific calculations very competently and to process the results of their experiments efficiently. Pupils use and develop their ICT skills very well in science. Standards of presentation are high. Pupils are careful to use the correct terminology and units. Gifted and talented pupils receive suitably challenging extension tasks and benefit from participating in extra-curricular activities that help them to achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good teaching and support that enable them to achieve very well.
69. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All the teaching observed was at least good and most was very good or excellent. A particular strength is the quality of relationships in class based on genuine, mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes. They respond very well to the high expectations of teachers and, consequently, learn very well and rapidly. Teachers explain the work in lively and interesting ways. They provide a good variety of tasks that keep pupils motivated. Excellent management of the class ensures that pupils are busy throughout lessons and enjoy the work. Very good planning of lessons caters very effectively for the differing needs of pupils. Teachers exploit their knowledge of pupils well and, through skilful use of targeted questions, draw out information and check understanding. The well-briefed support assistants work very well with teachers in promoting very good learning for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers make very effective use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest. Pupils appreciate the regular and thorough marking and teachers' detailed comments that help them to improve their work.
70. Excellent leadership has established a very effective team and ensures a common commitment to raising standards. Very good management results in the effective deployment of staff to make

good use of expertise with particular groups. Technical support of high quality assists the efficient running of the department. Excellent assessment ensures that pupils know very clearly how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Comprehensive programmes for revision, including after-school classes and contacting teachers by e-mail, ensure that pupils prepare well for public examinations.

71. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. GCSE results are even higher. The new building with nine laboratories has improved the learning environment greatly. Teachers and pupils now make considerably more use of ICT to support learning. However, the amount of data-logging equipment is insufficient to enable pupils to gain enough 'hands on' experience. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented is now much better. The monitoring of teaching is now much more effective in helping teachers to work to the same high standard.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress and attain well above average standards.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes contribute considerably to their very good achievement.
- Computers are numerous, up to date and readily accessible to pupils.
- Teachers do not share best practice in teaching sufficiently.

Commentary

72. In 2004, teachers' assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Standards in current classes in Year 9 are well above average overall. They indicate very good achievement compared with pupils' standards on entry in Year 7. Results in the examination for the GCSE short course, in 2004, taken by most pupils, were well above average. They show that boys and girls of all capabilities achieved very well. Pupils following the new applied GCSE course achieved above average results that indicated satisfactory achievement. Standards by Year 11 are currently well above average and represent very good achievement. Pupils' well above average standards of literacy and numeracy enhance their achievement. Boys and girls of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally very well.
73. Teaching is good and learning is very good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable. They use very good procedures for assessment very effectively to help pupils to learn thoroughly and quickly. Reports indicate clearly how pupils can reach their agreed targets. Pupils respond very positively and with hard work to teachers' very high expectations. Teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching methods. They plan well and make efficient use of resources and time to set work that meets the needs of the full range of pupils. They make very good provision for the highest attainers, through extension materials that pose suitably challenging and difficult tasks. Pupils' enthusiasm, very positive attitudes and willingness to work hard, independently and in groups, help them to make very good progress. Their good practice and use of their computing skills in other subjects enhance their standards in ICT. Pupils learn complex computing techniques and make effective use of a wide range of applications. They write extensively and discuss their work articulately. Work on databases is especially strong. Pupils with weaker language skills receive good support through teachers' effective presentations of key vocabulary.

74. The four well-equipped rooms are a good aid to pupils' achievement, through providing a stimulating environment for learning. Business links with a local power company assist the learning of pupils in the vocational aspects of the ICT course.
75. Good leadership and management provide a clear vision of the immediate priorities. The team is working hard to raise standards in the recently introduced, applied GCSE course. Suitable procedures are in place for monitoring the department's work but they do not always lead to the sharing of best practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and varies from very good to satisfactory. The technical team makes a positive contribution to the smooth running of the department.
76. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The main issue was the upgrading of computers, which has been done very effectively. Resources for computing are now very good. The programme for renewing equipment is realistic and underpins long-term planning for expansion.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. Pupils make very competent use of their well above average ICT skills to develop and enhance their work in all subjects. Very good training and support help to make teachers effective users of technology to improve learning and raise achievement. As a result, many teachers use the interactive whiteboards to provide very good demonstrations and stimulating explanations. Technicians provide very good support, which increases teachers' confidence and skill. Provision for ICT in modern foreign languages and music is particularly good and enhances pupils' learning considerably. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, use technology with confidence and skill. They understand how it can improve their work. In most subjects, pupils use ICT principally for research and presentation. In science, limited access to data-logging facilities slightly restricts the range of learning. Plans to develop on-line learning are well advanced.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because they enjoy hard work and are keen to learn.
- Teachers use methods that motivate pupils to reach high standards.
- Very good leadership contributes to high standards by the end of Year 11.
- High attainers have too little access to suitably challenging works of reference in the library.

Commentary

78. Teachers' assessments, in 2004, showed that standards were well above average by the end of Year 9. They indicated that pupils achieved very well in Years 7 to 9. The GCSE examination results in 2004, as in 2003, were well above average. They indicated very good achievement. The proportion gaining A*/A grades was twice the national average. Although more girls than boys reached the highest grades, boys' results were well above the boys' national average.

79. Current standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average. Pupils of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds are achieving very well compared with their above average standards in geography on entry. They understand and explain very well geographical features and processes. Their use and interpretation of statistical data are extremely competent, as, for instance, in their work on population. The essays from the highest attainers express views that feature logical and persuasive arguments.
80. The work of boys and girls currently in Year 11 is well above average. Pupils make accurate use of correct terminology in the work on geographical processes. They have very good understanding of problems such as the impact of coastal erosion. They articulate their views lucidly, both orally and in writing, showing clearly that they understand differing opinions about contentious issues such as globalisation.
81. Teaching and learning are very good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils learn very well because they respond very positively to very good enthusiastic teaching. Teachers set and expect very high standards. Pupils rise to the set challenges very willingly and achieve very well. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are happy to work hard, at a brisk pace and with much interest. Pupils make very effective use of their opportunities to work in groups. They support one another very effectively and so contribute to their own and others' learning. Teachers raise moral issues appropriately and give pupils good opportunities to form their own views.
82. The very good leadership and management of the department have led to very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards are higher. The department has remedied the weaknesses in teaching identified previously. Teachers and pupils now use ICT well to enhance learning. The assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is now very good. Imaginative use of the school site has improved opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9. The department focuses very clearly on improving the high standards still further. The school library does not contain enough suitably academic books for the very high attaining pupils to use for independent research.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers successfully enthuse and motivate pupils to achieve very high standards.
- Pupils work hard, show a keen desire to know more, and so learn very well.
- Excellent leadership has led to high academic standards.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use fieldwork to support their learning in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

83. Teachers' assessments, in 2004, showed that standards were well above average by the end of Year 9. Pupils' standards were above average on entry in Year 7, and their achievement by the end of Year 9 was very good. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were significantly above average, as in 2002 and 2003. They indicated that pupils' achievement was very good. The proportion who gained A/A* grades was twice the national average. Boys and girls both reach well above average standards.

84. Current standards are well above average by the end of Year 9. In Years 7 to 9, boys and girls of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress and achieve very well. They acquire very good knowledge and understanding about the past. Pupils learn to evaluate and interpret a wide range of sources very competently, as, for instance, in work on World War 1 propaganda. The highest attainers produce essays that demonstrate high standards of historical understanding and the capacity to argue their point of view cogently.
85. Standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are well above average. Boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds are achieving very well. They have very good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. They express their own views articulately in oral work and coherently in written work of very high quality, supporting their views with valid evidence. Their use and evaluation of complex historical sources, such as political cartoons, show very high levels of understanding.
86. Pupils learn and achieve very well because they receive very good teaching. Very good relationships, coupled with teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, mean that pupils are enthusiastic and want to learn. The high expectations of pupils and teachers, and a very brisk pace in lessons, result in pupils learning a lot in a short time. Teachers use group work very effectively to provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to discuss and present their conclusions. Pupils work very productively in groups, co-operating well to provide effective mutual support for their learning. The very thorough preparation of pupils for their GCSE examinations is a key factor in their success.
87. Excellent leadership and management ensure that the department is not complacent about the already high standards. There is a clear focus on improving still further. The library has an insufficient amount of suitably academic books for the very high-attaining pupils to use for independent research. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have enough opportunities to use sites of historic significance.
88. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The highest attainers now receive suitably sophisticated work. The department makes effective use of ICT to provide good opportunities for pupils' research and presentation of work.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to work are positive factors in their very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management have resulted in very good improvements.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to engage in outside visits to enhance learning.

Commentary

89. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. This represents very good achievement as pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge in religious education that are broadly average. Lower-attaining pupils explain how belonging to a religion and a community involves

religious beliefs and practices. Higher-attaining pupils place these practices in their historical and cultural contexts.

90. On both the short and full courses, results in the GCSE examinations, in 2004, were well above average. Currently, standards are well above average by Year 11. Lower-attaining pupils show considerable understanding of moral issues that confront people on a daily basis, such as abortion and euthanasia. The higher-attaining pupils display a high level of empathy when regarding religious attitudes towards these complex issues. Pupils of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds achieve very well throughout Years 10 and 11. They make particularly good progress in their analytical skills and in their ability to recognise and express valid opinions about different points of view concerning them.
91. Teaching and learning are very good across all years. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan a variety of stimulating activities, which strongly engage the attention of all pupils. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm about the subject to the pupils. Marking and assessment are very good. Pupils, consequently, know their levels of attainment and how to improve. Pupils enjoy carrying out the well-planned enquiry work because they have a clear understanding of what to do and respond keenly to the challenging tasks and good resources. Pupils' well above average skills in speaking and writing assist very good learning. They benefit from many good opportunities to develop their skills of empathy, research and literacy. The discussion of moral issues helps pupils' moral and social development. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and relationships are excellent.
92. Very good leadership and management provide a clear vision for the subject's future development. The department is aware of the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to visit places of religious interest in the vicinity. It makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Very good and supportive teamwork ensures a shared commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are higher and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The department now meets statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan well and to help pupils to learn well.
- Leadership does not ensure that the quality of teaching, though good overall, is consistent.
- Good teaching of design ensures pupils experience a good range of materials and projects.
- Good management of classes leads to pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- Unimaginative use of the accommodation limits the range of learning activities.

Commentary

93. Standards of work are average at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement is good, in relation to their standards when they entered the school. Good teaching and an engaging range of projects help pupils to develop a clear understanding of the various aspects of designing and making. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of materials. They select and use a range of

hand tools and equipment with accuracy and make various products to an acceptable standard. Their drawing techniques are less well developed. Pupils are developing their skills in evaluating their work, but not always against specific criteria. They make good use of ICT to present information and to enhance the quality of their work. In food technology, pupils make good use of sensory analysis to test and evaluate products.

94. In the GCSE examinations, in 2004, the overall results were well above average. They represented good achievement. Girls performed better than boys. Standards are currently above average by Year 11. Pupils are developing a good understanding of design processes. They show good progression from designing to making, through effective use of ongoing evaluation. By the end of Year 11, pupils produce work that shows detailed research, good design skills and drawing techniques. They consider the views of potential clients and make products of good quality. The highest-attaining pupils gain a very good understanding of the industrial application of the products that they make. The work of lower-attaining pupils reflects satisfactory skills in design, drawing and organisation, but their evaluations lack rigour. Pupils use ICT knowledgeably and are developing very competent skills in using computers in design. The unsatisfactory and uninspiring accommodation restricts learning opportunities. The workshops and the rooms for food technology, as well as much of the equipment, are out of date and do not create a good environment for learning to take place.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers manage pupils well. Their high expectations of behaviour create a positive attitude in class. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject well to give clear explanations, to demonstrate techniques and to use resources efficiently. Displays of high quality encourage pupils to do well. Good teaching of literacy helps pupils to use appropriate technological vocabulary correctly. Teachers plan well to ensure that the work is of suitable challenge and difficulty for all pupils. They provide particularly good individual support for those with special educational needs. Teaching is, occasionally, inflexible and leads to a few pupils becoming less motivated as they spend several weeks researching and designing, before they do any making. In many lessons, teachers give considerable direction as they guide pupils through structured tasks. This often inhibits pupils' opportunities to decide their own approach and restricts their development as independent learners. Pupils work quickly and enthusiastically to complete the set tasks and, as a result, make good progress in most lessons. Good systems for assessment ensure consistency in the marking of pupils' work. Pupils receive good oral feedback on their work. However, written comments often lack constructive comments for improvement.
96. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The splitting of the subject between two departments means there is no cohesive leadership to provide vision and direction. Nevertheless, the teachers share a commitment to improving standards and increasing the take-up of the subject in Year 10. Day-to-day organisation is efficient. Good documentation gives clear guidance to staff. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, despite the lack of improvement in the accommodation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

97. Work was sampled in **drama**. The subject makes a substantial contribution to the school's cultural life. The regular major productions and the three drama clubs during the week involve many pupils in work of high quality. Management is very good and leadership is both charismatic and inspirational. GCSE results, in 2004, were well above average and represented very good achievement. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are above average but vary considerably according to how much experience of drama pupils have. Some pupils in Year 9

have very few drama lessons because of timetabling arrangements. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very high levels of expertise to motivate pupils to participate actively and enthusiastically. Pupils work very successfully in small groups and show great energy and inventiveness in their work. Oral work is very good with much lively improvised dialogue. A class in Year 10, given every chance to develop their own ideas, produced a presentation that displayed strong group awareness and much mutual trust. Studio management is very efficient and lessons proceed at great pace.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching contributes to the high standards and achievement in all years.
- Work in ceramics is of a very high standard.
- Pupils' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their success.
- Pupils have few opportunities to use ICT for work in design and composition.

Commentary

98. On entry to the school pupils' standards are above average. Teachers' assessments, in 2004, showed that standards were well above average by the end of Year 9. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average. They represent very good achievement over the first three years for pupils of all capabilities. Pupils acquire very good skills and techniques across a wide range of art forms. These include drawing and painting, printmaking, ceramics, etching, batik and collage. Work in ceramics is particularly impressive with regard to design and finish. These wide experiences provide a very good basis for further study.
99. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above average. All candidates gained A*-C grades and over a quarter gained A* grades. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and represent very good achievement. All work is highly individual, creative and imaginative. Pupils become increasingly experimental in combining materials effectively. All pupils have a good knowledge of the effect of line and composition. Work in painting and oil pastel is bold and dramatic. Pupils gain good inspiration from the work of major artists. They make very good use of ICT for research in all years. However, apart from Year 7, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT in manipulating images or exploring the impact of design and composition.
100. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Teachers use their very good specialist expertise very well to inspire pupils through the quality of the ideas presented. They give very good demonstrations and illustrations of the key skills. As a result, pupils learn very effectively from the visual as well as the spoken guidance. Teachers give all pupils very good one-to-one guidance and support so that pupils of all capabilities and ethnic backgrounds make very good progress in class. Pupils are confident and responsible. They respond with enthusiasm and are very good independent learners.
101. Very good leadership and management set a clear vision for raising standards further. Documentation is analytical and thorough. The very good deployment of staff results in good teamwork and mutual support for teachers. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering these aspects within the

studies of artists' work. Impressive displays of pupils' work around the school celebrate pupils' success and enhance the school environment. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. All the very good features remain in place and GCSE results have improved.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently very high with increasing numbers of candidates.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure the very effective use of resources.
- The excellent range and standards of performing groups raise pupils' self-confidence.

Commentary

102. Teachers' assessments, in 2004, showed that standards were well above average at the end of Year 9. Currently, standards are well above average by Year 9. They represent very good achievement, compared with standards on entry in Year 7, for pupils of all capabilities and ethnic backgrounds. Increasing numbers choose to study the GCSE music course. In 2004, GCSE results were very high, with 18 of the 27 candidates gaining A*/A grades. These results indicated excellent achievement for the pupils concerned. Currently, standards by Year 11 are very high. They represent outstanding achievement, as shown in written work and recordings. The large proportion of pupils enhancing their work through taking instrumental tuition in school or privately is one reason for pupils' successful achievement in music in all years.
103. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning through music. They respond very well to encouragement and challenge both in class work and in the large extra-curricular groups. Boys and girls of all capabilities are keen to do their best. They work hard and productively to make rapid progress to meet the agreed targets. This is true for those identified as gifted and talented and for those with special educational needs. The use of computerised music-making supports achievement very well, especially for composition.
104. Teaching and learning are very good overall. At times, they are excellent. Practical music-making and listening predominate, with systematic recording of learning in books, on minidisk and on video. Teachers engage pupils very well. They make very good use of the available time so that pupils' levels of concentration are high and they work at a fast pace. Teachers make very effective use of their excellent knowledge and skills in music to enthuse the class, to explain the work clearly and to show pupils how to improve. Planning of lessons is excellent. Very good management of classes enables a wide variety of learning activities within each lesson. Assessment is very good because it is clear, is based on criteria known to pupils and is very effective in boosting achievement.
105. Excellent leadership and management result in a very stimulating environment for learning. The very efficient oversight and support of the work of the departmental staff and the 30 visiting instrumental teachers ensure a shared commitment to high standards. As a result, pupils who participate in the wide range of large vocal and instrumental groups reach very high standards. These musical groups perform frequently in school and the wider community. They make a valuable contribution to each pupil's personal development and promote the school's standing in the community. Visits and workshops enrich learning still further.

106. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Accommodation and ICT resources have improved greatly. High standards have been maintained with increased numbers.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high and represent outstanding achievement.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that teaching is very good overall.
- Active participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities helps pupils to improve their skills.
- Very good relationships and pupils' very positive attitudes promote very good learning.

Commentary

107. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9. They indicate very good achievement compared with pupils' broadly average standards on entry in Year 7. The GCSE examination results, in 2004, were very high with three quarters of candidates attaining A*/A grades. They represented excellent achievement. Standards in Year 11 are currently well above average for boys and girls in most activities on the general course. Standards on the GCSE course are well above average in both practical work and theory. Achievement is very good overall throughout Years 10 and 11.

108. Pupils in Year 9 are knowledgeable in basketball and rounders and have a well above average understanding of the game. In Year 10, pupils practise hurdling with very good technique and understanding of the stride pattern between hurdles. In the GCSE course, pupils' written work is of a very high standard and well presented, as seen in their individual work on task analysis. In tennis, pupils are very competent in the technique of serving and have good racquet control. Many pupils in Year 10 are developing leadership skills in the recently introduced Junior Sports Leaders' Award, with a view to supporting work in local primary schools. In all years, pupils with special educational needs play a full and active part in lessons and progress as well as their peers. Gifted and talented pupils receive particularly good extension work in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered.

109. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good expertise in the subject to motivate pupils to seek high standards. They ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. The high expectations and enthusiasm of teachers encourage pupils to work hard and with interest. Very good relationships in class contribute to the very positive attitudes of pupils to their work. Very good procedures for assessment track pupils' development closely and help them to improve. The good marking of GCSE work assists pupils' progress.

110. School teams are successful, particularly in gymnastics, basketball and hockey. The school teams are Solihull district champions in a range of sports. The school holds the prestigious Sportsmark Gold Award for its commitment to physical education. The school has very good links with a range of sporting clubs who make good use of school facilities. As a result, pupils benefit, particularly from coaching in rugby and trampolining.

111. Very good and enthusiastic leadership and management set a clear direction for improvement and ensure a shared commitment to maintaining high standards. Monitoring of teaching now

takes place systematically and is effective in sharing good practice in the department. Links with feeder primary schools are developing well. The work of the sports co-ordinator assists the continuity of pupils' learning from Year 6.

112. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are higher. The monitoring of teaching is now more effective in sharing good practice. Assessment is very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

113. Work was sampled in **business studies**. Standards in the few lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 reflect the well above average standards in recent GCSE examinations. Teaching is very good as a result of careful and detailed planning that takes full account of pupils' different needs. Learning is very good as a result of pupils' interest and commitment to hard work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

114. Work was sampled on the **personal, social and health education (PSHE)** course. The programme meets statutory requirements. It consists of appropriate topics such as those relating to aspects of citizenship, sex education and relationships, drugs education, support for learning and all-round personal development. The quality of teaching and learning observed in PSHE lessons was good overall. Very good planning, using a variety of teaching methods involving individual and group work, helped pupils to make at least good progress. Pupils made very good use of their well above average literacy and speaking skills to support their work. Boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds discussed sensitive or controversial topics intelligently and maturely, as seen in a Year 7 lesson dealing with the onset of puberty. Pupils worked well both independently and in pairs, supporting and challenging the views and ideas of others.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of citizenship in discrete units of work ensures good coverage of all aspects.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to the subject contribute to their success.
- Very good leadership and management co-ordinate well the teaching of all topics in citizenship.
- There is not enough emphasis on how all subjects should contribute to teaching citizenship.

Commentary

115. By Year 9, standards are above average. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching of citizenship is through discrete units of work within history, geography and religious education. This ensures that pupils study all the required aspects in good depth. Pupils have a good understanding of fairness and respect. Boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds have a good awareness of rights and responsibilities. They learn to show empathy and to consider a range of points of view.

116. By Year 11 standards are above average. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching of the subject is through discrete units of work within the PSHE and general studies courses. Pupils are able to define, reflect on and evaluate the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens. They know the essential aspects of different systems of government worldwide and how the United Kingdom's laws are made. They develop good skills of enquiry and communication.

117. Achievement is good in all years for pupils of all capabilities and different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils gain experience of problem-solving and enterprise activity. They apply their learning well to unfamiliar and differing situations. They have very good attitudes to the subject and show confidence in expressing and defending their opinions.
118. Teaching and learning are good. Work is done in good depth with a clear emphasis on what it means to be an informed and responsible citizen. Pupils are involved actively in their learning. The good planning and structure of lessons engage pupils' interest. Pupils have valuable experiences in most other subjects that contribute to their knowledge and understanding of citizenship. These include analysing information, discussing and debating contemporary and controversial issues, resolving conflict and challenging stereotypes. However, there is not enough direct focus on how these contribute to education in citizenship. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering these issues within the content of lessons.
119. Very good leadership and management provide a clear vision of how to extend pupils' learning about citizenship within all subjects. Good planning and monitoring ensure the successful coverage of all elements of the syllabus. Good procedures for assessment measure the progress that pupils make across subjects in the different topics and inform them well on how to improve. Extra-curricular activities, especially the work of the school council, enhance pupils' understanding of citizenship.
120. Citizenship was not a part of the taught curriculum at the time of the previous inspection.

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

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