

INSPECTION REPORT

BARTLEY GREEN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Bartley Green

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103491

Headteacher: Mrs Chris Owen

Lead inspector: Denis Pittman

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th February 2005

Inspection number: 268342

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	849
School address:	Adams Hill Bartley Green Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B32 3QJ
Telephone number:	0121 4769246
Fax number:	0121 4781585
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pam Zaccheo
Date of previous inspection:	1 st March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bartley Green is a smaller than average comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. The number on roll is 849 (482 boys, 367 girls). There are significantly more boys than girls in Years 7 and 8; boys represent the largest groups in each of the year groups. The socio-economic background of pupils is well below average, there being significant areas of social deprivation.

The school is situated in a suburb of Birmingham. The school has a low number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, which is in line with the local demography. The attainment of pupils on entry is well below average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is above average and of those with statements is well above average. The school achieved specialist status for technology in 1999 – it has recently received sports college status as well. The school is also accredited with an Investors in People award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16976	D Pittman	Lead inspector	
13786	S Walsh	Lay inspector	
12499	M Durkin	Team inspector	English
1407	P Scott	Team inspector	Mathematics
5985	M Holland	Team inspector	Science
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
23891	P Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology; work-related learning
29972	W Webster	Team inspector	Geography
3755	T Hulbert	Team inspector	History
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22501	S Jones	Team inspector	Music
4676	M Griffith	Team inspector	Physical education; special educational needs
10895	D Wasp	Team inspector	Citizenship; religious education

The inspection contractor was:

peakschoolhaus Limited
 BPS Business Centre
 Brake Lane
 Boughton
 Nottinghamshire
 NG22 9HQ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bartley Green is a very good school with some excellent features. **It is very effective in providing a very good quality of education.** The prevailing ethos is caring and supportive, yet also based upon high expectations. The school is very popular, meeting the needs of its pupils well. Relationships are very good; this is reflected in high standards of behaviour of pupils and their developing maturity. **The school gives very good value for money**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in 2004 GCSE examinations were well above those of similar schools; pupils' overall achievement is very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent; her vision and ambition have created a successful and innovative learning environment.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good; this promotes very effective learning amongst pupils.
- Pastoral care is very strong and promotes very positive relationships within the school. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- The overall curriculum provision is very good, being excellent in citizenship.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in some areas of the curriculum but lacks consistency in its overall management.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. In terms of its academic performance, the national measures of progress (value added) show a significantly high pattern of improvement. Attendance rates are much better. The quality of teaching continues to improve and is now a strength of the school. There are two issues that the school continues to need to address; they are the co-ordination and monitoring of ICT across the curriculum and compliance in providing daily worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	C	C	C	A

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

Overall, achievement is very good. Standards are broadly well below average on entry to the school; literacy skills are weak. Examination results show a significant improvement for the higher GCSE grades and performance in comparison with similar schools is well above average. In 2004, overall performance in GCSE examinations was in line with the national average; the trend of improvement is above national figures. Standards were well below average in English and science; they were below average in mathematics. Particularly good standards were achieved in French, ICT and physical education. The results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average but were comparable to similar schools. Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are below the national expectation but achievement is good given the pupils' prior attainment. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are in line with national expectations; achievement is very good. Pupils with special educational needs and able pupils also make very good progress.

Pupils' personal development is very good as a result of the very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Relationships with each other and with staff are very good. Behaviour and attitudes are very good; exclusion rates are low. Pupils' enthusiasm for their work and mature attitudes promote very good learning and achievement. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is very effective in identifying the individual needs of pupils. The overall quality of teaching is very good and helps promote high standards of achievement. Teaching in citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and religious education is of a very good standard. The school has successfully created an ethos for learning based upon high expectations and positive working relationships. The active encouragement of teachers helps motivate pupils and leads to high productivity. Pupils are keen and interested learners. Assessment procedures are effective in monitoring progress.

Overall, school provides pupils with a very good curriculum. The positive and supportive ethos evident in all aspects of the school's life ensures that pupils emerge as mature and enriched individuals when they leave the school. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.

The school has a very effective pastoral system. Pupils are very well supported and any underachievement is quickly identified. Excellent care, support and guidance contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. The school is very popular and is significantly oversubscribed; it enjoys a very good reputation in its community. The school has very good links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very effectively led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. A strong team of senior managers supports her very well and provides very good leadership in the school. The overall governance of the school is good. Governors are effectively involved in the leadership and strategic planning of the school. They are supportive and bring a good range of experience to the oversight of the school. The financial management of the school is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school works very effectively with parents to support learning. Parents feel a very strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust; they have great confidence in the school. They are very satisfied with almost all aspects of its work. Parents are provided with an excellent range of information about the activities of the school. Pupils enjoy being at the school. They feel that they are taught very well and that they are very helpfully supported in their academic and personal development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no significant weaknesses

The areas for further development are:

- Raise standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve the co-ordination and monitoring of ICT across the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- To comply in providing an act of daily collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards at the end of Years 9 are below national expectations but are in line at the end of Year 11. Examination and test results over time show an improving trend; this is particularly significant in Years 10 and 11. Given their relatively low prior attainment, the overall **achievement of pupils is very good**. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In most GCSE subjects there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, although boys do not do as well as girls in the National Curriculum tests. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and the most able, continue to make good progress in their lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were in line with national expectations. This is a significant achievement given the pupils' low prior attainment.
- Attainment in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests is comparable to those of similar schools.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9, as seen in lessons, is good; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. The value added in these years is very high.
- The trend of improvement is faster than the national average.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.4 (31.6)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	31.5 (33.1)	n/a (35.4)
Science	30.7 (30.5)	n/a (33.6)

Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Note Comparative national figures for the National Curriculum tests of 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection but reference is made about the results and trends.

1. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, the combined results were below average. In the individual subjects, standards in English and mathematics were well below national expectations but comparable to those achieved in similar schools. In science, standards were below expectations but above those of similar schools. Overall, standards in these subjects were broadly the same as those of similar schools. There has been a trend of improvement over previous years. Achievement in most other subjects is good. At the end of Year 9, pupils of all ability levels have made good progress in their studies.

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	52 (31)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)

Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.1 (32)	34.9 (34.7)
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There were 143 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In 2004, overall performance in GCSE examinations was in line with the national average; the trend of improvement was faster than national figures. The school's performance in comparison to that of similar schools was well above average. The value added during Years 10 and 11 is significantly high. Standards were well below average in English and science; they were below average in mathematics. Particularly good standards were achieved in French, ICT and physical education.
3. In Years 7 to 9, standards are below national expectations overall; they are in line with expectations in design and technology, ICT, history and physical education. Given the well below average profile of attainment on entry in most subjects, achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils with all levels of ability and ethnic background make good progress. Teachers have high expectations, which are encouraging pupils to do their best. Standards in the basic skills of numeracy are broadly in line with expectations, but they are below expectations in literacy.
4. In Years 10 and 11, standards are in line with national expectations; overall the achievement of pupils is very good. In particular it is very good in mathematics, ICT, design and technology, geography and physical education. The positive effect of the technology status, including well-managed departments and good teaching, can be clearly seen in the improving standards in most departments. Pupils at all ability levels make very good progress.
5. Pupils with special educational needs generally make very good progress towards their targets. This is the result of good teaching and sensitive support. Pupils' achievement is very good, with some pupils overcoming their difficulties and disabilities to achieve very well. It is the school's intention that all pupils should leave with some form of examination accreditation. Pupils who are gifted and talented are appropriately challenged, resulting in very good achievement, particularly in Years 9 and 10.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **satisfactory**. Attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is **very good**, cultural development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance have resulted in continued improvements in attendance rates.
- Relationships are excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and support very good achievement.
- Pupils' personal development is very good.

Commentary

6. Attendance rates have improved year on year and are now slightly above the national average. An effective attendance officer and good administrative support, together with very good input from the pastoral team, have ensured that procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are excellent. Continuous and careful monitoring and refocusing on those pupils who

are at risk of becoming poor attenders ensure that attendance rates continue to improve. Home visits and careful negotiations have altered parents' perceptions regarding attendance and have encouraged parents to become more supportive. Punctuality has also been carefully monitored and is improving. The school has received national recognition for the quality of its attendance procedures. Most pupils are keen to come to school. Very good relationships between all members of the school community ensure that pupils feel secure and confident in school.

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are keen to learn and to do well. In lessons, pupils of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds apply themselves well. Hard work and determination make a significant contribution to very good achievement. Pupils respond well to questioning and their responses are usually thoughtful and mature. Pupils co-operate very well in pairs and in groups. They clearly enjoy their learning. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils encourage pupils to gain confidence and to be keen to try new things. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and opportunities; they are actively involved in school life. They are willing to take on responsibilities and show good initiative.
8. Behaviour in lessons and around school is very good. Break periods and lunchtimes are relaxed and movement around corridors and shared areas is orderly. Pupils recognise that they are developing self-discipline. The excellent procedures for behaviour management, known as 'discipline for learning', are made very clear to pupils and parents and are consistently applied by staff. There are well-defined boundaries regarding standards of behaviour and expectations are very high. Courses designed to alter pupils' behaviour are run by the OWL centre. For example, a lesson was observed where pupils learnt to understand the justification for exclusion. Close links with local networks ensure that challenging pupils have very good access to behaviour support services. The number of fixed-period exclusions has recently reduced.
9. Parents and pupils have confidence in the school's anti-bullying procedures. Bullying is not tolerated. Pastoral staff make a considerable effort to ensure that any bullying issues, even minor fallings out, are successfully addressed. The school has even helped to resolve incidents that have happened out of school. There is extensive work in citizenship and other lessons to promote racial equality. Racism is rare but all incidents, however minor, are dealt with quickly. As a result of the school's vigorous efforts pupils feel safe and secure and learn not to tolerate or perpetrate bullying and racism in school.
10. Pupils' personal development is very good. There is a deliberate policy to broaden the experience of the pupils and this has a positive impact both on their examination results and in their personal development. The school makes a significant and successful effort to ensure that pupils develop a feeling of self-worth. Pupils are valued and developed as individuals.
11. Pupils' spiritual development is very good overall. Opportunities for spiritual development are consistently used well in lessons. The programme for collective worship contains many spiritual themes, for example beliefs, peace, wisdom and hope. Staff are willing to bring their personal experiences and beliefs into assemblies, which make them more interesting for pupils, but there are still missed opportunities for spiritual development. Despite good guidance in terms of thought for the week, these are used inconsistently in tutor times and the requirement for the daily act of worship is not met. Many religious festivals are acknowledged such as Eid, Diwali and the Chinese and Islamic new years.
12. Spiritual development is very good in religious education where pupils learn to understand and respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. However, it is excellent in citizenship where an emphasis on feelings and emotions develops empathy and understanding. Work in history

concerning world war poetry has developed an understanding of the horrors of war. A recent visit to Belfast allowed pupils to experience at first hand the results of prejudice and religious intolerance. This developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and allowed pupils to become actively involved in steps towards reconciliation. Teachers are very willing to discuss sensitive issues, to bring their own experiences into lessons and to challenge a narrowness of vision. Open discussion in many subject areas, including geography, develops pupils' understanding. Pre-conceptions are often challenged. Curiosity and wonder are encouraged; for example, in mathematics many pupils develop a love of number.

13. Moral education is very good. Staff provide very good role models for pupils. Pupils develop a very clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong; there is a strong moral code. There are very good opportunities to explore moral issues, for example, discussing in English lessons the issues of cruelty to animals. There are strong environment and moral themes in design and technology and geography, such as the use of environmentally friendly products, recycling and global warming. There is significant fund-raising for charities.
14. Social education is very good. There is a very good range of trips and visits including extensive residential provision, especially in Year 8. Pupils learn to co-operate in a community and work effectively in teams and groups in lessons. Active year and school councils, together with excellent provision in citizenship, enhance opportunities for understanding democratic processes.
15. Cultural development is good. Opportunities to experience cultural diversity have improved and are now good. A broad range of art from other cultures is considered, as are different texts and poetry in English. There is a good range of visits to galleries and museums and ample opportunities to experience the richness and diversity of British culture.
16. The majority of pupils with special educational needs display very good attitudes to their work. The school is very successful in developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem, particularly of those pupils who are supported as part of the speech and language provision. Pupils work hard and apply themselves well to challenges that have been set. Pupils willingly support and work amicably alongside each other.
17. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Very good relationships and mutual respect have been sustained. The school continues to have very high expectations regarding standards of behaviour and works very hard to ensure that standards of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning remain very good. Action to promote attendance is excellent and has resulted in further improvements in attendance rates. Departments have responded very well to criticism about spiritual education and as a result spiritual development has improved from unsatisfactory to very good. Cultural education has improved from satisfactory to good.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	746	89	2
White – any other White background	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	27	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0

Mixed – any other mixed background	9	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	5	0
Any other ethnic group	9	0	0
Preferred not to say/information not obtained	6	0	0

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003- 2004

Authorised absence	
School data	6.9
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching. The strong commitment to learning shown by the pupils' very positive attitudes to work is conducive to improving standards. The curricular provision and enrichment opportunities are very good. Support and guidance for pupils are excellent. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of **teaching is very good** and promotes very good achievement. The level of learning is very good. Assessment procedures are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very effective planning and subject knowledge help to promote and develop pupils' skills very well.
- The active encouragement by teachers helps motivate pupils and leads to high productivity.
- Teaching methods are very effectively geared to pupils' different levels of ability.
- The homework policy is effectively implemented in most departments; the very good practice promotes achievement.
- Assessment systems are good; there is some variability between subjects in the effectiveness of marking.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 113 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (3%)	42 (37%)	55 (49%)	12 (11%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some examples of excellent teaching. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and very good in Years 10 and 11. A particular strength is the consistency of high quality teaching across most subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the pupils and the school. They are keen to improve their teaching and support one another well. The school has a comprehensive programme for teachers' professional development and training. Members of the leadership team support other teams of teachers very effectively. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.
19. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their pupils. In the modern foreign language department, teachers have a very good command of the language they teach and in the majority of lessons they use the language being learned effectively to conduct activities. Pupils, therefore, benefit from very good role models and their listening skills are well developed. In science, teachers have a very secure command of their subject areas and their clear explanations of scientific concepts and theories help improve pupils' learning well. As a result, levels of interest and motivation are good; pupils are encouraged to be speculative in their thinking. In the best lessons, teachers set suitably challenging tasks. Another strength of the teaching is the teachers' use of discussion and activities, enabling pupils to express their own views and ideas. In citizenship lessons, there is a strong emphasis on debate and discussion. The pupils discuss

with considerable enthusiasm and maturity and show very positive attitudes in all lessons. In most other subjects questioning is skilfully used, often aided with good quality materials, to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues and events.

20. The very good teaching, evident in a great number of lessons, enables and consolidates pupils' learning. Explanations are clear and questioning is effective in moving pupils' learning forward and helping them to recall previous learning. In history and design and technology lessons, questioning is used effectively to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and to encourage them to think for themselves. In most lessons starter activities provide stimulating beginnings to the lessons.
21. Teachers use resources well. In ICT lessons, pupils are guided to use the Internet for research and edit information to develop their own understanding and learning. In modern foreign languages resources are well matched to pupils' capabilities and sequenced well to enable pupils to build on previous learning.
22. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school and is supported by a very effective whole-school approach to teaching these pupils. The majority of teachers are well informed about pupils and this enables them to plan work at an appropriate level for each individual or group. Most teachers work closely with teaching assistants, who are valued for their help and expertise. They take an active role in developing pupils' independence along with their academic and social skills. ICT is used effectively to support and extend pupils' learning.
23. The assessment of pupils' work, overall, is good. The school has a well-formulated assessment policy that takes account of the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 Assessment for Learning Strategy. There have been two professional development days on assessment for all staff in the past year and subjects have brought their systems in line with whole-school procedures. There is an appropriate annual calendar for assessment that links to development planning. Extensive use is made of data from predictive sources, national testing, and internal mock exams for Standardised Assessment Tests at the end of Year 9 and for GCSE. A thorough post-GCSE examination analysis is also undertaken. The implementation of the school's policy is at least satisfactory in every subject and is very good in history, geography, physical education, citizenship, mathematics and science. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the assessment of music in Years 7 to 9, and in English some variability in target setting, day-to-day marking and informing pupils about how they can improve. Overall, the school makes good use of assessment to support learning by involving pupils in self-assessment and target setting. The very thorough analysis of assessment data also makes a good contribution to development planning in all areas of the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is **very good**. The provision for extra-curricular, extension and enrichment activities is **very good** and pupil participation is excellent. There is **good** provision of well-qualified teachers and support staff, accommodation and resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad, balanced, inclusive and innovative in meeting the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of the pupils, especially those in Years 10 and 11.

- Curriculum design, planning, monitoring and evaluation are contributing to the very good achievement of the pupils.
- Pupils' participation in the very good extra-curricular provision and enrichment opportunities is excellent.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision in citizenship is excellent.

Commentary

24. The overall curriculum provision is very good. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of the pupils. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. The needs of all groups of pupils are met fully by paying close attention to the equality of access and opportunity when guiding pupils on curriculum options. In recent years, the curriculum has been successfully modified by introducing more vocational and other work-related courses for pupils who seek further education and training leading to eventual employment. Pupils with special educational needs, in Years 10 and 11, follow a well-adapted course that provides for one day each week in a college of further education. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good, with full coverage of drug and alcohol awareness and sex education. The school is currently reviewing the health education within the PSHE curriculum to meet more closely the needs of the pupils. The curriculum provision for citizenship is excellent and there are many strengths in the very good provision for design and technology.
25. The time allocated for the teaching of individual subjects is broadly in line with national recommendations except for the insufficient curriculum time allocated for religious education in Years 10 and 11, which has negative implications for the continuity of learning. Grouping arrangements are good because care is taken to place pupils in classes and groups where their learning needs are given close attention through very good course curriculum planning and teachers' daily lesson plans. Careers advice and choice of options as pupils move from Year 9 to Year 10 are good and this means that pupils follow appropriate courses, which are well matched to individual needs, future studies and career patterns. The curriculum provides well for the provision of life skills and in strengthening weaknesses in pupils' levels of literacy and numeracy.
26. Since the previous inspection the school has developed many imaginative and innovative curriculum initiatives. Most of these have been promoted and prompted by national initiatives, in particular the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This has significantly influenced curriculum planning, teaching methodology and assessment for learning. The recognition of the school as a specialist college for technology since the previous inspection, and the recent recognition as a sports college, have provided further impetus for positive curriculum change. The school has moved swiftly towards new developments, for example business initiatives which address and make good provision for work-related learning for all year groups. The school is developing a culture of work-related learning, work experience and vocational training for all pupils, including those who are able to access more academic subject studies. Comprehensive planning provides effectively for staff development to match the innovative curriculum. Planning is thorough and backed up by regular monitoring and informed self-evaluation before and during the implementation of curriculum initiatives and innovations.
27. The quality and range of extra-curricular provision, enrichment activities and support outside the school day are very good. In sport, pupil participation is very good; in other activities it is excellent. The provision the school makes and its use fully meet the approval of parents and pupils. An extensive variety of clubs and activities are arranged before, during and after formal lessons. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a broad, varied range of residential experiences, educational visits and contributions from outside speakers, mostly from the public services, industry and business. Close links with local colleges of further education and universities further enrich the learning experiences of the pupils. The school, through its planning and extensive enrichment experiences, provides the pupils with an engaging and fulfilling curriculum.

28. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs and others with learning difficulties is good. However, the curriculum planning does not allow sufficiently for matching learning experiences closely to the needs of the individual pupil. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to a curriculum that is sufficiently broad, balanced and relevant to their needs. They also have access to the full range of extra-curricular provision, despite some difficulties that have been encountered with travel arrangements out of school hours. All pupils are supported within classrooms alongside their peers. Occasionally they are withdrawn for individual and small group tuition, which targets specific needs. Intervention strategies are in place to improve pupils' reading and to raise standards of learning and behaviour. Provision for PSHE is good. Personal and social education is very good; health education is satisfactory. An excellent citizenship programme, delivered through discrete lessons in Years 8 and 11 and through the curriculum in other year groups, provides very good opportunities for personal and social education. Issues such as racial equality and human rights are very carefully considered. There are health education days in Years 7 to 11 that ensure that health education issues, including drug education, are satisfactorily addressed. They also contribute to sex education although the main content is delivered in Year 8. Although sex and drug education meets statutory requirements, the issues raised are not revisited in sufficient depth in Years 10 and 11.

Accommodation

29. Accommodation is good and meets the needs of the curriculum. The school is well maintained to provide classrooms and specialist facilities with areas that are safe and conducive to effective learning. The granting of specialist college status has provided resources to improve and enhance subject facilities. Facilities for teaching ICT and food technology have been substantially improved. Other external funding is currently being used to improve playing areas, such as the sports fields and tennis courts. Space for withdrawal of pupils with special educational needs is at a premium and there are occasions when pupils have to be taught in small corners of the school, due to lack of a base. The governing body has a clear policy for refurbishing and enhancing available accommodation to meet the needs of the dynamic and innovatory curriculum.

Resources

30. Resources for learning are good in the majority of subjects. The majority of departments have good provision for learning resources, equipment and materials to meet the requirements of the courses being taught. Most departments have suites of rooms but a number of classrooms are small. Technology for teaching is generally good and further improvements are planned as the school's high investment in advanced technology for the classroom is put in place. The ratio of 2.4 pupils to every computer is very good and the school plans to invest in further computer provision, but the management of access to computers to facilitate whole-class use is inadequate. The library provides a very good learning resource and supports the curriculum very well. Good learning resources for learning support are well matched to pupils' experiences and capabilities

Staffing

31. A well-qualified and sufficient team of teachers is properly deployed to target groups of pupils with specific learning needs. This strategy is effectively helping the school to meet its declared intention of raising the achievement of individual pupils. Staff development to meet pupils' needs and extend their professional skills is closely matched to the school's development plan. There is recognition that all teaching and non-teaching staff are supported well through a clear policy for continuous professional development. The school policy for the induction of new teachers and the training of prospective teachers is effective. The training of advanced skilled teachers, both on the staff and from other schools, and their use in sharing professional expertise

in some subject departments, are particularly effective. Pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly from the use of well-qualified learning support ancillaries working closely with teaching staff.

32. Curriculum improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for using ICT for teaching and learning. The function of the library has been reviewed and it is now staffed and well equipped. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has been reviewed and all pupils now receive a balanced curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are **very good**. Provision of support, advice and guidance is **excellent**. The involvement of pupils in the school's work is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation and management of the pastoral system are excellent.
- There is a very good range of extra support that encourages very good achievement.
- There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils.
- Induction procedures are very good and pupils settle very well.
- Pupils' views are actively sought, respected and acted upon.

Commentary

33. Comprehensive and recently improved health and safety procedures ensure that prompt action is taken to minimise hazards. Decisions about health and safety are based on well thought out risk assessments and careful monitoring of outcomes. For example, entries in the accident book are regularly analysed and routines are changed if necessary. Procedures for child protection are very good. Vulnerable children, including those in public care, are carefully monitored and staff are very aware of their responsibilities. However, the child protection policy does not name the designated teacher.
34. The organisation and management of the pastoral system are excellent. Rigorous consistency in the application of excellent systems for monitoring pupils' attendance and behaviour results in regular attendance and high standards of behaviour. Pupils' progress is regularly reviewed and pastoral staff, subject teachers and senior management have a very clear picture of each child's personal and academic progress. However, in addition to rigorous monitoring there exist within each year group different activities that promote individual identity and sense of fun. These ensure that pupils are happy, safe and well cared for and enjoy their learning. Pastoral staff are dedicated to removing barriers to learning.
35. There is very good access to a wide range of support mechanisms, for example, a very good variety of mentoring services. These include school-based learning mentors, volunteer mentors, and a specialist service for Afro-Caribbean boys. Extra support for Afro-Caribbean boys has promoted very good examination success. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent; there are high levels of mutual respect. Pupils report that they always have a trustworthy adult to turn to in times of difficulty. The completion of coursework is carefully monitored and there is a range of strategies that ensure that pupils complete their work. Support from subject teachers is very good; this includes work on study skills and examination techniques. There are revision conferences for each year group.
36. Very good procedures for induction ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. Pupils have regular opportunities to visit whilst in primary school and they report that this helps them feel comfortable about moving to secondary school. They meet their form tutor on induction day and parents have the opportunity to speak directly to the form tutor during induction evening. There is a very good quality induction booklet which gives lots of helpful advice. Year 7 pupils appreciate the help and support they get from Year 10 peer mentors. Social activities in Year 7 help bring the group together but there is no whole-of-year residential experience until Year 8.

37. Careers education is good. Each year group has an industry day and pupils in Year 8 experience 'the Real Game'. The procedures associated with GCSE option choices are of a high quality and pupils receive very good information about GCSE examination courses and pathways. Interviews with senior members of staff ensure that pupils access well-matched courses. All pupils have access to work experience and mock interviews. Good links with colleges ensure that pupils have access to extensive information about post-16 options. Links between education, qualifications and economic well-being are made early and Year 11 pupils have sensible plans for their future.
38. Pupils' views are regularly sought through questionnaires and acted upon when appropriate. There is an active school council and pupils are encouraged to develop and express their own thoughts and opinions through lessons such as citizenship. Self-assessment ensures that pupils understand how to improve their work and pupils are often invited to comment on the quality of their lessons at the end of units. Members of the school council have been involved in the appointment of senior members of staff. Pupils respond to these responsibilities in a thoughtful and mature manner.
39. The school has an excellent inclusion philosophy, which has led to the disbanding of the Speech and Language Resource Base. Pupils who were supported in the Base are now integrated into mainstream classes where they follow a similar timetable to their peers and receive well-designed support for their difficulties. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils requiring them, but many are not specific to each individual and they are reviewed too infrequently. The school has recognised this and is already in the process of improving their effectiveness. Targets identified for pupils broadly reflect the recommendations of statements where these apply. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are clear. Informative documentation provides clear profiles of individual pupils. Good tracking of pupils' progress gives a clear picture of how well they are progressing during their time in school.
40. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Support and guidance were then described as very good and this has improved to excellent. Careers education was satisfactory and is now good. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety have improved and all outstanding health and safety issues have been successfully resolved.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very effective communication between pastoral staff and parents.
- The range and quality of information for parents are excellent.
- Links with primary schools are very good and provide good transfer of information.
- The school plays an important role in the life of the local community.

Commentary

41. The school works very effectively with parents to support pupils' learning. Prompt and very effective communication between parents and staff, including heads of year, pastoral staff and the attendance officer, ensures that parents' concerns are quickly and sensitively addressed and

that parents support effectively the school's high expectations regarding standards of behaviour and attendance. Parents report that the school is open and approachable. The school has run a parenting group; although the numbers attending were not high, those who did attend found the course very useful. There is a small but very committed Parents' and Teachers' Association which organises social and fund-raising events. Parents are consulted regularly and their views are carefully considered. Regular feedback is sought on many aspects of the school's work including the OWL centre and the work of the learning mentors.

Example of outstanding practice

The school provides excellent, highly relevant information

Information for parents is excellent. The prospectus is very well presented, and expectations and routines are very clearly explained. Regular newsletters give a full and warm-hearted picture of the life of the school. The governors' report meets statutory requirements and reflects the life of the school. Curriculum information booklets of excellent quality are provided to parents of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9; these booklets provide a very good range of information and hints about how parents can support their children's learning. There are regular opportunities for parents to meet teachers, including an early settling-in meeting in Year 7. Parents appreciate half-termly progress reports. Annual subject reports are of a high quality and clearly state what pupils know, understand and can do and the progress they have made. Targets are usually very specific and clearly tell pupils how to improve. Parents get very full information about their children's attendance and behaviour.

42. Most pupils live locally and the school is at the heart of the local community. The specialist status has supported the delivery of nationally recognised ICT courses to local adults, and leisure services also run courses on site. The school is involved in the local 'safe estates' initiative and relationships with local politicians are good. Good links with local sports clubs are supported by the school's recently acquired sports college status. Pupils' understanding of history and empathy is enhanced by the school's commitment to Remembrance Day. A good range of visits to local facilities adds interest and enjoyment to lessons.
43. Specialist technology and sports college status has enhanced the school's links with local primary schools. The school is very actively involved in the local primary schools consortium. Extensive curriculum links have focused on raising standards in design and technology, ICT and science in partner primaries. The school has worked effectively with pupils in Years 4 and 5 as well as pupils in Year 6. The OWL centre has been used to improve the standard of behaviour of challenging pupils in Year 6 and to establish high expectations of conduct before they start secondary school. There is a popular community concert, in which musical groups from primary schools perform alongside older pupils. Collaboration with other local high schools is promoted by the school's active involvement with the local secondary schools group. The school works well with local colleges and ensures that pupils have access to information about the full range of opportunities available to them post-16. College placements are also used sensitively to create a more appropriate alternative curriculum for a small number of pupils for whom the traditional school-based curriculum is inappropriate. Strong links with local teacher training colleges and the local university assist staff recruitment.
44. The school attaches great importance to maintaining good contact with parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are well informed about what the school is doing to provide for their children's needs. They are free to come into school to discuss any concerns that they have. Attendance at annual reviews is good.
45. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. Significant variations in the quality of reports have been resolved and reporting now reflects what children know, understand and can do, rather than concentrating on pupils' attitudes. Targets have improved and now give pupils a clear indication of how to improve. The range and quality of information to parents about their children's progress and the work of the school are now excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very effectively led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. A strong team of senior and middle managers supports her very well; it provides very good leadership in the school. There is **very good** management of the school. The governance of the school is **good**; governors are fully involved in strategic planning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership by the headteacher is excellent; her vision and dedication provide purpose and direction for the school.
- Strategic planning is very good; this is reflected in detailed and focused development plans to promote improving standards.
- Governors make a good contribution to the effective leadership of the school. Financial management is good; it is efficient and supports effective decision-making.
- Senior and middle managers carry out their delegated roles very well. The leadership and management of the citizenship provision are excellent.
- The very good quality of leadership shown in pastoral care adds significantly to the school's ethos.

Commentary

46. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. A specific strength has been her ability to turn her vision into a coherent strategic plan for the future. She has instilled a creative ethos, which celebrates success and focuses on the individual needs of the pupils. It builds upon the principles of respect for the individual and high expectations, so as to sustain and improve standards. The school has placed emphasis on improving the effectiveness of learning in lessons, supportive self-review and involvement with the community. The school is managed with thoroughness and a clear purpose to consolidate strengths and promote personal development.
47. An effective senior leadership team very ably supports the headteacher. The team works very well together and shows a strong commitment to the objectives of the school. It exercises its delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. The quality assurance procedures that operate within the school are very effective. A systematic review of performance for each subject leads to challenging targets being systematically drawn up for both the whole school and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria, so that its success can be measured; the level of planning for meeting these targets is particularly detailed. Consequently, the standards achieved by the school have continued to dramatically improve. The overall quality of middle management in the school is very good with significant strengths being shown in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, physical education, religious education and pastoral care. The leadership and management of citizenship are excellent.
48. The management of the performance of staff is very good. Procedures are well entrenched and universally accepted as a means by which standards can be raised. The monitoring of teaching is rigorous. Very specific targets include a numerical element related to the performance of a designated group of pupils. The process informs development planning and leads to the identification of training needs at whole school, departmental and individual levels. The professional development of staff is thus very well rooted in identified need. As a result, provision is very good as recognised by the re-award of Investors in People status in 2004. The school is committed to improving still further the professional review arrangements for support staff.
49. The governance of the school is good. The governors show a strong commitment to the school and are knowledgeable about all aspects of its work. The background information compiled for governors' meetings is detailed and informative. Governors are proactive in their intentions for the school. For example, they have been particularly active in promoting improvements to the school buildings, improving resources and acquiring specialist status.

The governing body is an effective team and working relationships with the staff are good. Annual meetings with parents are carefully recorded; these minutes show the care governors take to explain the school's work to parents. Helpful information on the required areas is given in the annual report. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs and statutory requirements are fully met, apart from the provision for an act of daily collective worship. The prospectus is an attractive and informative document, which closely reflects the school's values and work.

50. The school's contribution to the initial training of teachers via the King Edward's consortium is outstanding. Twenty-five students are attached to the school this academic year. They are excellently supported by subject and professional tutors. Individual training plans map out the range of opportunities, including shadowing of pupils and observing lessons in other curricular areas, which will help them gain professional status. Tutors observe lessons and give feedback, agreeing targets and action plans. Half-termly seminars evaluate progress. Trainees have their own evidence portfolios. A number have subsequently been rewarded with teaching posts at the school.
51. Roughly a third of the teaching staff is new to the school in the past two years. Newly qualified teachers and others speak of being very well supported. New support staff have mentors chosen, where possible, from members of staff with similar responsibilities. The school's fully documented induction policy is well thought out, comprehensive and very effective. The recruitment of staff is very well managed. Interviews for teaching posts include an appraisal of classroom competence. The school is determined to appoint only the best teachers for the job, even where this means that temporary alternative arrangements are sometimes necessary.
52. The acting special educational needs co-ordinator is currently performing a satisfactory role in terms of keeping the department running until a new appointment is made. He is unable to give a great deal of time to the role due to his teaching load. It is to the credit of all teachers and teaching assistants that they are able to deliver good provision under these circumstances. They firmly believe that teaching pupils with special educational needs is the responsibility of everyone. The Code of Practice is operating effectively and teachers are well informed about pupils' specific needs. Frequent use is made of the services of external agencies whose relationships with the school are very good. The school is fully complying with legal requirements in respect of pupils with statements.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,588,835
Total expenditure	3,516,401
Expenditure per pupil	4,288

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	60,966
Balance carried forward to the next	133,400

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of WRL is well led and managed, and opportunities offered are appropriate for the range of pupils in the school.
- In Years 10 and 11 there is an effective programme of industry-linked enterprise activity supporting learning about and for work, with a very good foundation in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' opportunities for WRL and enterprise can vary between subjects.

Commentary

53. Provision for WRL is made through a range of planned complementary strategies. The schools' technology and now sports college status means it has forged close links, some long-standing, with local commerce and industry. It uses these to good advantage as it develops its provision of WRL. Industry links are particularly effectively developed to enable a co-ordinated programme of 'industry days' to take place, and to support the curriculum where possible. The school builds its Years 10 and 11 provision on a progressive foundation of experiences through Years 7 to 9 for all pupils. In suspension of timetable 'industry days', Year 7 pupils work in teams on a car-based project with Rover, which explores the complete manufacturing process. In Year 8, the day is based around a careers appreciation simulation in conjunction with Connexions. The Year 9 programme involves every pupil experiencing a half-day placement in industry, where pupils get to talk to employees and identify key skills required. These experiences lead to more a challenging experience in Year 10 in which pupils in form groups develop an action plan to revitalise an ailing company. The tasks are made suitable for all pupils to become involved, and are related to a fictional company manufacturing winter sports clothing. Pupils use a wide range of resources and are well supported by personnel from commerce and industry. In Year 11, pupils' appreciation of the world of work is further developed when they prepare for work by creating a CV and job application based on a wide selection of real job specifications. Pupils are subsequently interviewed by employers in a simulated interview, which is fully evaluated by the interviewer, school and pupil.
54. In addition, the vast majority of Year 10 pupils access two weeks work experience, mostly through self-placements and closely co-ordinated through vocational courses, where possible. This is effective, and most pupils report a positive experience. The placement is well planned and reviewed, and supported by pre- and post-work experience analysis and review in English. The citizenship programme, behaviour management, careers programme and school's very good attention to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, ensure that pupils are well prepared for employability.
55. An enterprise audit has been carried out in conjunction with the local enterprise adviser, and an effective action plan developed. The school is a Cadbury Link School, and is forging links, notably with science and design and technology, with this major local industry. Some subject areas, but not all, promote learning about and for work and plan WRL opportunities into their Year 10 and 11 curriculum. Several subjects, including geography, design and technology, science and ICT, have integrated elements of WRL into the curriculum planning, or have well-developed links with local industries. A number of enterprise activities and visits take place. Language pupils from Aston University talk to pupils about careers opportunities using languages. In mathematics, pupils have developed a mini-enterprise company, producing and selling greetings cards in aid of a local hospice.
56. The school recognises the needs of a wide range of pupils, and over 20 extended work-experience placements are made with different local companies. A well-organised alternative curriculum is provided for pupils in danger of not accessing a more traditional curriculum. These pupils have individual programmes organised in conjunction with local college

‘increased flexibility’ partners. Courses arranged include construction and motor vehicle maintenance, and allow for a core curriculum entitlement to also be taught in school. Programmes are well monitored, and changed where not sufficiently effective.

57. The complete WRL programme is well led and managed. Current provision is effective and continues to develop. Responsibility for different elements of WRL is effectively devolved to a number of key staff who manage individual elements of the programme well.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE BASE

58. This base is no longer functioning as a separate resource. The school still maintains 55 placements for pupils with statements of special educational need related to speech and language difficulties. Provision in school is also now made for pupils on the autistic spectrum and with Asperger’s syndrome, and more complex language disabilities. The school philosophy reflects its full commitment to principles of access and entitlement. This creates a successful inclusive environment for all pupils, academically, socially and pastorally.
59. The decision to develop and extend an inclusive whole-school approach has been very successful with the pastoral framework now focusing on the role of the year co-ordinator at the centre of a fully inclusive support system. Many pupils now have full access to the curriculum, taking tests at the end of Year 9 and accreditation at GCSE and GNVQ. There are examples of pupils leaving school with eight or more subject certificates. Access to extra-curricular provision is also very good and the school has worked hard to overcome the difficulties of transport for pupils who travel a long way to school from their homes. A pupil with autism was observed taking an active role in an after-school trampoline session and was totally committed to improving his personal programme.
60. It is difficult to identify pupils who are part of the provision due to the fact that they are so well integrated. They work alongside their peers in all but the core subjects of the curriculum, where they are taught as a specific group. Every member of staff is involved in teaching them at some time. It is indicative of this commitment that these pupils do so well. Specific support from a speech and language therapist is given to pupils on a regular basis and they are well supported by specialist teachers and teaching assistants.
61. A very experienced manager of speech and language provision liaises closely with the co-ordinator for special educational needs. He is keen to bury the myth that pupils with special educational needs cannot achieve. Expectations are appropriately high and pupils are well motivated to perform to the very best of their ability.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving because of good leadership.
- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and pupils are encouraged to think and reflect.
- Some pupils are not aware of how to improve and targets are not always matched to individual pupils.

Commentary

62. Standards in the 2004 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and also in GCSE examinations were well below national expectations. However, these results and current standards reflect continuing improvement. Pupils' achievement is good, taking into account their prior attainment, as well as pupils' work seen. The head of department has succeeded in developing a shared vision for the improvement of teaching and learning, and consequently standards are better than at the last inspection.
63. In work seen, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 was well below average and below average by the end of Year 11. This represents improving standards, because when the pupils joined the school, their standards were well below average and low in writing. Standards in literacy have improved. Most pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of literacy skills by the time they have been in the school for three years. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion but falter in formal situations. Writing standards are well below average; most pupils have not grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar, although their work is generally well presented. Most writing is creative and pupils enjoy working on imaginative and descriptive stories. The standards of all pupils are benefiting from a wider choice in the variety of writing assignments and increasing differentiation in lesson planning. The use of ICT is effective in developing pupils' writing standards and the quality of teaching. However access to this resource is limited. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented achieve well because their needs are planned for and support is effective.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and includes very good lessons. In a small minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, pupils learn less than in others, because they are not as clearly targeted and challenged. In the good lessons, there is a brisk pace, pupils are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Pupils enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Pupils respond well to their teachers' care for achievement and this helps develop the good relationships evident in the department. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were stimulated and enthralled by photographs from World War 1 and this made their writing on life in the trenches much more realistic and heartfelt. They presented their findings in a deeply felt and expressive manner, because the teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. This matched a

consistent approach to teaching in the department. In a Year 8 poetry lesson, pupils made very good progress because of high expectations, a wide range of activity and stimulating resources.

65. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has developed a loyal and cohesive team. She has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and pupils. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the pupils. More clearly focused schemes of work for pupils in Year 11 to help prepare for the examination are needed. Newly qualified teachers are supported effectively in their teaching and learning. Procedures for assessment are clear and used by the head of department to set targets. This is not consistent in practice as teachers' levels are not always matched to individual pupils and draft work requires more assessment in order that pupils may improve on it. A minority of pupils are not aware of their standards or targets and therefore are not sure how to improve.
66. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Pupils' standards have been maintained and literacy teaching has been used effectively to target further improvements in English language for Year 9 pupils. This exemplifies the department's commitment to raising standards. The shared commitment to raising the standing of the subject, coupled with the determination of the head of department, means that it has the capacity to succeed even further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. Departments are successfully improving pupils' literacy skills. The literacy co-ordinator has effectively organised the management of literacy improvement, especially in the 'catch up' programme. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in history, geography and English. Good use is made of the library, for both ICT and text-based research. Pupils discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. More developed discursive and analytical writing is not consistent, however, in subjects where literacy teaching is less emphasised. In music and art and design, opportunities were missed to correct mechanical accuracy and extend specialist vocabulary. Most subjects, however, undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously as a means of improving standards.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of writing, reading and listening are above average; this represents good achievement.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are very positive and behaviour is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils to achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good; standards have improved significantly and teachers work very well as a team.
- The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils sometimes have insufficient opportunity to use the language themselves in lessons and lack confidence in speaking and responding spontaneously.

Commentary

68. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards in French have improved, particularly in the last three years; examination results are now above average. Very good leadership and management have resulted in a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are good and information is used well to meet the needs of pupils.
69. GCSE results in 2004 were above average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was above average. All pupils entering for the examination gained an A*-G grade. However, the proportion of B grades was below average and no candidates achieved A* or A grades. Nonetheless, results represent good achievement, particularly for lower attaining pupils. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Results in 2004 were significantly better than in 2003.
70. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average; however, pupils achieve well. By Year 9 pupils can describe events in detail in the past, present and future, and can express opinions and all are able to give reasons for their views, and identify the main points and detail from extracts of speech and short texts. They display a good understanding of grammar and write accurately using a good range of vocabulary and structures. Higher attaining pupils write at length and in detail about themselves and their interests, for example to pen-friends. However, for the majority of pupils the range of vocabulary and structures they use is limited and their writing follows models closely. In speaking and responding most find difficulty in manipulating the language on the spot without reference to notes and models but their pronunciation is good.
71. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average; pupils achieve well. By Year 11, pupils can write at length and detail for a variety of purposes and in doing so they use a good range of vocabulary and structures and link sentences effectively to compare and contrast ideas. However, although their listening skills are well developed as a result of extensive exposure to very good role models in lessons, their responses are very brief and they lack confidence in speaking and responding without recourse to guidance from the teacher or notes. Opportunities for pupils to use the language themselves are often limited in scope so that although they memorise new language they are not confident in using it independently to give and gather information in realistic situations.
72. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Activities and resources are well matched to pupils' capabilities and sequenced well to enable pupils to build on previous learning; the needs of the least and most able are effectively addressed and these pupils achieve well in examinations. Teachers have a very good command of French and usually use the language effectively to conduct activities. In the best lessons higher attaining pupils are challenged to interpret more complex instructions for others. Clear presentations of new language allow pupils to identify and apply patterns and enable them to rapidly understand and use new language themselves. Sensitive and supportive questioning enables all pupils to respond successfully. Starter activities are used well to consolidate previous learning and pair work activities are effective in increasing pupils' confidence and competence. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils' effective questioning supported by visual cues enabled pupils to give their opinions about a variety of leisure activities. ICT is used to good effect to support and extend learning. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to work in pairs and small groups but this is often restricted to rehearsal and based upon models; as a result most are not confident in using the language spontaneously. Teachers use assessment information well to present an appropriate challenge to pupils.

73. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They have very good relationships with their teachers. This is a major factor in enabling pupils to achieve well. Pupils listen attentively, concentrate on tasks set and work productively in small groups and pairs. In a minority of instances they become restless and lose concentration during teacher-led activities where they are not directly involved themselves for lengthy periods, but this is rare.
74. Leadership and management are very good. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are very good, examination results are analysed regularly and appropriate action is taken to raise standards. Marking is consistent across the department and teachers make good use of assessment information to inform pupils how to improve their work. The department has successfully developed the use of ICT to support and extend learning but further development is restricted by access to facilities and the limited range of subject-specific software available. Although only French is offered by the school, the department makes good use of its links with other schools to provide gifted linguists with the opportunity to study Spanish outside the school day. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural and social development not only through contact with native speakers, the use of e-mail and opportunities for trips and exchanges abroad, but also through the French club and frequent opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning and effective teaching are helping them to make good progress and achieve well, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment to help pupils' learning is used very effectively.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- The below expected performance of more able pupils, especially girls, at the end of Year 11.

Commentary

75. Achievement is good. Pupils who are well below the expected standard on entry make very good progress from Year 7 and are achieving very well by the end of Year 11. This is largely because the pupils have a strong commitment to learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good teaching and support they receive. In 2004, standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average; however, pupils' performance was close to that of pupils of the same age in similar schools. In recent years there has been an improving trend in the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9, in particular those who are more able, and this is now close to the rising trend recorded nationally. Since the previous inspection, test results show no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Overall, pupils do not perform as well in mathematics as they do in English and science at the end of Year 9.
76. Results of examinations taken at the end of Year 11 in 2004 show that standards reached are below the national average. However, the standards are rising quickly, as shown in the number of GCSE A*-C passes. This was confirmed by the improving quality of pupils' work and their responses in the classroom. Higher attaining pupils, in particular girls, are not performing as well as expected. Since the previous inspection, results at GCSE have improved each year.
77. In Year 7, most average and lower attaining pupils are not fully secure in using the rules of number fluently to extend their learning in mathematics. Effective and consistent teaching, using extensive practice in written and mental work, and with close attention to number operations and relationships between them, means that by Year 8 pupils are becoming more confident in their numerical skills. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are fully competent in understanding ideas relating to place value, ordering and rounding numbers and the inter-relationships between fractions, ratios, decimals and percentages. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, use calculators correctly and accurately. Their understanding and use of ICT to help their learning in mathematics are very good. Pupils of average attainment in Year 9 made good progress in plotting and interpreting straight-line graphs, because their skills in using computers were well developed. The solid groundwork commenced and consolidated in Years 7 to 9 means that, in Years 10 and 11, pupils extend their mathematical skills successfully into more advanced ideas, including those involving the properties of lines, angles and shapes, data handling and using the powers and roots of numbers. A few lower attaining pupils are less secure in re-arranging formulae using transposition and prefer to rely upon mechanical solutions rather than using methods of reasoning.
78. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. It is better in these years because pupils' levels of understanding are higher than in previous years and teachers are

able to use their very good command of the subject content to improve pupils' learning further. Where lessons were very good, teachers' planning, expectations and challenge were dominant features. Very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs took place because the teacher worked very effectively with the learning support assistant. Lessons were well planned and paced to ensure that their learning was secure. The use of the guidelines for the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has influenced very positively the planning of lessons, the methods of teaching and the use of assessment to improve pupils' learning. Resources for learning are sufficient and adequate and teachers are using these and ICT expertly to enhance and improve the quality of their teaching and the effectiveness of pupils' learning.

79. Leadership and management are very good. There is excellent clarity of vision for the direction the department is moving in to meet the needs of the pupils. The leadership is securely established on a very sound knowledge of contemporary developments in mathematics and the high aspirations of a committed team of teachers. The thorough monitoring, evaluation and use of information and data are effective in improving achievement, learning and teaching. Individual teachers are committed to improving their personal knowledge and teaching skills. They are supportive of each other, and of teachers in training, in sharing good practice.
80. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are rising at the end of Year 11 and pupils are achieving at levels above expectations. Overall, the department is well poised to continue the pattern of improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. There is a good school numeracy policy. A comprehensive curriculum audit has been done and departments now show where pupils' numerical skills can be used and extended in development plans, schemes of work and lesson plans. However, in some subjects, for example science, opportunities for the use and raising awareness of numeracy are infrequently taken. In geography, a strong contribution to exploiting and extending pupils' competency in using numerical skills is made. As yet, the school policy is not emerging as fully consistent practice across the curriculum. This issue has recently been addressed and a new impetus for development and consistency has taken place. Outside of the planned curriculum, the mathematics department contributes well to creating interest with pupils and parents, for instance, through weekly mathematics puzzles and regular competitions.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All teachers are using innovative teaching and learning strategies.
- There is an effective integration of ICT into learning, especially data capture and analysis.
- The monitoring of pupils' performance and record keeping are very good.
- GCSE results are not high enough.

Commentary

82. By the end of Year 9 the standards reached by pupils are below the national average but above expectations when compared with similar schools. National measures of predicted levels confirm that well above expected gains are made between Years 7 and 9. Girls have slightly

better results than boys. Improvements in science have been at a slower rate than in English and mathematics. GCSE results for both double science and single science have been well below the national average in the past three years and few pupils achieve high grades. When compared with all subjects taken in Year 11, science results are below average, but above those being achieved by the same pupils in English and mathematics. Science results for boys and girls are similar at all levels. The standard of pupils' work seen by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 was below nationally expected levels.

83. The overall achievement of pupils is good. They enter the school with well below average results and reach levels that are higher than predicted, and much higher when compared with similar schools. Overall, this represents good value added in the subject and good progress. This achievement is due to purposeful teaching and exposure to a wide range of learning resources, particularly ICT. Boys and girls make similar progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and are fully integrated into classes. More able pupils generally make good progress compared with their attainment levels on entry to the school.
84. Teaching and learning are good in all years; there are frequent examples of very good lessons. These lessons are very well planned and most include a range of learning activities that provide appropriate challenge. Effective lessons involve pupils in speculative thinking and provide opportunities to test out ideas through experimental work. A few of the lessons seen had an over-reliance on worksheets. Pupils concentrate well during lessons and participate well in discussion. Literacy skills are developed well through vocabulary and word-matching exercises, but numeracy is insufficiently integrated into lessons. Pupils record work in files for each module, which is not currently allowing the mapping of knowledge and concepts between topics to easily take place. Study guides for home use have recently been introduced, but are mainly suitable for revision. Older pupils do not have a textbook they can take home, which is restricting independent learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and a science club. Assessment of learning is thorough and mainly conducted through module tests. Results are analysed well and used diagnostically to improve learning. Record keeping and target setting are very good. Pupils get good feedback from teachers and also engage in self-assessment.
85. The management and leadership of the subject are good. The subject has a good strategic plan directed at raising achievement. The professional development of staff is taken seriously and linked to priorities in the development plan. There has been a lack of stability in teaching staff in recent years and this has adversely affected the progress of many pupils. Suitable new appointments have been made and the subject now has a strong teaching team but does not currently have a teacher with a physics specialism. Support for staff, both from within the school and locally from advanced skills teachers, is very good. Performance analysis and the monitoring of pupils' progress are excellent. The laboratories generally provide a good learning environment and two have exceptional displays. The practical equipment and resources for learning are largely situated within individual laboratories, used mainly by a single member of staff. This is restricting access to and availability of some learning materials, as does two of the preparation rooms being accessible only through laboratories. Technicians provide good support and help in the development of learning resources.
86. The improvement since the previous inspection is good. There have been some significant improvements in teaching and learning recently that are beginning to address GCSE standards. ICT is now a strength, schemes of work have been improved and the monitoring of work is now very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of pupils achieve higher grades in the GNVQ examination.
- The management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum are not effective.
- The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection..

Commentary

87. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the attainment of pupils was below the standard expected nationally in 2004. Results in the most recent GNVQ examination were well above the level expected and a significant number of pupils achieved higher grades. Standards achieved show an improvement over the previous year.
88. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with below average skills in ICT. Standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to use computers confidently because they are provided with a well-structured course. This enables them to achieve very well considering their wide range of experience upon entering the school. Pupils' understanding of how to present information in different formats is good. They successfully produce documents that are designed with a particular audience in mind. Pupils use the Internet very well for research and can edit this information to suit an appropriate audience. They show a good understanding of word processing, the use of control systems, spreadsheets and databases. They are particularly adept at using presentation software, incorporating image and text manipulation to enhance their work. Higher attainers have a good understanding of matching work for particular audiences. They incorporate and manipulate sophisticated and imaginative materials into their presentations. Their understanding of the potential use of ICT beyond the school is good and many give imaginative examples of where it might be used.
89. By Year 11 pupils' attainment is above average. In lessons pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing, and use of database and spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. Pupils discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the courses being offered. Pupils develop and apply their skills further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects.
90. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which they use well to ask searching questions and stretch the pupils in lessons. Teachers plan their lessons really well. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how pupils should behave. Teachers share the lesson objectives with their classes so pupils understand what they are going to do and how they will do it. The content of lessons is well researched and teachers explain principles well. Teachers modify work so that all pupils can achieve as well as possible; higher attainers are suitably challenged. However, where teaching is only satisfactory not all teachers modify work so that all pupils can achieve as well as possible; higher attainers are not challenged enough. In these lessons the pace is slow and there are few opportunities for interaction with pupils, particularly the use of questioning and discussion to support the learning process. In the better lessons effective use is made of data projectors to demonstrate each stage of the lesson clearly. Relationships are particularly strong and result in a good balance between enjoyment and hard work. The department's assessment procedures are beginning to be

developed; results are recorded and stored. Teachers are able to readily access these assessments and usefully monitor the progress of individuals and groups. Teachers provide regular oral feedback to pupils about their attainment and progress, but the quality and regularity of marking are inconsistent.

91. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has successfully overseen many changes and has a clear vision about the need to raise attainment. Good monitoring systems are in place. The curriculum has improved significantly, meeting the needs of all pupils because the good subject knowledge of the teachers has been used well in planning the schemes of work. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The tracking and assessment of pupil attainment and progress are beginning to be used much more effectively to inform teachers' planning. With these recent innovations the subject is set well for future developments. There is very good technical provision; the technician team provide a very good level of support.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. The management and co-ordination of ICT are not effective. There is very little tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of ICT and there is no cross-curricular approach to the subject. Standards of work seen in a number of subjects are good; there is evidence of work produced in the majority of subjects with the exception of art and design, where the application of skills is unsatisfactory. In most subjects there are opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers. Technical support is very good. The computer rooms and the library provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers outside of lessons when they can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving very well when compared to prior attainment.
- GCSE results have been rising significantly.
- Very well planned lessons with pace and variety challenge pupils and drive learning.
- The department is very ably led and very well managed.
- The department reviews its performance rigorously and is fully committed to raising standards.

Commentary

93. Pupils enter the school with knowledge and understanding of geography that are well below what are normally expected. Few know where important places are. Aided by a progressive scheme of work with extensive use of case studies and local examples, they make very good progress. By the end of Year 9, standards are only slightly below national expectations. Pupils are beginning to use terminology appropriately. They know why shanty-towns develop in some less economically developed countries and understand why people continue to be drawn to the cities from the countryside. The needs of less able pupils are well understood. Classroom assistants give effective support. Streaming allows teachers to tailor their expectation so that all pupils make similar progress.
94. The numbers continuing with geography to GCSE were small but are beginning to increase. Results in recent years had been significantly improving since the time of the previous report. The most recent results, however, were disappointing. Pupils achieved grades below the national average and their results in other subjects. The erratic attendance of some pupils was a contributory factor. The standards being achieved in current GCSE classes and target grades firmly rooted in evidence suggest that the upward trend will continue. Given that GCSE geography does not attract many of the more able, pupils are achieving very well when compared to their prior attainment. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The department is raising the quality of coursework and provides weekly extra-curricular revision classes for GCSE pupils.
95. Pupils generally enjoy geography. They remain on task because lessons are well planned with a variety of challenging activities. Lessons have pace, which engages pupils and holds their interest. Consequently, they show commitment to their work. Their behaviour in the classroom is very good. Less able pupils struggle to describe in sufficient detail. They write short sentences. Some tend to guess rather than think before answering questions, much as previously reported. Pupils relate well to each other and to their teachers. They are not reluctant to participate in lessons. They take a pride in the presentation of their work, some of which is attractively displayed in teaching areas.
96. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is no evidence of the inconsistencies previously reported. Schemes of work identify opportunities for using ICT and contributions to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy. Citizenship and links with industry are explicitly included. Lessons now get off to a brisk start, often with light-hearted openings. Tasks are well explained. Less able Year 9 pupils, for example, were required to think for

themselves about tourism. They were very well managed. What drove learning were the teacher's high expectations of them, the pace at which he moved the lesson along and the variety of strategies he employed so that pupils remained interested and achieved very well. They reacted with enthusiasm to a homework task which would involve independent research using the Internet. Regular assessment is very well used to set targets. Pupils know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and how to improve.

97. The department is very well led and managed. There is a shared commitment to raising standards. The development plan is fully informed by the thoroughness of the department's annual review of its performance. The work of teachers is rigorously monitored. The humanities period in Year 8 makes a contribution to skills development. Otherwise, the single period of geography in each of Years 7 to 9 restricts subject coverage. Long lessons and an interval of a week between them adversely affect the continuity of learning. The department's desire to widen the urban horizons of its pupils through its curriculum and its programme of visits is commendable and is worthy of further development. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strength and weaknesses

- Standards are steadily improving and are now in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 and in Year 10.
- Pupils have difficulty in explaining in writing their understanding of the links between historical causes and consequences.
- Teaching is very good and results in interesting and challenging lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work are very positive and this contributes to the good progress they make.
- Assessment procedures are very effective in setting pupils' progress targets and in monitoring their improvement.

Commentary

98. Standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils enter the school with well below average language skills. This presents history teachers with a considerable problem because the subject relies heavily on reading and writing ability. Very good progress is made because teachers focus on developing speaking and writing skills so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are very close to the national average. Boys' written work is less good than that of girls because boys find it difficult to explain their understanding between causes and effects. By Year 9, both boys and girls demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of historical concepts and a good memory for facts. A significant factor is the very positive attitude of most pupils, which makes them prepared to listen to and act on their teachers' advice.
99. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are much better than in previous years. In 2004, GCSE results, although better than previously, were well below the national average for higher A*-C grades. Standards seen in the present Year 11 confirm predicted A*-C grades that are close to national expectations. The current Year 10 group has benefited from changes to the scheme of work and the sustained focus on improving writing skills. Pupils in both Years 10 and 11 find it difficult to explain concisely the links between historical events and their impact. As a consequence, the

proportion of written work that meets the criteria for higher A*-B grades is still below that seen nationally.

100. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Both history teachers are relatively new to the school and have brought with them a good range of teaching approaches. Detailed lesson planning successfully provides a succession of interesting activities that promote active learning. Teachers are enthusiastic experts in the subject and have a very good rapport in all classes. As a result, pupils actively look forward to their lessons, arrive promptly with an eagerness to learn and work hard for the whole lesson.
101. Good use is made of computerised projectors and computers, which pupils use to research from the Internet and work on school-developed materials. The variety of reading materials and learning tasks meet pupils' widely varying learning needs. Teaching assistants provide very good additional support, so pupils with statements of special educational need make the same very good progress as other pupils.
102. Assessment procedures are a real strength. Regular and very careful marking of work provides pupils with clear improvement targets. Teachers monitor progress closely and use their detailed knowledge of individuals to provide extra support. Pupils understand how well they are doing and what aspects of their work need to improve
103. Leadership and management are very good. Revision of course content and materials has revitalised the subject and is directly responsible for rapidly improving standards. Close departmental teamwork ensures the sharing of good ideas. Very good monitoring of teaching and learning systematically evaluates the effectiveness of different approaches and materials. Frequent visitors to the school and interesting fieldwork encourage pupils to understand the relevance of history. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching is very good and results in very good learning.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal and multicultural development.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The department has a very strong specialist teaching team.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning which yield high quality work.
- The use of levels is not yet fully developed as an assessment tool.

Commentary

104. Results in the full GCSE course have improved considerably over time and, in the most recent examination in 2004, standards were in line with national expectations. In recent short course examinations, results have been below expectations, but there is an upward trend. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards were below those expected by the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 9. However, this represents good achievement as many pupils enter the school with very low levels of literacy and subject skills.

105. The previous inspection report expressed concerns about pupils' rudimentary knowledge of world religions in their first three years at the school. This is no longer the case and, from Year 7 onwards, pupils develop a clear understanding of Christian beliefs as well as those of other world religions such as Islam and Sikhism. In Year 10, all pupils follow a short course in the subject and pupils investigate spiritual and moral issues such as wealth and poverty. Higher attaining pupils write fluently on these issues and, in this context, some well-developed extended writing was seen on moral dilemmas such as abortion. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, struggle with written work, but they are given very good support with materials suited to their needs. Religious education for all pupils in Year 11 is provided within the citizenship programme and the school now complies fully with statutory obligations at this stage.
106. The quality of teaching is very good. The department has suffered from staffing difficulties in recent years but the new specialist teaching team plans lessons very effectively and uses classroom management skills very well to support pupils' learning. Concerns raised in the previous report about lack of pupil involvement have been fully addressed. A very wide range of teaching and learning techniques is now employed to stimulate pupils, including group work, paired work, use of video and role-play. As a result, pupils are very positive about their studies and are keen to take part in debate and discussion. They also show great respect for their teachers and for each other.
107. The department is led and managed very well, with a very strong sense of teamwork and exemplary documentation. Marking is thorough, but the department has not yet fully developed a consistent assessment policy based on the use of levels. ICT is playing an important role in the work of the department and display is used very imaginatively to create a very positive learning atmosphere. The subject also makes an excellent contribution to all pupils' personal and multicultural development.
108. Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection, especially in terms of acquiring specialist staffing and fulfilling statutory requirements. The new enthusiastic teaching team has the undoubted capacity to develop still further.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are continuing to improve and pupils do significantly better than they do in their other subjects.
- Leadership and management are very good, leading to a climate for change and improvement shared by the whole department.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11, and achievement is very good

Commentary

109. Teachers' assessments for the past three years show a significant and sustained rise in standards at the end of Year 9. Current work seen showed that standards are in line with national expectations by Year 9. This represents very good achievement for these pupils. They have very varied prior experience and the department runs an effective induction programme for Year 6

pupils. Pupils make good progress in the acquisition of skills and knowledge in Years 7 and 8, but some work is not sufficiently varied for those with higher or lower abilities. Much better progress is made in Year 9, when open-ended design tasks present more appropriate challenges. Pupils can work safely with a wide range of materials, including electronic systems.

110. In 2004, GCSE results improved significantly and were average for those attaining A*-C grades. More pupils than average obtained a pass, but fewer achieved the very highest grades. Pupils of all abilities did broadly equally well in all design and technology subjects. Boys did particularly well, because of deliberate tactics to monitor, motivate and set strict deadlines for coursework. Standards of current work seen in Year 11 continue to improve and are above average. This represents very good achievement for these pupils. Pupils are confident in presenting the development of their design ideas, and in the way they utilise ICT to improve their coursework. They do not sufficiently link product evaluation to their initial specifications.
111. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are very good overall. Teachers have a very good level of subject knowledge and impart their enthusiasm to pupils. In Years 7 to 9, the most effective teaching utilises examples of existing products and skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think about their own design choices and the needs of users. Pupils' sketching skills have not been sufficiently developed across the range of subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teachers provide meaningful advice and clear targets for improvement of coursework. Expectations of the quality of outcomes are high and pupils' construction skills are above average. Teachers are good at helping pupils consider moral, social, cultural and environmental issues, together with implications for the commercial manufacture of their own designs.
112. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department has identified very clear priorities for continuing to improve standards. Members of the department co-operate well in their shared belief in improving teaching and learning. Further developments in the application of new technologies are needed, such as computer-aided design and manufacture, to improve facilities in all subject areas in keeping with the school's technology status. The range of enrichment activities for all pupils, and especially the most able pupils, is very good. A number of gifted and talented pupils take an additional GCSE in electronic systems in a partner institution after school. The curriculum is developing to meet the need of pupils and effective courses in manufacturing and engineering are also offered. Despite having a current vacancy, recent staff appointments have had a positive impact.
113. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen considerably. Teaching and learning have improved and achievement is very good. Teachers' planning has improved and pupils are now given sound advice about how to improve.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good which results in good achievement.
- There is insufficient emphasis on research and discovery through drawing and the use of sketchbooks.

- The department is well led and managed.

Commentary

114. The GCSE results in 2004 were well below average and worse than in 2003 and at the last inspection. The work in school is below average but noticeably improving. Pupils' practical skills and understanding of composition improve rapidly in Year 7 and are close to average by the end of Year 9. Their drawing is well below average and too often based on imagination rather than careful observation. Sketchbooks are not used for research, either into methods and materials or to observe the pupils' surroundings. There is insufficient use of computers and specialist software to make artwork. The pupils continue to develop their practical work in Years 10 and 11 but only a minority of pupils use drawing to record space, form or texture. For the majority, drawing and sketchbook usage are simply another way of making a picture. This lack of personal research and discovery is causing the pupils to rely more on their teachers for guidance than is usual. Pupils also find it difficult to write about or discuss their own or famous artists' work. Completed work is seen as most important, often at the expense of research or development work. Pupils keenly respond to the challenge of using mixed media in both two and three dimensions. Recognising the pupils' low knowledge and skills when they arrive in school and because of their very good attitudes to their teachers, the subject and their work, all pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11.
115. Teaching and learning are good and occasionally very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well, making their expectations of creativity and effort clear, delivering demonstrations that generate co-operation and enthusiasm. Teachers circulate, assessing, prompting and encouraging their pupils, offering assistance where needed, helping maintain pupils' pace and productivity. There is insufficient time at the end of lessons for pupils to comment on and evaluate their own and their classmates' work. The study of African, Asian, Australian and North American art allows an appreciation of the spiritual and ceremonial content in different cultures. Achievement was unsatisfactory in a Year 7 lesson because the work was insufficiently challenging. The resultant behaviour of a significant majority of the boys was not well enough managed to stop them interfering with others' learning. The assessment of pupils' work is good and provides a clear view of pupils' progress and how to improve. The curriculum is broad but the shortage of computers makes full delivery of the National Curriculum difficult.
116. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has been in post since September and has already introduced measures to raise standards. She has a clear vision for the future and is ambitious for her pupils and staff alike. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and the school is providing training to improve classroom management where necessary. Detailed planning relates closely to the National Curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although standards have fallen slightly, teachers have much higher expectations and the assessment of pupils' work is much improved.

Drama

The provision in drama was not inspected in detail but some lessons were seen.

Commentary

117. The teaching of drama is an asset to the school curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teaching of drama not only broadens the curriculum, but also improves standards because pupils are able to transfer the skills they have learned into other subject areas. Teaching

and learning emphasise decision-making skills, and provide opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Pupils generally learn well because the lessons are well prepared and they enjoy the subject. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the pupils. In a Year 11 lesson, dramatic rehearsals were professionally planned and skillfully executed. This was because of the high expectations of the teacher and carefully focused lesson planning. Very good relationships create an atmosphere of achievement and respect. A very good range of extra-curricular activities contributes to the positive ethos of the school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of effective teaching.
- The good range of instrumental provision and performance opportunities caters well for the needs and interests of pupils.
- Assessment procedures are not fully in place to ensure consistency within the department.
- There has been a good increase in music technology resources but their use to support pupils' learning is still in the early stages of development.

Commentary

118. Pupils join the school in Year 7 having had varied musical experiences and with standards in music which are well below expectations for their age. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress because of effective teaching. By the end of Year 9 standards are below national expectations. Pupils' performing skills, however, are in line with expectations. When listening to music, pupils can identify key features of the music but they have limited knowledge and understanding of musical styles and traditions.
119. GCSE results for 2004 were well below the national average for grades A*-C but the trend is one of improvement. Comparisons with national figures are not statistically meaningful because numbers taking music are small. Standards in Year 11 are below expectations but pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. Performing is the strongest aspect of pupils' work because they receive instrumental or singing lessons.
120. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons have clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils so they know what they are expected to learn. Resources, including music technology resources, are well chosen and used effectively to develop pupils' musical understanding, skills and knowledge. Teaching is enthusiastic and relationships are good, so as a result pupils enjoy their lessons. However, some teaching does not challenge the more musically able pupils sufficiently, which means that they do not always make enough progress in a lesson.
121. The leadership of the department is good. The curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the further development of the department and is a good role model for pupils and staff. Management of the department is satisfactory. A good start has been made in departmental evaluation but performance data is not yet analysed well enough. Procedures for assessing and marking pupils' work are not sufficiently in place to ensure consistency between teachers, so

that pupils are clear about how to improve their work. This is largely because there has been some staffing instability during the last 18 months.

122. The music department contributes well to pupils' personal development and to the further development of their musical learning through the provision of a good range of instrumental and singing lessons and performance opportunities involving an increasing number of pupils. Good opportunities for pupils to perform are provided within the school and through effective links with the local primary schools and community at events such as the Bartley Green Community Concerts.
123. Since the previous inspection the accommodation has been much improved and is now good. Resources have increased, including those for music technology. However, the use of music technology to develop pupils' composing and performing skills is still in the early stages of development. GCSE is now established with flourishing examination groups and pupils in Year 9 now have the same curriculum time as pupils in Years 7 and 8. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are above the national average and are improving.
- Teaching and learning are predominantly very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and excellent standards of behaviour successfully raise levels of achievement.
- Very good assessment procedures lead to pupils' excellent understanding of how they might improve.
- Very good leadership and management ensure good coverage of the National Curriculum

Commentary

124. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were above the national average. There has been a steady improvement over the last three years. Although more boys were entered for the examinations there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 reflected average attainment; standards continue to improve. Pupils enter the school with low levels of skill and a restricted range of experiences, but throughout their time in school they achieve very well.
125. In lessons observed standards were in line with national expectations between Years 7 and 9 and above expectations in Years 10 and 11. This is the result of very good teaching and learning which effectively raises standards on entry and improves them over pupils' time in school. By the end of Year 9 pupils have established good control and techniques in trampolining. A strong feature of all activities is pupils' ability to coach each other and bring about progression. Similarly, due to improved assessment procedures, pupils are aware from an early age of the level they are working at and what they need to do in order to achieve the next level. Pupils are capable of choreographing their own rock and roll dances, making good use of video footage to develop their movement ideas. In gymnastics they work with precision and control and handle apparatus well. By the end of Year 11, standards of practical work are above average. Written

work is of average standard and lack of literacy skills limits the progress of the least able. However, stimulating and challenging teaching enables all pupils to appreciate how new skills can be learnt and the importance of good feedback in skill development. Year 10 pupils demonstrate above average skills when working on their Junior Sports Leaders' Award with local primary children. Their understanding of basic games skills reflects a secure knowledge base from previous learning.

126. Pupils with special educational needs achieve equally as well as other pupils due to good levels of support. However, teachers' planning does not always make it clear how tasks and resources will be adapted to meet their needs.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned with clear objectives, which are always shared with pupils. Teachers form very good relationships with pupils, which contributes to their very good attitudes and excellent standards of behaviour. Teachers are enthusiastic and possess good knowledge of the activities they are teaching. This leads to a very low level of non-participation. Very good leadership and management of a strong and committed team have excellent features that have brought about good improvement since the previous inspection. There is very good coverage of the National Curriculum, which is further enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

128. No courses in this area were inspected in detail. Courses in leisure and tourism, health and social care, vocational science and vocational art, engineering, manufacturing and ICT were sampled.
129. Provision in vocational courses sampled is good overall. The curriculum continues to develop, and current pathways offer pupils opportunities to opt for an increasing range of vocational and applied GCSE courses. In the new academic year these will include catering and a BTEC course in physical education.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent opportunities for all pupils to participate in the life of the school and in local and national citizenship activities.
- There is excellent leadership and management of the department.
- The quality of teaching is very good and promotes very good learning.
- There are full and effective arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' progress in the subject.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all pupils.
- Display is used very imaginatively, both in classrooms and throughout the school.

Commentary

130. Standards overall are below expectations by the end of Year 9 but this represents good achievement, as many pupils enter the school with very low levels of literacy and subject knowledge. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, pupils show a very good understanding of issues within society and develop skills of enquiry and communication well. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils examined in depth how local democracy works and engaged in a practical demonstration of how to vote. In Year 11, all pupils follow a new short course examination and are developing their subject skills to greater depth, for example in a lesson that produced a lively and informed debate on the effects of global warming.
131. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use classroom management skills very well to promote very good learning. By the skilled use of questioning, they also encourage all pupils to take part in lessons. As a result, there is a strong sense of purpose and enjoyment in lessons and all pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject.
132. There are excellent opportunities for all pupils to participate in school life and in the wider community. The school council is a very effective channel of communication and pupils are also involved in peer mentoring, prefect duties and charity activities.
133. Most especially, there is a wealth of opportunities that allow pupils to take responsibility and examples of these include citizenship activity days, the Junior Sports Leadership scheme, an annual residential visit to Northern Ireland and community activities and youth conferences.
134. There is excellent leadership and management of the subject with boundless energy and enthusiasm. Most departments have responded very positively to the recent audit of citizenship opportunities, most especially in the humanities area. Plans to assess, record and report the subject in line with recent requirements have been fully implemented and there is excellent provision throughout the curriculum for pupils' personal development. There is also excellent use of display in the dedicated classroom and throughout the school in general.
135. Overall, the provision for citizenship is a model of good practice. The opportunities provided for all pupils to participate and to become responsible citizens are particularly noteworthy and the subject is rapidly becoming a significant strength in the school. There are very clear plans for future development and an undoubted capacity to build on current success.

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	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
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	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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