

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Harvington School

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Full Name of the School | Harvington School | | |
| DfES Number | 3076002 | | |
| Address | 20 Castlebar Road, Ealing, London W5 2DS | | |
| Telephone Number | 020 8997 1583 | | |
| Fax Number | 020 8810 4756 | | |
| E-mail Address | admin@harvingtonschool.com | | |
| Name of Headteacher | Dr Faye Meek | | |
| Name of Chairman of Governors | Professor Alan Gillett | | |
| Age Range | 3 to 16 | Gender | Boys and Girls to 5. Girls to 16 |
| Number of Pupils | 221 | Number of Boarders | Nil |
| Inspection Dates | 8th to 12th March 2004 | | |

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The school must not quote the report selectively in the school prospectus or other promotional literature.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

Harvington School is a small school which successfully achieves its aims. The small classes, the good teaching and learning, and the happy, welcoming, supportive atmosphere lead to good academic attainment and progress from pupils with a wide range of abilities and cultural backgrounds. The very good pastoral care and provision for personal development result in very good behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, the procedures for assessing and

recording the achievement, progress and needs of pupils are not used consistently in the senior school. Middle management structures require further development.

What the School Does Well

Of the school's strengths, the following are the most important:

Good teaching enables pupils to progress well in relation to their abilities and achieve good standards.

The support for pupils who learn more slowly and for those with special educational needs is good.

Pupils make a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage.

The quality of pupils' attitudes to learning, of their relationships with each other and with their teachers and of their behaviour is very good.

Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.

The pastoral care, support and guidance given to pupils are very good.

What the School Should Do Better

The following aspects of the school's provision could be improved:

In the senior school, procedures for assessing and recording the achievement, progress and needs of pupils are not used consistently and assessment information does not make a sufficient contribution to the development and planning of the curriculum.

The roles of subject leaders and co-ordinators are not sufficiently well defined and subject policies and schemes of work are not consistent. As a result, curricular continuity across the whole school is limited in some subjects.

The facilities and curriculum time for design and technology are very limited, especially in the senior school.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

The standards achieved by pupils are good in relation to their ages and abilities. Their results in national tests are at least in line with, and are often above, the national average for broadly equivalent maintained schools. Pupils make good progress in relation to their ages and abilities at each stage in the school; progress in individual lessons varies according to the stage and subject. Pupils of all abilities make gains in knowledge, understanding and practical and academic skills that are generally good in relation to their abilities. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

When the school's results in national tests are compared with the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools, attainment in English and mathematics at age 7 is well above the national average; at age 11, attainment overall is in line with the national average; in English it is far above, in science it is in line and in mathematics is below the national average for broadly equivalent schools.

In the senior school, pupils' performance at age 14 in national tests in English, mathematics and science is well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained secondary schools. At age 16, results in public examinations at GCSE are well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained secondary schools, which are maintained non-selective schools. It is a credit to the school, which has a wide ability range, that GCSE results in several subjects are in line with those of pupils in maintained selective schools.

In the Foundation Stage, attainment is good overall in each of the six areas of learning. In the junior school, in the work seen in lessons and in pupils' books, attainment was always at least in line with abilities, and often was good. At age 7, attainment is good in English, mathematics, science and in line with abilities in the humanities. At age 11, attainment is good in English, science and the humanities and in line with pupils' abilities in mathematics. In the senior school, standards achieved by pupils in lessons were almost always at least in line with their abilities, and often were good. At age 14, attainment is in line with pupils' abilities in mathematics and science; it is good in English and the humanities. At age 16, attainment is in line with abilities in science and good in English, mathematics and the humanities.

Pupils make good progress in relation to their ages and abilities at each stage in the school. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress. In the junior school, progress is good in most subjects from age 5 to 11. In the senior school, progress is good overall from age 11 to 16. In lessons, progress is good in English and the humanities from Year 7 to Year 11 and is sound in mathematics and science. In English, speaking and listening skills improve particularly well and written work develops in maturity, enabling good progress in arts and humanities subjects. The outcome of an official comparison in 2003 of national assessment test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 with GCSE results in Year 11, indicated that pupils in Year 11 in 2002/2003 made greater progress than might have been expected in these subjects.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

The quality of pupils' attitudes to learning is good, and the quality of their personal development and of their behaviour is very good for the ages, abilities and aptitudes of junior and senior school pupils. Their positive response in lessons and very good relationships contribute significantly to the learning process. Pupils are well motivated and eager to succeed. They are competent learners who concentrate hard on the work in hand and take pride in the presentation of their written work. Pupils show a mature respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, and are notably well-mannered and courteous.

The Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching is good and contributes effectively to pupils' attainment and progress. In almost half the lessons observed the teaching was good, in a quarter it was very good and in a further quarter, it was sound. Virtually all the teaching was at least sound and a few lessons were excellent. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils at all stages of their life at school.

Teachers almost all have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects; some very effective specialist teaching takes place in the senior part of the school, where teachers communicate their real interest in and enjoyment of the subject to their pupils. Class management is good; lesson planning is generally thorough and efficient. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost uniformly good or very good. The best teaching is characterised by the encouragement of independent thinking and an open mind, and by high expectations and skilful questioning, so that pupils are challenged and their understanding is deepened. In most lessons the pace of the teaching is purposeful and brisk, and the effective use of time is matched by an effective use of the resources available.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

Attendance is good. The school has no unauthorised absences. Pupils mainly arrive punctually at school and at lessons. Instructions for lateness and all related procedures are clear. The attendance and admission registers are up to date, completed correctly and kept efficiently; they comply with regulatory requirements.

Assessment and Recording

The quality of assessment and recording is good in the junior school and sound in the senior school. The methods used in the junior school are thorough and meet the needs of pupils well as they proceed up the school. In the senior school, external assessment procedures are efficient but internal systems are variable and the information gained from assessment is not yet used to any significant extent to set targets for individuals or to contribute to curriculum development and planning. Marking is consistent and effective in most subjects.

In the Foundation Stage, initial and continual assessment takes place against the early learning goals and an integrated system of individual profiles is maintained. In the junior school, appropriate annual nationally standardised tests in English, mathematics and science are given. In the senior school, pupils take external nationally standardised tests in Years 7 and 8, national assessment tests in English, mathematics and science in Year 9 and GCSE examinations in Year 11. Internally, tests are given once a year in the junior school and examinations take place twice a year in the senior school. The assessment programme is carefully planned and results are efficiently recorded.

Curriculum

The curriculum offers a satisfactorily balanced education, suited to the needs of pupils across the age and ability range. It contributes effectively to their intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development and provides satisfactory continuity and progression. The curriculum is sufficiently broad to prepare pupils adequately for the next stage of their education; it offers equality of access and the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make appropriate progress. A modest range of extra-curricular activities and a satisfactory programme of outside visits and residential trips support the curriculum.

The Foundation Stage curriculum covers the required six areas of learning and the planning provides good continuity and progression. The curriculum from Year 1 onwards is based on the national curriculum and, in the senior school, it leads into the syllabuses for GCSE. Some subjects have well thought-out policies and schemes of work that run seamlessly through the junior and senior years into appropriate GCSE provision. Other subjects have yet to co-ordinate their syllabuses to ensure continuity throughout the school. Design and technology is very limited and pupils would benefit from increased time and improved facilities. The school caters well for a broad range of ability. Good provision is made for those who need help for dyslexic problems, for example. Provision for the academically gifted is less formalized but is satisfactory overall and it is good in some subjects.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

The number, quality, and experience of teaching and non-teaching staff are good and contribute appropriately to the quality of education provided and to the educational standards achieved. Staff are well qualified in their teaching subjects and they are deployed well; specialist teachers are used effectively in all areas of the school. Staffing ratios for children under five are in line with current legislation. Appropriate and secure procedures are followed and checks are made through the Criminal Records Bureau before the appointment of all new staff. Policies and procedures for induction, appraisal, training and professional development are efficient, effective and appropriately funded; they apply to all staff.

Resources for Learning

The books, equipment, materials which are needed to support the teaching, learning, study and recreation of the pupils at all levels are good in quantity, quality and organisation; they are accessible and are used effectively. The range, availability, quality and accessibility of information and communication technology (ICT) resources are good. Although the use

made of ICT by staff is uneven, pupils use ICT successfully for research in all areas of the curriculum. An effective budget system is in place for each area of the school.

Libraries

Library facilities offer appropriate support for the curriculum and are used effectively. The range, availability, quality and accessibility of library stock and facilities are sufficient; they satisfactorily support the curriculum and pupils' attainment, progress and quality of learning. Links with the academic staff ensure that subject sections and specialist libraries, such as careers, are suitably stocked, with new titles being added as requested. The premises and stock of both the junior and senior libraries are well managed.

The cheerful junior library is busy and popular; it succeeds in encouraging younger pupils to read both for information and for pleasure; the senior library register shows a steady stream of books being withdrawn. Despite the constraints of size and space which affect both junior and senior libraries, they fulfil a broadly satisfactory role in providing resources for private study.

Premises and Accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. They have been continually adapted and upgraded to make them as suitable as possible for their purpose. They support the life and work of the school satisfactorily and play their part in creating the ambience and friendliness which is a feature of the school. The three listed Victorian buildings and their small immediate grounds provide a secure, happy environment and sufficient rooms of adequate size to support curricular provision, teaching and learning. All necessary services are in place, including sufficient cloakrooms. The buildings are in good repair and decorative order.

Links with Parents and the Community

The school has developed a good partnership with the parents and worthwhile links with the local and wider community. Formal communication between school and home is frequent and regular. Parent-teacher meetings and reports provide a good framework to inform parents regularly about their children's attainment and progress and the curriculum. Parents have reasonable opportunities to be involved, especially through Parents' Association events.

The school prospectus provides clear information including the terms and conditions for admission, a complaints procedure for parents, which complies with requirements, and a home-school partnership agreement. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire issued as part of the inspection expressed positive views on the school, including satisfaction with the worthwhile values of the school and with their children's attainment and progress.

Pupils' Personal Development

Provision for personal development is very good and this contributes significantly to the caring ethos of the school. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their moral, cultural and social awareness, enabling them to make mature judgements and decisions for their age. Pupils learn to appreciate the beliefs and values of others within a strong, supportive community where a diversity of cultures and faiths is represented. Pupils are taught to know the difference between right and wrong from their early years. The personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) programme is effective and comprehensive. Pupils are encouraged to care about each other, the wider community and their environment. The diverse community offers a wealth of rich cultural traditions and opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. Staff are fully involved in the social development of their pupils, which creates a very responsible and caring community.

Pastoral Care

The pastoral care of pupils is very good, providing very effective support and guidance for all; this makes a significant contribution to their educational standards and personal growth. Pupils making the transition from one phase to another are given good advice and support so that they, with their parents, make informed decisions. Pupils' welfare, including their health and safety, is paramount; every reasonable measure is taken to safeguard them. Disciplinary systems and procedures to deal with inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, are very good and effective. Staff carry out risk assessments and appropriate remedial action is taken.

Governance and Management

The school benefits from good, effective, supportive leadership and management. The governors and the senior management of the school have worked hard together to ensure that the school's aims are met, that a suitable quality of education is provided and that secure financial planning is in place to provide the resources required for teaching and learning, both now and in the future. The arrangements for governance and management provide for the effective administration of the school, its clear educational and pastoral direction and its future development. The senior management team and teaching staff support pupils well, giving them security and a sense of purpose. The roles of staff at intermediate level who have responsibility for subjects are not all well developed. The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient; the school is well organised and has effective internal and external communication and other procedures.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

The programme of activities is much constrained by space, time, the distance some pupils travel to school and availability of staff. It is only just satisfactory. The selection of activities provided, although limited, is suitable for the ages of pupils attending: levels of achievement are appropriate to their ages and abilities. Activities such as modern dance where teamwork is an essential element make a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils and are much enjoyed. Pupils' participation in activities are recorded and reported appropriately.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

Report on ISC/ISA Review Visit – 25th to 27th February 1998

Good progress has been made. An action plan was drawn up and most recommendations were attended to within the first twelve months. One recommendation concerned the need for closer liaison between all those teaching the same subject to ensure continuity and progression and prevent duplication of topics. In response, appropriate posts of responsibility were created.

Report on Nursery Inspection – 7th July 2000

Two points for consideration were raised; both have been followed up satisfactorily.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

| DfES Standard | | Does the school meet the regulatory requirements? |
|--|--------------------|---|
| 1. Quality of education: | 1.(2) Curriculum | Yes |
| | 1.(3)-(5) Teaching | Yes |
| 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils | | Yes |
| 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils | | Yes |
| 4. Suitability of proprietors and staff | | Yes |
| 5. Premises and accommodation | | Yes |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6. Provision of information | Yes |
| 7. Manner in which complaints are to be handled | Yes |

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

No action is required.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The body of the report contains a number of recommendations for the school to consider in its next stage of development. The main recommendations are listed below.

Develop further the systems and procedures for assessing and recording the achievement, progress and needs of pupils and ensure that assessment information contributes consistently to the improvement of individual progress and to the development and planning of the curriculum, especially in the senior school.

Strengthen middle management and extend curricular continuity by defining the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders and co-ordinators more clearly, especially in the junior school.

Consider the balance and breadth of the curriculum in order to make greater provision for pupils in design and technology.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

Harvington School is a day school for girls aged from three to sixteen years of age and boys from three to five years of age. It was founded in 1890 and was a boarding school originally; it moved to its present premises soon after 1900. The school occupies three adjoining Victorian houses in a residential road near the centre of Ealing and has a small purpose-built hall. The school is in a conservation area and its numbers are restricted by the local council.

At the time of the pre-inspection visit, the school had 221 pupils on roll including the co-educational Early Years section of 61 girls and nine boys between three and five years old; the junior school had a total of 84 girls in Years 1 to 6; the senior school had 67 girls in Years 7 to 11. Pupils come from a range of business and professional backgrounds and travel from a wide area including Chiswick, Wembley, Southall and Northolt; the population generally is very mobile, and this leads to a high pupil turnover.

No entry requirement is made for Nursery or Reception children. Pupils entering Year 1 are required to have made satisfactory progress against the early learning goals expected nationally of five-year olds. Entry from outside to Year 1 upwards is dependent on satisfactory assessments in English, using national curriculum based tests and nationally standardised reading age and mathematics tests, and a report. Entry to Year 7 is by assessment using nationally standardised tests in English, mathematics and verbal and non-verbal reasoning.

The school is of mixed ability; it caters for pupils who require small classes and a nurturing atmosphere. Assessments indicate that ability levels are wide, ranging from just below to above the national average. The scores over the previous two years have been between 105 and 110, with a range of 91 to 137; the national average is 100. The results of nationally standardised tests in Years 7 and 8 indicate an ability range which is average to above average by national standards and below average for independent schools. The ability range within a

year group may vary significantly from year to year. The results of national tests at ages 7 and 11 will be compared with those of broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. These are schools in economically advantaged areas or where pupils come from economically advantaged backgrounds. The results of national tests at age 14 and GCSE results at age 16 will be compared with those of broadly equivalent maintained secondary schools; these are maintained non-selective schools. The results of GCSE examinations will be compared also, where appropriate, with those of maintained selective schools. Approximately five per cent of pupils have additional support for various learning difficulties; no pupils have statements of special educational needs.

About 20 per cent of pupils have assistance with fees, mainly provided by the school. Approximately 40 children receive the Nursery Early Years grant. The majority of senior school pupils continue into the sixth form of a local school or college and subsequently enter higher education.

The school aims to enable pupils to flourish as individuals and reach the highest academic standards for their abilities. It seeks to encourage pupils to behave well, and to be confident, articulate, polite and helpful. It places a particular emphasis on the care and pastoral support of its pupils, and on welcoming and valuing pupils from other cultures and faiths.

National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups.

Key Indicators

Externally audited National Curriculum Assessments at age 7 (Key Stage 1):

| Subject | Level 2 or higher | Level 3 or higher |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Reading | 100% | 42% |
| Writing | 100% | 42% |
| Mathematics | 100% | 50% |

Externally marked National Curriculum Assessments at age 11 (Key Stage 2):

| Subject | Level 4 or higher | Level 5 or higher |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| English | 100% | 76% |
| Mathematics | 82% | 29% |
| Science | 100% | 59% |

Externally marked National Curriculum Assessments at age 14 (Key Stage 3):

| Subject | Level 5 or higher | Level 6 or higher |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| English | 94% | 75% |
| Mathematics | 100% | 82% |
| Science | 100% | 76% |

GCSE:

| Most recently completed Year 11 | Average for the last <i>three</i> Year 11s |
|---------------------------------|--|
| | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|
| Entered for 5+ subjects | 100% | 100% |
| Achieved 5+ @ A* - C | 100% | 94% |
| Achieved 5+ @ A* - G | 100% | 100% |
| Average score per candidate* | 51.6 | 53.8 |

* Scoring is 8 for GCSE grade A*; 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for grades A – G.

Attendance for Summer Term 2003:

| | | |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| | Authorised | Unauthorised |
| Percentage absence | 4.2% | 0% |

Exclusions Over the Previous 12 Months:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Temporary exclusions | Permanent exclusions |
| 1 | 0 |

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and Progress

The standards achieved by pupils are good in relation to their ages and abilities. Their results in national tests are at least in line with, and are often above, the national average for broadly equivalent maintained schools. Pupils make good progress in relation to their ages and abilities at each stage in the school; progress in individual lessons varies according to the stage and subject. Pupils of all abilities make gains in knowledge, understanding and practical and academic skills that are generally good in relation to their abilities.

Although numbers in most year groups are too low for comparisons of results to be statistically significant, at age 7, in national tests, attainment over the most recent three years in English and mathematics is well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. At age 11, in national tests, attainment overall is in line with the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools; in English it is far above, in science it is in line and in mathematics it is below the national average for broadly equivalent schools.

In the senior school, pupils' performance at age 14 in national tests in English, mathematics and science is well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained secondary schools. At age 16, results in public examinations at GCSE are also well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained secondary schools, which are maintained non-selective schools. It is a credit to the school, which has a wide ability range, that GCSE results in several subjects are in line with those of pupils in maintained selective schools. In 2003, results in English, science and mathematics at GCSE were broadly in line with the national average for maintained selective schools.

In the Foundation Stage, attainment is good. It was very good in a third and good in two-thirds of lessons seen. Most pupils under five will achieve, before their fifth birthdays, the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning specified nationally for five year olds.

In the junior school, in the work seen in lessons and in pupils' books, attainment was always at least in line with abilities, and often was good. Between ages 5 and 7, attainment was either good or in line with abilities in equal proportions. At age 7, attainment is good in English,

mathematics, science and in line with abilities in the humanities. Year 2 pupils plan stories well, and punctuate their writing correctly, they read scales to measure capacity with confidence and pupils are aware of the uses of electricity and the dangers and risks involved; they use technical vocabulary well. Between ages 7 and 11, attainment was good or high in the majority of lessons. At age 11, attainment is in line with pupils' abilities in mathematics and good in English, science and the humanities.

In the senior school, standards achieved by pupils in lessons were almost always at least in line with their abilities, and often were good. At age 14, attainment is in line with pupils' abilities in mathematics and science; it is good in English and the humanities. At age 16, attainment is in line with abilities in science and good in English, mathematics and the humanities.

In the Foundation Stage, children are in mixed ability groups; they make good progress. Children who have English as a second language all speak and understand English and also make good progress.

In the junior school, progress is good in relation to abilities. In English, mathematics and science, the rate of progress improves from Year 3 to 6.

In the senior school, progress is good overall from age 11 to 16. In lessons, progress is good in English and the humanities from Year 7 to Year 11 and is sound in mathematics and science. In English, speaking and listening skills improve particularly well and written work develops in maturity, enabling good progress in arts and humanities subjects. In mathematics, Year 9 pupils have good basic algebraic skills and by Year 11, pupils are working competently on revision papers. In science, Year 9 pupils understood the use of variables in their investigation of parachutes and by Year 11, experimental and investigational skills are further developed.

In the senior school, nationally standardised tests were introduced in Year 7 in 2002 and the information they provide indicates steady progress from Year 7 to 8. The results of national assessment tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 are compared with GCSE results in Year 11 to give a measure of the extent to which performance exceeds prediction as a whole, and for individual pupils. This measure of improvement is called 'value added' and official DfES statistics award a rating figure, which was very good in 2003, to the school. This indicates that the pupils in Year 11 in 2002/2003 made greater progress than might have been expected in the subjects above.

Pupils who learn more slowly and those with special educational needs, are well considered and provided for; their attainment is good and they make good progress in relation to their abilities. The most able make good progress and achieve appropriately high standards by Year 11. The attainment and progress of pupils from different cultural backgrounds, including those for whom English is not the only language spoken at home, are comparable with others in the school.

Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

The quality of pupils' attitudes to learning is good, and the quality of their personal development and of their behaviour is very good for the ages, abilities and aptitudes of junior and senior school pupils. Their positive response in lessons and very good relationships contribute significantly to the learning process and form a major strength of the school. Pupils show a mature respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, and are notably well-mannered and courteous.

Pupils are competent learners; they are well motivated and eager to succeed. They concentrate hard on the work in hand, they take pride in the presentation of their written work and they are good orally – good at communicating information and at asking questions that are often

thoughtful and perceptive. Listening skills are equally well developed, with a studious atmosphere prevailing in many of the lessons observed.

Pupils work together very effectively in pairs and small groups. They discuss ideas in a sensible and often lively manner, and they are as ready to listen to the views of others as they are to put forward their own suggestions. Increasingly, as they move up the school, they show that they have the ability to work independently. A good example of this was seen in some individual presentations on *Macbeth*, where pupils not only chose their own selection of themes and influences in the play but made their own choice of computer graphics to highlight, very successfully in most cases, the points that they were striving to emphasize.

Research skills in most subject areas develop steadily as girls move up the school, with the library providing useful material for them to use, in subjects such as art. However, most pupils are accustomed to conducting their research on a computer, at school as well as at home. Pupils throughout the junior school carry out simple research tasks and draw sensible conclusions from what they know.

Pupils show a mature respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others; they are prepared to listen to other people's views and respond positively to them. They thereby form very constructive relationships, both with one another and with their teachers. A strong rapport often exists between teachers and pupils.

Behaviour, both in and out of the classroom, is very good indeed; one pupil was observed running when she should have been walking, and that was the sum total of offences against the school rules seen during the entire course of the inspection! This is not to say, however, that pupils appeared to be down-trodden or subdued; plenty of friendliness and laughter were in evidence, and pupils were extremely polite and helpful, not just to adults but amongst themselves. Pupils showed a readiness to answer questions about the school and their own experience of it, both in the formal pupil interviews, with every year group well represented, and in informal discussion. Attitudes to the school are supportive, with pupils taking pride in their own work and in the school.

Attendance

The average rate of attendance is good. The school has no unauthorised absences. The high attendance enables pupils to take full advantage of their opportunities. After completion, the attendance registers are sent to the school office; absences are carefully followed up. Attendance registers comply with regulatory requirements. Instructions for lateness and all related procedures are clear. Pupils mainly arrive punctually to school and to lessons. Good practice was observed in some subjects, with registers being taken at the beginning of lessons in the senior school. The admissions register is up to date and efficiently kept. It complies with legal requirements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

The quality of teaching is good and contributes effectively to pupils' attainment and progress. In almost half the lessons observed the teaching was good, in a quarter it was very good and in a further quarter, it was sound. Virtually all the teaching was at least sound and a few lessons were excellent. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils at all stages of their life at school.

In the Foundation Stage, all the teaching was good or very good in almost equal proportions. In Years 1 and 2, teaching was sound in six-tenths and good in four-tenths of lessons. In Years 2 to 6, teaching was sound in a tenth, good in five-tenths and very good in four-tenths of lessons. In

Years 7 to 9, teaching was sound in four-tenths and good in four-tenths and very good in two-tenths of lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was sound in approximately a tenth, good in over seven-tenths and very good in over a tenth of lessons.

Teachers almost all have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and some very effective specialist teaching takes place. In mathematics, for example, the most able are encouraged to forge ahead while the less able are given discreet support and help. In music, the quality of the GCSE work owes a great deal to some very good teaching. In most cases, it is more than a secure knowledge that teachers possess: it is their real interest in and enjoyment of their subjects which are also communicated to their pupils.

Class management is good: discipline is effective, friendly and seemingly effortless. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost uniformly good or very good. A sensible balance is struck between friendliness and firmness; pupils say that they feel able to go to their teachers with any points they do not understand or if they have any problems.

The best teaching is characterised by the encouragement of independent thinking and an open mind, and also by high expectations, so that pupils are challenged and their understanding deepened. A fine example of this was seen in an inspiring English lesson where pupils were displaying skills of empathy and imagination much beyond what their chronological ages might have suggested was possible. Where teaching was less successful, pupils were allowed to play a more passive part in the learning process; they depended upon the mere transmission of knowledge from the teacher, rather than being persuaded to think for themselves.

The organisation and planning of lessons are thorough and efficient; they appropriately match the ages and ability levels of all pupils. The quality of the lesson plans seen during the inspection was high. Most lessons revealed a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils; this resulted in much questioning that was skilfully designed to deepen understanding, tactfully drawing out, helping and encouraging those who needed extra assistance, including those with special educational needs, and spurring on the most able.

Much of the best teaching, for example in the English department, makes constructive use of assessment and recording not only to keep track of and assist each pupil but as useful tools to inform and make any necessary changes in the curriculum. In some subjects, marking is not consistent and information from assessment is not used sufficiently to guide teaching. A notable example of good practice was seen in the Foundation Stage. Several departments in the senior part of the school choose to use computer records rather than mark books, with the aim of making the recording process both speedier and more efficient.

Little or no time is wasted. Lessons almost all start and finish promptly, and in most lessons the pace of the teaching is purposeful and brisk. This effective use of time is matched by an effective use of the resources available, and effective is a suitable word to describe the teaching seen over the period of the inspection; teaching was almost always at least effective, often better than that, and occasionally outstanding.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for teaching?

Yes.

Assessment and Recording

The quality of assessment and recording is good in the junior school and sound in the senior school. The methods used in the junior school are thorough and meet the needs of pupils well as they proceed up the school. In the senior school, external assessment procedures are efficient but internal systems are variable and the information gained from assessment is not yet used consistently to set targets for individuals or to contribute to curriculum development and planning. Marking is consistent and effective in most subjects.

In the Foundation Stage, initial and continual assessment takes place against the early learning goals and an integrated system of individual profiles is maintained. The Foundation Stage Profile is completed at the end of Reception for each child and forms a useful basis for Year 1 teachers to plan their work.

In the junior school, external and internal assessment is regular and thorough; records are kept by the class teachers and subject staff in their own mark books. Results of annual standardised tests measuring progress in mathematics and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) optional tests in English, mathematics and science are recorded in pupils' folders. Pupils sit the national assessment tests when they are 7 and again when they are 11 years old. Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) testing is also being introduced in Year 2. The 11-year-olds also take four other nationally standardised tests during Year 6 in preparation for transfer to the senior school. Applicants for Year 7 from outside the school take an entrance examination. All junior school pupils sit an internal assessment test at the end of each school year and the grades awarded for this are recorded on their annual report. Grades are based on the criteria set out in the national curriculum.

The arrangements for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs are effective and promote their educational progress well. In the junior school, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) teaches spelling to all Year 2 and, together with the class teachers, is able to discover problems. In the senior school, the SENCO teaches study skills to Year 8 and again, in consultation with form and subject teachers, is able to identify pupils with particular needs. Parents are requested to provide any information relevant to their daughters' needs on admission to the school.

Marking throughout the junior school is good. It is consistent, regular and not only evaluates the work but also gives the pupil an insight into her strengths and weaknesses. Different coloured stars are used to indicate high standards of work, effort and progress.

In the senior school, external assessment is regular. Nationally standardised tests were introduced in Year 7 in 2002 and are used in Years 7 and 8 to assess achievement and progress; national assessment tests in English, mathematics and science are taken at the end of Year 9. The results are analysed and made available to staff but are not yet used sufficiently to influence planning.

Internal systems of assessment and recording vary from department to department. The different systems work sufficiently well for some tracking of progress and achievement to take place throughout a year and from one year to another, but the information is not used consistently to set targets or contribute to curriculum development. Internal examinations take place twice yearly in February and June and the grades for these are recorded on the biannual school reports, as are grades for effort in each subject. The form teacher places a copy of each report, and also records extra-curricular achievements, in each girl's individual file while the subject teachers are responsible for entering grades on the progress sheet in each file. At the end of Year 11, each girl completes a record of all her achievements and her folder is then presented to her at final assembly.

Marking in the senior school is regular, consistent and constructive in most subjects. Remarks provide pupils with a good understanding of their standard and where improvement is needed. Where appropriate, marking and grading is commensurate with national criteria.

In both the junior and senior schools, the special educational needs co-ordinator gives twice-yearly standardised assessments to pupils receiving help and keeps detailed records in order that the progress of each of these pupils is carefully monitored at all times. The information is shared with other staff, taking confidentiality into consideration. No explicit whole-school programme is in place for identifying the most able and monitoring their progress and achievement, although the standardised test results enable such pupils to be identified.

However, individual staff are particularly aware and good at providing these pupils with challenging extension work. The school should consider introducing a whole school identification and support system for such pupils and should monitor their progress regularly to ensure they are achieving their full potential.

Pupils are not involved in self-assessment or setting targets for themselves to any significant extent. With the exception of one or two departments in the senior school, the process of assessment and recording is not formally linked to the planning of the curriculum. The systems and procedures for assessing and recording the achievement, progress and needs of pupils require further development to ensure that assessment information contributes to individual progress and to curriculum development and planning, especially in the senior school.

Curriculum

The curriculum offers a satisfactorily balanced education, suited to the needs of all pupils. It contributes effectively to their intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development. The curriculum is sufficiently broad to prepare pupils adequately for the next stage of their education; it provides equality of access and the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make appropriate progress. A modest range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum.

The Foundation Stage curriculum covers the required six areas of learning. Short-, medium- and long-term plans provide good continuity and progression throughout this stage. The pupils' experience is enriched by a regular flow of interesting visitors and visits to places of interest.

The curriculum from Year 1 onwards is based on the national curriculum. In the junior school, pupils receive a balanced education which includes French. In the senior school, the curriculum leads into the syllabuses for GCSE. The school regularly considers the effectiveness of its curriculum provision and takes great care to maximise pupils' opportunities, within the constraints imposed by the listed buildings and small site. The emphasis in physical education, for example, is largely on games which take place at a local sports complex, whilst provision for art and music is possible within the school buildings and is relatively generous. The subject of design and technology does not have a high profile, especially in the senior school where only a textiles component is taught and this is limited to Years 7 and 8. Time allowance is low and space and facilities are limited in this subject.

Junior school documentation is mostly thorough and consistent. The senior school documents show less uniformity. Some departments have well thought-out policies and schemes of work that run seamlessly through the junior and senior years into appropriate GCSE provision. Other departments have yet to co-ordinate their syllabuses to ensure continuity throughout the school.

The school caters well for a broad range of ability. Good provision is made for those who need, for example, help for dyslexic problems. Provision for the academically gifted is less formalized but is satisfactory.

Once identified, the school provides well for pupils with dyslexic problems, together with a number of girls who are academically very weak, at no expense to their parents. They are given two or three specialised lessons per week on either an individual basis or in very small groups. The school's policy is also to support these pupils as much as possible in the classroom, therefore subject and class teachers are informed of progress and given help in providing these pupils with appropriate work alongside their peers in the classroom. In mathematics very small groups are withdrawn for extra help and it may be more beneficial for a larger number of weaker pupils to be withdrawn together, as the SENCO is a mathematician.

The curriculum is enriched by a limited range of activities including lunch-hour and after-school clubs, some of which are deservedly popular and effective. A satisfactory range of outside visits and residential trips also support areas of the curriculum.

The school's programme of studies would be strengthened by departmental co-ordinators agreeing a standard document style to include aspects specific to Harvington, such as timings, resources, provision for the academically gifted and those needing specific support and, where appropriate, risk assessments. A senior member of staff with a specific brief to oversee and regularly review the curriculum would further contribute to the continuity and progress of the pupils' learning. An increase in time and an improvement in facilities for design and technology are required.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum?

Yes.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

Overall, the number, quality, and experience of teaching and non-teaching staff are good and contribute appropriately to the quality of education provided and to the educational standards achieved. Policies and procedures for induction, appraisal, training and professional development are efficient, effective and appropriately funded.

Staff are well qualified in their teaching subjects, nearly all have a teaching qualification and many are highly experienced in this school and elsewhere. They are deployed well, with specialist teachers used effectively in all areas of the school. A well-qualified special educational needs co-ordinator is employed three days per week in term time. The work of the non-teaching staff is effective and supportive; their contribution is highly regarded by teachers. The number of teaching staff is adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum throughout the school. Staffing ratios for children under 5 are in line with current legislation. The combination of qualifications and experience of the teaching and non-teaching staff makes a significant contribution to the quality of education provided by the school and the educational standards achieved.

Appropriate and secure procedures are followed and checks are made through the Criminal Records Bureau before confirming the appointment of all new staff. No newly-qualified teachers were on the staff at the time of the inspection; the school states that it will use the official induction scheme when necessary. Teachers new to the school are given suitable guidance to help them settle in.

A well-considered system of appraisal is in place for all teaching staff; it includes observation of teaching as part of the annual review. Non-teaching staff have an effective appraisal system organised by the bursar. The staff development programme is linked to the annual review and feeds into the school development plan. In-service training is good; it has been provided for all teaching and non-teaching staff on a variety of issues including child protection. A specific annual budget, sufficient for its purpose, is set for staff development, including in-service training days. Outside training may be partly or completely funded if requirements overlap the school's development plan.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff?

Yes.

Resources for Learning

The books, equipment, materials and ICT resources which are needed to support the teaching, learning, study and recreation of pupils at all levels are good in quantity, quality and organisation and are used effectively.

The range, availability, quality and accessibility of ICT resources are good. Overall, the provision and use of ICT supports teaching and learning well, and the number of computers is in line with national recommendations. A new suite of nineteen personal computers, with broadband access to the internet, is networked with those in administrative and senior staff offices, the staff room, libraries and careers room. A further nineteen computers, not networked, are distributed throughout individual classrooms; they include those in the Foundation Stage and laptops used in science and modern foreign languages. Five further computers in the staffroom and subject offices offer effective facilities to teachers but the use made of ICT by staff is uneven. English lessons, for example, are enhanced by good use of ICT for presentations and for word-processing, notably in drafting GCSE work, whilst the mathematics department has no computer and very little software. Audio-visual equipment and digital cameras are accessible when required. Photocopiers are well used by teaching staff and administrators. Pupils use ICT effectively for research in all areas of the curriculum.

The SENCO's specialised resources are good, including those designed and made to help individual pupils with their particular needs, but she does not have a computer and the use of a dedicated computer in her room would be a great asset.

The range, availability, quality and accessibility of all other resources are good. Ample stationery, books and equipment in good condition are used effectively to support pupils' learning and studying at all levels. A suitable range of textbooks, equipment and apparatus supports science teaching and learning across the whole school. The music department is well supported by a wide range of percussion instruments and several keyboards. The art department is well equipped for two-dimensional art and modelling. Classrooms, including nearly all designated subject rooms, have sufficient equipment to enable a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. The resources for pupils with special educational needs are also good and contribute to the effective support of pupils withdrawn from classes. Resources for pupils in the Foundation Stage are of good quality and are versatile. A range of indoor and outdoor play equipment is accessible to all pupils within the younger age range, although additional storage would further extend this accessibility.

The school has a new school minibus. Coaches are also hired to enable a range of excursions to take place to games fixtures, museums and theatres. An effective budget system is in place for each area of the school. The budget allocation is reviewed annually and is linked to the overall school development plan. Needs are identified by heads of subjects and a request system ensures that all departments are well resourced.

Libraries

Library facilities offer appropriate support for the curriculum and are used effectively. The range, availability, quality and accessibility of library stock and facilities are sufficient; they satisfactorily support the curriculum and pupils' attainment, progress and quality of learning.

Links with the academic staff ensure that subject libraries are suitably stocked, with new titles being added as requested; in some areas, such as careers, separate libraries exist. The figures for the number of books in both libraries, and the annual budget for purchasing new stock, are well in line with those recommended by the School Library Association. After a major cull of old or outdated stock in the senior library some time ago, staff broadly adhere to the principle that for all new books purchased a similar number of damaged or out-of-date books will be removed.

The premises and stock of both libraries are well managed. The junior library makes good use of a computerised system for keeping records of stock and for lending books. A similar system in the senior library, at present run manually, with pupil librarians giving useful assistance, was awaiting the arrival of new software at the time of the inspection.

Both libraries remain open during the school day, and the junior library was seen to be busy and popular; conversation with pupils suggested that the senior library was not so frequently visited, mostly because of pressure of work, but the library register showed a steady stream of books being withdrawn.

The junior library, in particular, with its cheerful displays and child-friendly furniture, succeeds in encouraging younger pupils to read both for information and for pleasure, and even if some of the stock is rather dog-eared and tired-looking, that does suggest that those books have been frequently read. The senior library is not so obviously appealing so far as its stock of contemporary fiction goes, but it does have some good reference sections, such as the shelves devoted to art.

Despite the constraints of size and space which affect both the junior and the senior libraries, they fulfil a broadly satisfactory role in providing resources for private study. The libraries are both too limited in space to allow for the provision of ICT facilities for research, though each room possesses a computer, essentially as a tool for the more efficient managing of the library.

Premises and Accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. They have been continually adapted and upgraded to make them as suitable as possible for their purpose. They satisfactorily support the life and work of the school and play their part in creating the ambience and friendliness which is a feature of the school.

The three listed Victorian buildings and their small immediate grounds provide a secure, happy environment but impose constraints on capital development and the curriculum. Nonetheless, sufficient rooms of adequate size support curricular provision, teaching and learning. These include specialist teaching rooms, for example, a science laboratory, a junior and a senior library, art, DT and music rooms, a very well used ICT suite and a room for special educational needs. The science laboratory has recently been entirely refurbished and much equipment has been renewed; with the adjacent preparation room, it provides appropriate and safe facilities.

All necessary services are in place, including sufficient cloakrooms. The buildings are in good repair and decorative order. A seven-year rolling plan of redecoration and refurbishment is carefully followed. Local sports facilities are used to supplement the limited space available for physical education in the small multi-purpose hall and the modest grounds. Space in the school grounds is limited but careful and effective planning, such as staggered break times, enables the school to provide sufficient recreational opportunities. Very good use is made of appropriate wall space for the display of a wide variety of pupils' work from all year groups.

Careful planning has enabled appropriate, sympathetic modification and adaptation so that the best possible use is made of the buildings and grounds. The property is owned by the school.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation?

Yes.

Links with Parents and the Community

The school has developed a good partnership with the parents and worthwhile links with the local and wider community. Formal and informal relationships with parents are good. Parents are well informed about the school and about their child's work and progress.

Formal communication between school and home is frequent and regular. Half-termly newsletters are informative and the annual school magazine provides insight into the range of pupils' work and activities. The attractive prospectus has clear information including the terms and conditions for admission, a complaints procedure for parents, which complies with legal requirements, and a home-school partnership agreement. Informal contact is evident in the home-reading books used in the infant and junior school and in the homework diaries.

The nursery has good regular contact with parents through its 'open door' policy and provides a written report and an open evening. Yearly written reports in the junior school provide detailed information about achievements and progress. They are supplemented by parent consultation afternoons in the autumn and spring terms. The senior school provides twice-yearly reports and an annual consultation evening for each class. Parents may meet staff at other times by appointment. The meetings and reports provide a good framework to regularly inform parents about the pupils' attainment and progress and about the curriculum. Further information evenings are held for curriculum issues such as the Year 6 national tests and entry into the senior school. Good information is available on careers guidance.

The SENCO draws up an individual educational plan twice a year for each girl who has particular learning needs and a copy of this is sent home. Parents are encouraged to discuss their daughter's needs and to attend review meetings.

Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed positive views on the school, including satisfaction with its worthwhile values and with their children's attainment and progress. A few were concerned about the opportunities to discuss attainment and progress but, given the size of the school and the importance placed on relationships at all levels, the inspectors considered that senior staff were sufficiently available for discussion.

Parents have good opportunities to be involved in activities in the school. The Parents' Association organises and runs a series of activities for pupils and parents. Parents are invited to accompany educational visits and activities and are always given briefings before residential trips. Parents are involved in the 'Getting to know you' evening for new parents and are invited into school to talk to pupils, at different ages, about their jobs. Parents are also invited to attend class assemblies and a good number come to watch their children.

Links are well established with two local churches and with a club for senior citizens, who are entertained at school and visited at home. The gymnasium is available free of charge to local groups. A local charity maintains an ancient church now used for cultural and historical research purposes and pupils visit this to exhibit art, to study and to sing. Plans for a partnership with a local primary school are well in hand. Year 11 pupils have one week of work experience each September. Further afield, the school has links with a school in Soweto, through personal connections with a teacher there, and a long-standing link with a sponsored child in Kenya. Language exchanges promote further valuable links with the wider community.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the provision of information?

Yes.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the manner in which complaints are to be handled?

Yes.

PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

Pupils' Personal Development

Provision for personal development is very good throughout the school. Through the formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities, pupils have very good opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, cultural and social awareness, enabling them to make mature judgements and decisions for their age.

Spiritual development is good and it contributes to the ethos of the school. Pupils gain a broad knowledge and insight into values and beliefs by which to live, and they learn to make informed decisions. They develop personal values and learn to appreciate and understand the beliefs and values of others within a strong community where a diversity of cultures and faiths is represented. 'Circle times', which are quiet discussion times for younger pupils, and assemblies, contribute significantly to the spiritual life of the school. Religious festivals are acknowledged, special celebration assemblies are held and a grace is said daily before lunch. The programme of religious education is comprehensive; visits are made to different places of worship and pupils are encouraged to reflect on spiritual issues when studying different faiths. Their responses are knowledgeable and thoughtful, based on previous learning and personal experience.

Moral development throughout the school is very good. Through the curriculum and other aspects of school life, the school makes very good provision for moral education, enabling pupils to develop a moral code and to learn to make responsible judgements. Members of staff are good role models and treat both each other and their pupils with respect. Pupils are taught courtesy and to know the difference between right and wrong from their early years. An effective and comprehensive programme of PSHE is taught throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to care about each other, the wider community and for their environment. They support various charities and have well-established links with some elderly people in the local community.

Cultural development in the school is very good and is underpinned by the religious education (RE) and PSHE programmes. The diverse community offers a wealth of rich cultural traditions and opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. The curriculum is supported in a variety of ways, including dual language books, a selection of appropriate toys and games and visits to places of interest such as art galleries and museums at home and abroad.

Social development is very good with common courtesies and good manners expected and encouraged at all times from the earliest years. Mutual consideration is evident between all staff and pupils. Social and practical skills are developed at lunch and snack times where younger pupils learn to share and develop good manners. They learn to help each other, as when older pupils assist with younger children and paired reading. All pupils are taught to care for their own environment and consider wider world issues; for example, pencils are collected for children in less fortunate circumstances. All staff are fully involved in the social development of their pupils, creating a very caring and considerate community. Pupils have valuable opportunities to accept responsibility in a variety of school roles such as becoming a games captain or a prefect, representing their form as a member of the junior or senior school council, even being 'Today's Class Helper' at Foundation Stage.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils?

Yes.

Pastoral Care, including Welfare and Health & Safety

The pastoral care of pupils is very good, providing very effective support and guidance for all, based on a variety of systems. This high standard of pastoral care makes a significant contribution to the educational standards and personal growth achieved by pupils. Their welfare, including health and safety, is paramount and is appropriately and well safeguarded. Measures to promote and safeguard the health and well-being of pupils are successfully implemented.

The systems in place include a wide range of appropriate policies and procedures which are consistently implemented and make a positive and effective contribution to the development of each pupil. These systems form a strong framework for all members of the school community. All members of staff, regardless of their remit, are committed to the care of their pupils, who develop confidence and high self-esteem. The procedure for the monitoring of academic standards, however, varies in quality and frequency; strengthening this area would further benefit existing systems.

The quality of support, advice and guidance is good. Advice is provided for pupils at varying stages of their education, such as in readiness for Year 10 or sixth-form choices, thus enabling them to move into the next phase with confidence and to make appropriate and informed decisions. Parents are involved in consultation with teachers as appropriate. Those pupils requiring educational support to ensure that they achieve their potential are identified and after appropriate discussion with parents are given additional or extension work.

A well-stocked careers room is accessible to pupils and the good advice and support of an experienced careers teacher is readily available. Almost all pupils move on to higher education after an appropriate period of study in a sixth form; the school continues to offer support to former pupils. A detailed programme of PSCE, including study skills, contributes significantly to the success of this transition.

Disciplinary systems are very good and effective. Measures taken are very positive, fair and effective; they are understood by pupils. Procedures to deal with inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, are efficient. A wide range of policies and procedures underpin the pastoral framework. Detailed and balanced records are securely maintained; good work and endeavour are suitably acknowledged in class and in assemblies.

Health and safety arrangements are good. The school employs a full-time, paramedically qualified matron, who plays a key role in health and safety provision and also gives caring and understanding assistance to those requiring it. A quiet and private rest area is available under her supervision. No unauthorised medication is stocked at the school and prescription items such as inhalers are stored appropriately and securely. Up-to-date lists are maintained with regard to asthma and allergies, and staff are trained in the correct use of epi-pens. The school provides a rolling programme of first-aid training to ensure that a good number of qualified staff are available. First-aid boxes are suitably stocked and located; a list of emergency contact numbers is kept up to date and readily available. Medical records and details of incidents and accidents are securely and confidentially kept, using official documentation where appropriate.

An awareness of healthy eating is encouraged; younger pupils have fruit and water at snack time and the school is embarking on a trial period of allowing pupils to 'buy in' healthy packed lunches from a catering firm. Pupils are looking forward to this experiment with interest and, with the staff, will evaluate the situation in due course. The school has no catering facilities, therefore pupils bring their own packed lunches. The multi-purpose hall serves as a dining room and is supervised by a team of conscientious and caring ladies who know the pupils very well.

Child protection policies and procedures are efficient, with a nominated member of staff dealing with any concerns and liaising with the local authority child protection committee when necessary. Regular training has taken place and members of staff are familiar with indicators and procedures. Any information is retained in a secure and confidential manner.

Comprehensive safety policies are fully supported by staff, and where appropriate, pupils. The school is very conscious of its health and safety responsibilities and aims to comply quickly with changes in these regulations. Fire precautions, for instance, are up to date; the main electrical circuits are receiving certification and the school keeper has recently qualified to test the portable electrical appliances 'in house'. The school takes the minimisation of risk very seriously. Staff carry out risk assessments and appropriate remedial action is taken as potential problems are identified. The school has a comprehensive special educational needs and learning support policy together with a new disabilities policy to meet the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act 2001.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils?

Yes.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Governance and Management

The school benefits from good, effective and supportive leadership and management. The governors and the senior management of the school have worked hard together to ensure that the school's aims are met, that a suitable quality of education is provided and that secure financial planning is in place to provide the resources required for teaching and learning, both now and in the future. The arrangements for governance and management provide a suitable framework for the effective administration of the school, its clear educational direction and its future development. The school has achieved the 'Investors in People' award. Pupils achieve good academic standards in relation to their abilities.

The governing body, which includes parents and teachers, is very representative, with members bringing their own specialist knowledge. The governors offer great loyalty, interest and commitment in addition to supportive professional, financial and educational experience. They are aware of their legal and financial responsibilities and have correct procedures in place; expenditure is tightly controlled and its effectiveness is monitored. The school volunteered to participate in an ISI pilot scheme whereby a bursar from another school visits the bursar's department and acts as a financial advisor. The recommendations made by the financial advisor received serious consideration and appropriate documents were written in response. The governors are consulted about policies and planning; the skills of their sub-committees have ensured the success of the continuing programme of refurbishment and development of facilities which has contributed to an improvement in the quality of education and pupils' attainment.

The day-to-day running of the school is delegated by the governing body to the head, who gives committed leadership and is very well supported by the deputy head. The senior management team, particularly the head and deputy head, gives good educational and pastoral leadership and direction to the work of the school. It is a relatively new committee with each member representing a different sector of the school and reporting to the headmistress. The Foundation Stage is particularly well managed but the roles of staff at an intermediate level, who have responsibility for subjects, are not all well developed across the school, especially in the junior school. Most subjects in the senior school are well managed and effectively led; the day-to-day responsibilities of the heads of subjects are generally taken seriously. Expenditure on subjects is monitored and staff are deployed to make the best use of their experience and expertise. The quality of the teaching is monitored by the senior staff through the school's review system. The formal review procedures for academic and support staff, although not always rigorously followed, are good.

Overall, within the school day, the senior management team and teaching staff provide good role models and support their pupils well, giving them security and a sense of purpose and enabling them to achieve their academic potential. However, the constraints on space for sports and the lack of involvement of staff in out-of-school clubs and activities result in limited opportunities for the girls to enjoy and excel in extra-curricular activities to any significant extent.

The school has very appropriate aims and values which underpin its daily life. It has a recently revised range of policies, including complaints procedures which comply with new regulations. A very comprehensive, clear and relevant whole-school development plan, with forward financial planning, is in place and staff are expected to produce development plans for their subjects.

The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient; the school is well organised and has effective internal and external communication and other procedures. The efficiency, kindness and courtesy of the reception and all administration and other staff are very evident. A definite sense of team work is apparent. Parents are appreciative of the caring, supportive ethos and the happy, purposeful atmosphere in which their children are educated and grow in confidence.

It is recommended that the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders and co-ordinators are more clearly defined, especially in the junior school in order to strengthen middle management.

ACHIEVEMENT AND QUALITY IN SUBJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Junior School

The Foundation Stage

The school makes good provision for children at this stage of education and the Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. The coeducational environment is rich in its diversity of culture, which enhances learning opportunities for all.

Standards are good in relation to children's ability and most are expected to achieve the early learning goals in all six areas of learning by the age of five. Attainment and progress are always good and sometimes high. Children's behaviour and learning are very good.

Personal and Social Development

Provision in this area is very good; this is an area of strength, and attainment and progress are good. Children behave well and are confident and happy. They display good, positive attitudes to their learning, showing confidence and enthusiasm. They learn to listen well, to concentrate and to follow instructions. Children are involved in decision-making and learn to act independently and also to be co-operative and share and take turns with their peers. They manage their own needs, help each other and care for their environment.

Children learn to respect the feelings of others and develop an awareness of other cultures, particularly within their own society. They are able to express thoughts and emotions, for example at 'circle time'. A sense of responsibility develops with simple tasks such as acting as 'Today's Class Helper'.

Language and Literacy

Attainment and progress in basic skills in this area are very good. Children learn to listen and to respond well in discussions. Very firm foundations are laid in reading and writing skills, with children responding very quickly to phonics, as when learning about the letter 'l' through the

character of 'Lucy Lamp Light'. They are heard to read regularly and enjoy a weekly visit to the school's junior library. Emergent writing develops as children progress through Reception. They enjoy rhymes and stories and participate fully, with language developing further through role-play. Visits to places of interest are planned to support many areas of the curriculum. A recent visit to the science museum gave rise to a discussion about molecules and children related this to a 'Big Book' story about a storm. Children benefit from some specialist input in French and participate fully in oral sessions.

Mathematics

Attainment and progress in this area are good. Many opportunities are provided for children to develop an understanding of number sequences and patterns. Every opportunity is used to consolidate development in this area, as at snack time when dividing fruit or counting and adding numbers at register time.

Mathematical language is extended well and concepts of time, space and shape are developed. Practical activities are used to reinforce learning and simple problem-solving situations extend learning in this area.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Attainment and progress are good; this area of the curriculum enjoys very good provision. Topics encourage children to develop a broad and extensive view of the world around them. Children learn to develop an enquiring attitude and to notice and compare changes over time. They are encouraged to bring to school items related to their weekly topic; the theme of 'Transport' resulted in a collection of toy vehicles and culminated in a sponsored pedal push! Children have good access to headphones and story tapes, and to a computer which they particularly enjoy using to create designs.

Creative Development

The programme for creative development is very good and leads to good attainment and progress. Children benefit from a wide range of creative activities including painting, baking and music. One such exciting session was observed when children were learning about the dynamic quality of sound and were exploring their collection of musical instruments to make loud and soft sounds. The numerous songs and rhymes link effectively with many areas of the curriculum such as mathematics or language.

Physical Development

Provision for physical development is very good and attainment and progress are good. The school gymnasium and an outdoor play area add scope to the curriculum. Children use their skills in everyday activities as well as when they are involved in specific lessons. They are confident using a range of simple tools such as pencils, scissors and brushes. They learn to cut, paste, thread, balance, jump, skip, hop, throw and catch balls. They use indoor and outdoor apparatus in directed and free-choice activity.

Many topics of the curriculum embrace all six areas of learning, providing children with reinforcement, stimulation, enjoyment and very good learning opportunities. One example was a very good session about 'The Gingerbread Man' where children enjoyed many different experiences. They sang, spoke, counted, measured, smelt ginger, mixed ingredients, rolled out, used cutters, learned about hygiene and safety, tasted and ate their results.

Other Aspects of the Foundation Stage

Teaching is always good and often very good. Sessions are very well planned to motivate and stimulate children. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject areas and adopt a calm,

firm approach. They set a good level of expectation and challenge to children, appropriate to their abilities. Good, effective use is made of time, space and resources. A balance of activities exists, including those that are teacher-directed and those that are chosen by the child. The learning environment is attractive and stimulating and includes displays of children's work.

Progress and development are carefully monitored and detailed records are maintained. Systems are in place for formal parental contact as well as informal contact. Parents are kept well informed on a regular basis and are free to discuss any concerns they may have.

Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Well-qualified assistants very ably support them, creating a cohesive and consistent staff team. Staff keep up to date by attending training courses. Specialist teachers introduce children to some subject areas, such as French. Staffing ratios are appropriate and all staff are very effectively deployed.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the children. Detailed short-, medium- and long-term planning uses the strengths of all staff. All children have equal access to the curriculum and full regard is paid to part-time attendance.

The Nursery and Reception rooms are conveniently situated adjacent to each other on the ground floor of an attractive Victorian building. The limited outdoor provision is used wisely and imaginatively. Safety and security measures are a priority.

Nursery and Reception staff meet regularly under the effective and enthusiastic management of a Foundation Stage co-ordinator. The Year 1 teacher attends planning meetings to ensure continuity. Leadership is good; the department is well run and organised. Staff create an effective and happy environment in which children thrive and develop.

English

Pupils generally achieve good standards and make good progress in relation to their abilities. Pupils at age 7 have satisfactory standards in reading and they have good speaking, listening and writing skills. By the age of 11, pupils have attained a very good standard of reading, very good speaking and listening skills and good standards of writing.

In 2003, results in national tests at the age of 7 were above the national average in reading and well above in writing and, at the age of 11, pupils' attainment in English was far above the average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools.

At the age of 7, pupils' standard of reading is in line with their abilities. Reading is practised daily at school and at home. Pupils read with enjoyment and confidence, building on the very good foundation laid in the Early Years, with its emphasis on phonics and word building. They speak clearly, answer questions enthusiastically and generally organise their ideas well. A Year 2 class was observed building up a simple character profile and discussing sensibly the character's likes and dislikes with the teacher and each other. They can sequence a familiar story and are familiar with fairy tales and fables. Pupils use a wide range of writing styles including news, poetry and information. Wall displays showed poetry dealing with familiar topics, such as 'My favourite colour' and 'People in our families'. Pupils use normal writing conventions such as capital letters, full stops and exclamation marks. They can spell simple words phonetically and can spell a number of high frequency words. Handwriting is beginning to develop into a clear legible style by the end of Year 2. It is helped by regular practice of correct letter formation.

By the age of 11, pupils have attained a very good standard of reading and good standards of writing. A strong emphasis on vocabulary work has developed good comprehension skills. They retrieve relevant information, use technical vocabulary accurately and understand dramatic terms. Pupils write confidently using a wide variety of writing styles, for example poetry,

traditional stories, play scripts and dialogue. Speaking and listening skills are very good. In a Year 6 drama lesson involving radio and telephone conversation, pupils spoke spontaneously and listened intelligently. Pupils are offered many opportunities to promote their verbal and auditory skills in group work, role play and assemblies. A Year 4 class was observed in assembly performing Roald Dahl's 'Matilda' with tremendous dramatic effect.

Pupils make sound progress in lessons in relation to their abilities in Years 1 and 2. Progress in lessons is reflected in pupils' writing books; they are steadily developing their understanding of the functions of nouns, verbs and adjectives, helped by the strong emphasis on grammar. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6. Their understanding of grammar and the structure of language develops well. Notebooks show that pupils write increasingly complex sentences. They use similes, metaphors and alliteration. They use dialogue with increasing confidence. Pupils with special needs make good progress in all year groups. They are helped by the good support offered by the special educational needs co-ordinator, who acts on the profile of pupils' strengths and weaknesses, drawn up by the class teachers, and also acts on concerns raised by parents. Emphasis on reading and vocabulary ensures that pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress in relation to their abilities.

Learning and behaviour are generally very good. Pupils are well motivated and respond positively to the good teaching. They concentrate on their work and are not discouraged when it is challenging. A Year 5 class studying the story of English were initially puzzled by the old English used in the extract from Beowulf but eventually succeeded in identifying some of the words, to their great satisfaction. Relationships with the teacher and each other are courteous and friendly. Pupils' work is well presented. They become increasingly competent in using computers to improve their learning, for example, when redrafting their work or accessing information. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident learners and have developed their independent learning skills. A Year 6 class was observed selecting information from surveys and extending their critical understanding of the effect of advertisements in their own lives.

The quality of teaching is mainly good. The teaching extends the pupils' knowledge and develops their individual learning skills. A Year 4 class responded positively to their total immersion in poetry; they discussed their own fears and, helped by very good teaching, identified vocabulary that contributed to the atmosphere in John Rice's poem *Big Fears*. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives understood by pupils; they proceed at a good pace and are suitably resourced. Well-chosen visits enrich the curriculum. Support is given to individual pupils when needed. In the best lessons, able pupils are challenged, particularly in Years 4 to 6 where specialist teachers are employed. Written work is marked regularly and suggestions on how to improve are discussed and on occasions noted in pupils' books.

Assessment and recording procedures are mainly good and are used to promote learning. Careful reading records are kept and samples of individual pupils' work are maintained and used to inform progress, and when appropriate, to identify pupils' learning difficulties. The leadership and management of the subject are uneven. In Years 3 to 6, management by the subject co-ordinator is good. It is effective, though informal, mostly through discussion in the staffroom. However, management of Years 1 and 2 is lacking; these years are not involved in junior school planning procedures to any significant extent and it would improve continuity and progression to include them. The work of all year groups is supported by appropriate schemes of work but these are not sufficiently detailed, especially in the lower years.

Mathematics

By the age of 7, most pupils achieve good standards; they make good progress in relation to their abilities in Years 1 and 2. At age 11, pupils achieve standards in line with their abilities; between Years 3 and 6, they make sound progress in relation to their abilities.

In the national tests taken in 2003 by seven-year-olds, attainment was far above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. Results in national tests at age 11 in 2003 were below the national average but in line with the ability of the group. Results in previous years were above the national average.

In the lessons observed and the work scrutinised, the attainment of pupils at age 7 is mostly good in relation to their abilities. At age 11, attainment is at least in line with pupils' abilities and sometimes good. A Year 2 class capably measured length, mass and capacity in standard metric units and also read from a scale where some of the numbers were deliberately missing. Year 2 and 3 pupils have a good understanding of mathematical language. A Year 5 class could distinguish different types of angles from one another and measure these using the appropriate terminology and a Year 6 class understood how to find the areas of rectangles and triangles.

Throughout the junior school, pupils generally make sound progress in relation to their abilities in mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. They develop confidence and accuracy in using the four basic operations with quite large numbers. They draw on previous work and record answers clearly. Mental mathematics skills are developed well.

Those who have difficulty understanding concepts are withdrawn from some of the lessons in order to be helped by the special educational needs co-ordinator, who is a mathematician and therefore has a very good understanding of their needs. Very good use is made of practical mathematical resources in these lessons. The most-able pupils are given extension work that is challenging and suitable for their ability. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds were not observed to be disadvantaged in any way and make similar progress to the others, according to their abilities.

The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is good overall. In the majority of classes, pupils are very well behaved; they are quiet, attentive and well-motivated. In a few classes, pupils have difficulty in maintaining concentration. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are mostly very good. Pupils wait patiently for help and ask sensible and relevant questions. Their class and homework books are neat and pupils take pride in their work.

The quality of mathematics teaching in the junior school is good. Teachers give careful, patient explanations and constant reinforcement. Questioning is used well to challenge and also to consolidate and check that pupils understand. Lessons are well planned with consideration given to the needs of pupils with different levels of ability; teachers have a good rapport with and understanding of their pupils.

The mathematics curriculum follows the national curriculum and good use is made of ICT facilities whenever possible. Annual assessment tests are held at the end of the year. However, assessment and recording of results are not yet used to plan the future curriculum for mathematics.

The leadership and management of mathematics are effective but informal and would be improved by more formal meetings and procedures. Staff in the junior and senior school meet regularly and liaison between the two schools is good as one member of staff teaches in both. Textbooks and other resources are mostly up to date. Classrooms are bright, pleasant and good displays of pupils' work add interest.

Science

Pupils in the junior school achieve good standards in science in relation to their ages and abilities and make good progress overall.

Results in national tests at age 11 in science are in line with or just above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained schools.

In lessons observed and work scrutinised, the attainment of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good in relation to their abilities. At age 7, pupils are aware of the uses of electricity. They read and interpret pictures in terms of danger and risk and use appropriate technical language to describe their ideas. At age 11, pupils are technically well versed, handling terms such as bacteria, micro-organisms, decay and toxin fluently and with good understanding.

The progress of pupils in science in Years 1 to 6 is good in relation to their abilities. Year 2 pupils rapidly reinforced their knowledge of electrical safety as they matched pictures of potential dangers with appropriate electrical phrases on cards. In Year 6, good progress was made in understanding the rapid rate of bacterial cell division and also the process of vaccination.

Learning and behaviour in the junior school are good. Pupils are observant, ask questions with enthusiasm, concentrate, listen carefully to instructions and are generally very eager and interested. Pupils work together well in pairs and small groups, sharing results and equipment; they enjoy being challenged to research and think independently. For example, Year 2 pupils worked out why planning regulations forbid electric sockets in bathrooms. Year 3 pupils helped each other to pronounce difficult scientific terms that they found in their dictionaries. Pupils respond very well when the teaching is very good. In Year 6, a sense of awe was created by a calculation of the possible number of bacteria formed after a single bacterium had divided every twenty minutes for twenty-four hours.

Teaching in the junior school is good. Lesson objectives are made very clear and lessons are carefully planned; lesson pace is brisk. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and make lessons challenging and interesting, especially when relating them to everyday life or topics in other subjects. In Year 3, pupils were encouraged to make good use of descriptive words and they successfully linked adjectives with appropriate scientific materials, such as 'dull stone' and 'transparent glass'. In Year 6, pupils were brought to understand the significance of tooth decay and competently handle the concept of 'bad' bacteria, which linked with the PSICHE topic of 'Keeping Healthy'. Relationships and control are good, with thought given to adapting tasks for pupils who learn more slowly. Resources, including dictionaries, are used thoughtfully and well.

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Science planning and teaching schemes follow the national curriculum closely. However, insufficient use is made of information from assessment, recording and marking to influence curriculum development and planning. A suitable range of textbooks, equipment and apparatus supports science teaching and learning.

Geography and History

Pupils achieve good standards in history and geography in relation to their ages and ability at both 7 and 11 and they make good progress throughout the junior school.

In lessons observed and work scrutinised, the attainment of pupils is good. Year 2 pupils compared fire-fighting methods today with those used in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Year 4 pupils had a very good understanding of the class system in Victorian times and Year 6 pupils had a thorough understanding of the importance of famous Ancient Greek philosophers and writers. In geography, Years 5 and 6 showed a good awareness and understanding of world geography and the interaction between people and the environment.

Progress is good overall in lessons in relation to pupils' ability. In history, Year 2 pupils are developing an awareness of the past and how to use different sources of information. Year 4 made rapid progress in understanding the conditions in a Victorian match factory and Year 6 quickly learned about Archimedes' inventions through practical experiments. In geography, Year 3 made good progress in their understanding of wind symbols and measuring instruments. Year 5 were developing their understanding of the logistics of moving goods

across continents and Year 6 made good progress in understanding how a rain shadow is formed.

Teaching is good; in one lesson it was excellent. Teachers have high, though appropriate, expectations of their pupils. The management of pupils and discipline are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan effectively. Very good use is made of time and resources. Primary sources are used well to extend and consolidate pupils' knowledge of the subjects. In a Year 6 lesson, a picture and quotation of Archimedes "Give me a place to stand and I will move the Earth" enabled pupils to broaden their knowledge of the Ancient Greeks. Teachers use good questions to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Outside visits to museums and appropriate fieldwork are valuable in promoting pupils' learning. For example, a Year 3 class studying climate and temperature extended their knowledge of wind direction and its measurement by excellent fieldwork, using their own simply constructed weather vanes.

Pupils respond well to the good teaching. They co-operate well with their teachers and each other. They show interest and enthusiasm for these subjects and are willing to work independently. A Year 4 class studying Victorian times were riveted when, in a suitably darkened room, they were dramatically informed "You are no longer in the twenty-first century. You are working in a match factory in..."

Leadership and management are satisfactory; suitable schemes of work give guidance in both subjects and continuity is established between the year groups informally through staff discussion; more formal procedures would benefit staff and pupils. The subjects have sufficient textbooks and other materials. Good use is made of ICT, including use of the internet for research.

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Senior School

English

Pupils achieve good standards in relation to their abilities. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average for maintained non-selective schools. Results at this stage are well below the national average for maintained selective schools. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results, in 2003 and over three years, are well above those of maintained non-selective schools. GCSE results for grades A* to C, in 2003 and over three years, are broadly in line with the national average for maintained selective schools.

Attainment in class and in work scrutinised in Years 7 to 11 is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Pupils in Year 7 could deliver short, prepared lectures with confidence and panache, while those in Year 8 showed unusual maturity in their ability to articulate their feelings and to answer questions with insight and perception. Attainment in class by the end of Year 9 is good and is also good by the end of Year 11, with work displaying growing erudition and intellectual rigour.

Progress is good both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. It is marked by a development of analytical powers, going well beyond a sound knowledge of the key facts to the point where most pupils are able to draw inferences and come to balanced judgements. Rapid progress was seen in a lesson on the feelings and motives of the characters in *I'm the King of the Castle*, where pupils were able to demonstrate surprising powers of empathy for their age. Pupils with particular learning difficulties make good progress in relation to their abilities.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are never less than good: they are always keen to move on with the task in hand, and they take pride in the quality and in the presentation of their work. Their behaviour was very good in every lesson seen; they have good relationships with their teachers and with one another, and their politeness and friendliness is unflinching.

The quality of teaching is always at least good and occasionally excellent. Clear objectives are set out, lessons are both well planned and efficiently organised. Pupils of all ability levels are not only helped whenever help is needed but encouraged to come up with their own ideas and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and great enthusiasm for all they do. The two drama lessons seen were also well planned and capably taught.

The curriculum is sound and carefully devised, and schemes of work are interesting and thorough. Assessment and recording function smoothly: the use of a computerised system to record pupils' progress helps to inform curriculum planning as well as keeping track of the progress of individuals. Pupils' work is marked promptly and thoroughly; notes with guidance for improvement as well as encouragement and commendation are usually given. Very good use is made of ICT, both for improving drafts using word processing techniques, and for making presentations. Resources are good, with an up-to-date stock of books.

Both leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear vision of the way in which the department can move forward as well as extremely capable day-to-day management.

Mathematics

Pupils achieve satisfactory standards and make sound progress in relation to their abilities.

Results in the 2003 national tests at age 14 are well above the national average for maintained non-selective schools. Results at this stage are well below the national average for maintained selective schools. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results for grades A* to C, in 2003 and over three years, are well above those of maintained non-selective schools; they are broadly in line with the national average for maintained selective schools.

Attainment in lessons and in the scrutiny of work at ages 14 and 16 is in line with pupils' abilities. Year 9 pupils were able to apply the elimination method, using either addition or subtraction, when given simultaneous equations to solve. Year 10 pupils were consolidating factorisation of quadratic expressions and Year 11 pupils were working competently on past examination papers.

Progress in lessons and in written work is sound in relation to pupils' abilities. Year 9 pupils made sound progress in their first lesson on simultaneous equations and by the end of a Year 10 lesson, all pupils had become skilled at factorising quadratic equations and the most able were enjoying the challenge of harder examples. Those who had difficulty in understanding concepts made sound progress in special lessons with the SENCO.

The quality of learning and behaviour is good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are well motivated and hard-working; they are good listeners, are articulate and are familiar with mathematical terminology. Older pupils are able to work independently. In class, pupils are attentive and eager to participate by asking relevant questions and providing suitable answers. Their class and homework books are neat and they take pride in their work. Pupils are well-mannered, polite, friendly and co-operative. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good.

The quality of teaching is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the subject and the content and style of the lessons are appropriate for the ages and abilities of their pupils. Objectives of the lessons are made clear, lessons are planned well and time and resources used effectively, although no evidence of the use of ICT was seen. The staff have high expectations and their pupils respond to the challenge accordingly. The teaching satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils with different levels of ability and understanding. Marking is regular, consistent and thorough. Helpful and constructive remarks are to be found in pupils' books.

The leadership of mathematics is satisfactory; day-to-day management is informal although effective. Minutes of meetings are not formally recorded and no departmental handbook or evidence of future planning was seen.

Assessment and recording are effective in giving information about attainment to pupils and their parents. In addition to the national tests at age 14, annual assessment tests are held at the end of the academic year, while school examinations are held twice yearly in the senior school and grades are also given for effort. However, no indication is given that assessment and recording of results, including those from nationally standardised tests and internal examinations, are used to set targets for pupils or plan the future curriculum for mathematics.

Textbooks and other resources are modern and support the curriculum well. The mathematics classroom is not spacious but it is bright and pleasant with good displays of pupils' work to add interest.

It is recommended that more ICT is incorporated into everyday teaching and that information from the recording of assessments and progress is used when reviewing and planning the curriculum and the work of individual pupils in future. The department should produce a simple handbook to guide mathematics teaching throughout the school.

Science

Pupils are achieving satisfactory standards at present in relation to their ages and abilities and making satisfactory progress.

Results in the 2003 national tests at age 14 are well above the national average for maintained non-selective schools. Results at this stage are well below the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in public examinations at GCSE level in combined science (double award) in 2003 and over the last three years are above the national average for maintained non-selective schools and broadly in line with the national average for all maintained selective schools. The percentage of A* and A grades was higher than that achieved by pupils in maintained selective schools in 2003. Only a few pupils are entered for combined science (single award) and numbers generally are too low to make statistically significant comparisons.

The attainment of pupils in written work and in lessons is in line with their abilities at the ages of 14 and 16. Year 9 understood the planning procedure for their investigation and could decide upon which factors to vary and which to control. Year 11 pupils had a degree of background knowledge of photosynthesis but did not consistently demonstrate this or build upon it.

Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 11 is sound in relation to their ages and abilities. Year 7 made very good progress as they developed their knowledge of floral reproduction. Year 9 pupils developed their planning skills steadily as they prepared to construct small parachutes. Year 10 pupils satisfactorily extended their understanding of the sensation of touch as they created class statistics demonstrating that this sense is especially concentrated in their fingertips but Year 11 made slow progress in understanding the various changes in xerophytic plants.

The quality of learning and behaviour is sound in most classes. When the teaching is very good, pupils respond very well; they are observant, ask questions with enthusiasm, concentrate, listen carefully to instructions, collaborate constructively, evaluate their work and are generally very interested and involved. Despite possessing these abilities, pupils do not demonstrate them consistently in all lessons. Although their behaviour is good and they are never uncooperative, pupils show a lack of real interest in learning when the scope for personal initiative and involvement is limited.

The quality of teaching is uneven; it is sound overall. Due to illness, almost three-quarters of senior science lessons were taught by internal and external cover teachers during the inspection. The

majority of lessons were at least satisfactory. Lesson objectives were usually made clear and most lessons were carefully planned. Subject knowledge was secure although at times not fully up to date with current techniques and course requirements. Lessons were less successful when expectation and challenge were insufficiently high and they failed to capture the pupils' imagination and interest. In successful lessons, pace was generally good, challenging questions were asked and evident thought was given to the availability and use of resources.

Insufficient use is made of information from assessment. The school's marking policy is not followed consistently. In some years, work is marked infrequently and helpful, evaluative comments are often lacking. A regular programmed review of pupils' work and marks which could influence future planning is not in place.

Schemes of work are often closely related to commercially available documents and show little evidence of modifications to make them more specific to the needs of the school and individual pupils. Schemes would benefit from considerable further development in order to maximise pupils' opportunities for advancement, particularly the strong scientists and those who need extra help. More careful planning, especially in the senior school, and more co-ordination between junior and senior schools is needed to ensure a seamless science programme across the school's entire age range.

At the moment leadership and management of science are weak; illness has reduced the opportunities for planning, co-ordination and monitoring science across the school and strengthening the link between the junior and senior schools. This whole area currently lacks specific direction. The school has done its best in difficult circumstances to provide continuity for each class and, in particular, appropriate support for the public examination candidates.

Geography and History

Pupils achieve good standards in relation to their abilities and make good progress.

Performance in GCSE examinations in geography and history is above the national average for maintained non-selective schools and broadly in line with the national average for all maintained selective schools in history.

In lessons observed and work scrutinised, the attainment of pupils at ages 14 and 16 is good in relation to their ages and abilities in both subjects. Pupils in a Year 9 geography lesson were good at making informed and sensible comparisons from data about trans-national corporations. In Year 11 lessons, the quality of written and oral work was good; pupils drew well-reasoned conclusions from facts presented to them. In history, Year 9 pupils could give shrewd and perceptive answers about the reasons behind the desire for appeasement in the 1930s and Year 11 pupils in their written and oral work on the Chartist movement showed signs of growing erudition.

Progress is good in relation to pupils' abilities. In both subjects, a growing ability to evaluate information and come to balanced judgements is evident and complex issues are increasingly well understood. Pupils progressively asked more pertinent questions and displayed growing confidence in class.

The quality of learning and behaviour is good and, at times very good, particularly in history. Pupils are well motivated and keen to learn; they enjoy their lessons. Relationships are good between pupils; a readiness to listen to the ideas of others and a pleasant rapport between pupils and teacher are evident. Pupils are good at listening and at asking questions; they show strong collaborative skills when working in pairs, and the ability to concentrate when working independently and researching information.

The quality of teaching is good in geography and very good in history. The pace is brisk and purposeful and teachers are aware of the needs of pupils of different ability levels in their classes. Geography lessons, especially, were characterised by the skilful use of questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and clarify topics as diverse as the management of fragile environments, plate tectonics and the role of trans-national corporations. Thoroughly secure knowledge of the subject and a clear enthusiasm for it, combine to produce history lessons that are both carefully planned and structured and also highly enjoyable and productive. Topics such as the policy of appeasement in the 1930s, or the Chartist movement, provided intellectual challenge for older pupils, while three playlets on the Black Death gave some Year 7 pupils the chance not only to enjoy one another's histrionics but to develop valuable skills of empathy.

Leadership and management of both subjects are good. Curriculum documentation and schemes of work are well planned, comprehensive and informative; they make an effective contribution to the progress made by pupils. Assessment, marking and recording are efficient and up-to-date. In geography, the accommodation is rather cramped, especially when classes are large, but it is adequate, and the provision of resources is satisfactory. Classroom accommodation in history is satisfactory. Resources are good, with up-to-date text books and audio-visual material, though the department possesses relatively few artefacts. Wall displays are very good and promote the enjoyment of the subject.

Senior and Junior Schools: Short Subject Reports

Short subject reports contain concise evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of provision in the school. The following short reports refer to the whole school.

Art

One lesson in the junior school and three lessons in the senior school were observed; the files and folders of many pupils were examined, and a meeting was held with the head of department.

The teaching of techniques was good. Lessons were well planned and well structured, with a good balance between explanation and practical work. Help and advice were given to all, and the less talented were discreetly supported and encouraged. The folders of GCSE work showed interesting variations on a set theme. Pupils responded well in the lessons observed, working diligently and taking pride in their efforts. An atmosphere of sustained concentration was a feature of these lessons. Pupils worked well together in pairs, employing both pencil and crayon to produce sketches of one another's hands.

The emphasis of the scheme of work is on two-dimensional work, though some modelling work is done in clay. Within this constraint, the course is broad and interesting. The accommodation is rather limited, but good use is made of the space available. The department has sufficient materials and resources for the work that is undertaken.

Design & Technology (DT)

Three lessons were observed, one in the junior school and two in the senior school. Subject documents and examples of pupils' work were scrutinised and discussions were held with pupils and staff.

The quality of teaching was sound; lessons and activities were competently planned and organised. Clear explanations and much individual help were given; good relationships were evident. The emphasis in the senior school is on textiles, mainly knitting and weaving; professional knowledge is secure, enabling well-organized demonstrations. Safety factors were taken into consideration. Learning and behaviour were sound. The younger pupils were enthusiastic in their cookery lesson, although their attention wandered at times. Senior pupils listened

attentively and worked quietly and earnestly; they asked sensible questions and encouraged each other.

Resources and opportunities are, however, limited. The art room, which is also used for senior school DT, is not spacious and this severely restricts the type of work which can be done.

French and Spanish

Two lessons were observed in each of the senior and junior schools, and one lesson in the nursery. Departmental documents and examples of pupils' work were scrutinised and discussions were held with pupils and staff.

The teaching was good overall. Teachers were very secure in their language and confident in their knowledge of topics under discussion, such as environmental matters. They made good use of time and resources in carefully planned lessons that proceeded at a good pace. Discipline was generally well maintained and relevant; suitably varied tasks and activities were well chosen to involve all pupils, regardless of ability. Pupils were interested, concentrated well and, especially in the senior school, maintained their motivation throughout the lessons in spoken and written work. They were prepared to use their textbooks, their own prior knowledge and other resources to find answers to pertinent questions. They had the confidence to make a response and try to contribute to discussions.

Subject policies, documentation and thorough schemes of work properly support the modern languages curriculum throughout the senior and junior schools. Assessment and recording are done well; marking is regular, and very helpful comments are given. Interesting displays enliven the well-resourced specialist classroom.

Information and Communication Technology

Four lessons were observed, two each in the junior and senior schools. A small quantity of written work was scrutinised and the subject co-ordinator was interviewed.

Teaching was good. Lessons were well planned and objectives made clear. Subject knowledge was good and the content of each lesson was appropriate for the age and ability of the class. For instance, in Year 10, the teacher used relevant everyday examples of the use and misuse of the Data Protection Act. Relationships were very good and expectations were high. The most able were suitably challenged with extension work while those least able were given much individual attention. Time and resources were used effectively.

Pupils were competent learners with good motivation and enthusiasm. They contributed effectively to theoretical work and were articulate and confident in responding to questions. Behaviour was always good; pupils listened attentively and followed instructions carefully. They co-operated with one another when working in pairs and on other occasions worked quietly and efficiently on their own. Pupils were skilled at making use of previous knowledge and quickly grasped new concepts. Year 7 produced a menu for a party from a previously constructed database and enjoyed the challenge of finding a database formula to ensure the budget did not exceed £30. Year 4 pupils learnt about branching databases and how to use them to produce pie charts; the subject was 'shapes', which linked with a recent mathematics lesson.

The computer room is very popular at lunchtime and good displays of different groups' work added interest.

Music

Three lessons were observed, one in the junior school and two in the senior school; discussions were held with the music co-ordinator and a substantial amount of pupils' work was seen and listened to.

The quality of the teaching was very good: expert subject knowledge, considerable enthusiasm, high expectations and a close rapport with pupils made for stimulating and enjoyable lessons. Pupils were clearly eager to respond and participate, from a cheerful Year 4 group marching round the room and concentrating hard as they sang a succession of rounds, to the experimental music being performed by Year 10. Pupils were good at working together and their behaviour was exemplary.

The curriculum offers a broad range of musical experience, including composition in the final year; various instruments are learnt, both in and out of school. Visits are made to concerts, and informal concerts are regularly performed by pupils. The department is pleasantly situated in an attractive room; it is well stocked with instruments and audio-visual material, and its work enriches the life of the school.

Personal, Social, Citizenship and Health Education and Religious Education

One RE lesson and four PSCHE lessons were observed, mainly in the junior school. Pupils' work and displays around the whole school were scrutinised; circle time, form times, school assemblies and a senior school council meeting were visited. Discussions took place with several staff, including the subject co-ordinators.

The quality of teaching in PSCHE and RE was good. PSCHE is taught by form teachers with support and input from other staff, including the school matron. Staff had sound and secure subject knowledge. An interesting variety of strategies was used, including role play and question-and-answer sessions. Relationships were strong between teacher and pupils. In a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere, pupils learned to listen to each other, respect each other's beliefs and organise democratic meetings where they could put forward ideas whilst representing the views of others. Attitudes to work were positive in a Year 6 group who were willing to participate in a role-play scenario, interviewing a 'guest speaker' for television.

The PSCHE programme has been very well developed to be accessible to all pupils across the age groups. Planning and organisation is very detailed and appropriate to the ages and the multicultural backgrounds of pupils. The programme is presented in a variety of ways, including RE lessons, assemblies, circle time, class discussions, school council meetings and friendship groups. It is carefully monitored and modified as required. In RE, planning and organisation are well carried out with full account being taken of the diversity of faiths represented in the school. The curriculum is balanced and broad, and relevant to the needs of pupils.

Physical Education (PE)

Three double games periods were observed across the junior and senior schools. Three extra-curricular activities were also visited. The departmental documentation was scrutinised and discussions were held with pupils and specialist staff.

Teaching in the lessons was sound. Practical activities were carefully organised and the planning followed comprehensive, well-thought-out schemes related to the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. The individual sessions were arranged, when appropriate, to make the most of the limited facilities available on site. Planning also maximised pupils' opportunities to achieve high standards in as wide a variety of sports as possible within the constraints imposed by the need to travel to the swimming pool, playing fields and sports centre.

The quality of learning varied according to the weather conditions. However, learning was never less than sound and behaviour was very good. Pupils generally responded with enthusiasm, being

keen to learn new skills and to improve their performance. They interacted well in small groups and with staff.

The encouraging range of opportunities has been considerably extended in recent years and now includes, for example, modern dance and cross-country running. The creative, thoughtful blend of on-site and off-site provision greatly enhances the PE curriculum and benefits the pupils.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

The programme of activities is much constrained by space, time and distance some pupils travel to school, and by the availability of staff. It is only just satisfactory. However, some activities, such as Japanese and modern dance, are popular and successful.

The selection of activities provided, although limited, is suitable for the ages of the pupils attending. The range includes Japanese, French, physical education, modern dance and cross stitch. Levels of achievement are appropriate to the ages and abilities of pupils and are acknowledged with the award of certificates at the end of the Japanese and physical education courses. After each dance course, a performance is given to parents.

In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, some parents raised concerns and dissatisfaction with the programme and the limited choice of extra-curricular activities in which their daughters could participate. Some activities incur a charge to cover the cost of materials or outside coaching, which is another constraint. Inspectors agree that the range is not wide but considered the programme to be just satisfactory, given the constraints of space and time not in the control of the school. The school is working to extend opportunities.

Most activities are scheduled during the lunch break or after school and are at times restricted to certain age or ability groups. Some activities are of a flexible duration and pupils may adopt an equally flexible approach in attendance. This degree of choice limits the contribution which participation in an activity can make to a pupil's social development and educational experience and achievement. However, activities such as modern dance, where teamwork and practice are essential elements, make a significant contribution to a pupil's personal development.

Only a minority of staff are involved in the regular programme of activities but those who do contribute are effectively deployed, committed and enthusiastic. Some staff are involved in organising and accompanying visits and residential activities which support the curriculum, at times assisted by parents who make a valuable contribution to such events. Appropriate procedures are in place for recording and reporting pupils' participation in activities. Registers are taken and a senior member of staff monitors the programme.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspection was carried out from 8th to 12th March 2004. All subjects of the curriculum were inspected and all members of the teaching staff were observed teaching. However, the size of the team did not permit all subjects to be reported on in full. The following subjects do not have full reports in Section 8: art, design and technology, French, information and communication technology, music, personal, social, health and citizenship education, physical education and religious education. The inspectors visited 93 lessons or parts of lessons, examined extensive samples of work by pupils of differing abilities in each year and held formal discussions with these pupils as well as informal discussions with other pupils. They attended four assemblies and 15 registration sessions. They observed 10 extra-curricular and sporting activities. They held discussions with 30 teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels in the school. They analysed the responses of 77 parents to a questionnaire distributed

in advance of the inspection. They examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

A bursar from another school joined the RI on the preliminary visit as part of the ISBA pilot scheme, spending the day with the Bursar's department. The principal findings have been included in the relevant sections of this report.

List of Inspectors

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|-------------|---|
| D. Iles | Reporting Inspector. Former head, GSA school. |
| G. Henry | Former head, ISA school. |
| R. Lewis | Former head, IAPS school. |
| R.F. Lewis | Former head, GSA school. |
| E. Parris | Former head, ISA school. |
| C. Richmond | Former head of department, IAPS/HMC school |