

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

SOLIHULL JUNIOR SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on

January 24th – 28th 2005

MAIN REPORT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Solihull Junior School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Solihull Junior School		
DfES Number	334/6003		
Address	Warwick Road, Solihull B91 3DJ		
Telephone Number	0121 705 5644		
Fax Number	0121 711 4439		
E-mail Address	broughl@solsch.org.uk		
Name of Head	Mrs. Lindsay Brough		
Chairman of Governors	Air Vice-Marshal John Price, CBE, DL		
Age Range	7-11	Gender	Boys
Number of Pupils	144	Number of Boarders	None
Inspection Dates	January 24th- 28th 2005		

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 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.

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1. MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

- 1.1 The junior school at Solihull is a happy, close-knit community in which pupils thrive through a varied curriculum well-suited to their needs, which includes very good opportunities and facilities for pastoral care and their all round personal development. The excellent spirit of cooperation and mutual interdependence which permeates both senior and junior schools underlines the emphasis on enabling pupils to mature into sensible and responsible young people. The school has no major weaknesses and is well prepared for its forthcoming development to become fully coeducational.

What the School Does Well

- 1.2 The school has a number of strengths, of which the following are the most significant:
- Pupils receive a very good all round primary education, with strong support at all levels, which prepares them very well for their next educational stage. They attain notably high standards in art, design and technology, mathematics, music, physical education and games and also in information and communication technology, which underpin achievements across the curriculum.
 - Pupils' confidence and self-esteem, interests and talents are nurtured by extensive opportunities in their academic work and, similarly, in the very good range of aesthetic, creative, cultural, practical and physical activities.
 - Pastoral care and guidance and the provision for all aspects of personal development are very good.
 - Very good and worthwhile links are forged between the school and its parents and with the senior school, as well as the local and wider community.
 - Clear vision on the part of the headmaster is complemented by the strong commitment and efficient direction of the head of the junior school, who is very well supported by enthusiastic and dedicated colleagues.
 - The school's strong sense of identity and common purpose stems from the excellent community spirit pervading both senior and junior schools, and contributes significantly to pupils' overall maturity and well-being.

What the School Should Do Better

- 1.3 The school has no significant weaknesses, but some shortcomings are apparent in the following areas:
- Documentation in English and mathematics lacks clear medium- and long-term planning.
 - Insufficient liaison takes place in subjects involving several teachers, with the result that common strategies to assist pupils' progression are not always properly pursued.
 - Pupils' participation, progress and prowess in physical education and games are not included in reports to parents.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

- 1.4 Pupils achieve good standards overall. Their attainment and progress are at least good and often high at all ages and, in particular, by the end of Year 6.

- 1.5 Attainment is high in art, design and technology (DT), mathematics, music and religious education (RE). High standards in ICT contribute particularly strongly to attainment across the curriculum. Attainment is good in English, science and all other subjects.
- 1.6 Pupils throughout the school make good and often rapid progress, the latter most noticeably in art, DT, ICT, music, physical education (PE) and games and RE, and, in the older age groups, in mathematics and science.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

- 1.7 The quality of pupils' attitudes, learning and their behaviour are very good.
- 1.8 The school is a cheerful, friendly and lively place with good evidence of a positive learning ethos, through extensive displays and the pupils' general demeanour.
- 1.9 Pupils' behaviour is good and often very good and they form good relationships with each other and with their teachers.

The Quality of Teaching

- 1.10 The quality of teaching is good. In a significant majority of lessons, teaching ranged from excellent to mostly very good or good in almost equal proportions. Teaching in aesthetic and creative areas and in science is of particularly high quality. No lessons were less than sound.
- 1.11 Expectations are mostly high. Good strategies support the less capable and extend the more able. Methods and approaches are skilfully deployed to challenge and stimulate pupils.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

- 1.12 Pupils' level of attendance is very good and enables them to take full advantage of the many opportunities offered by the school. Records of attendance are properly kept and levels of absence are extremely low. Attendance and admissions registers are correctly maintained.

Assessment and Recording

- 1.13 Methods used for assessing and recording pupils' achievement, progress and needs, are accurate, consistent and generally informative. Thorough and comprehensive series of nationally recognised and diagnostic tests enable all pupils' progress to be effectively tracked. Test results on entry to the school are used to identify those who may need additional support or extension work.

Curriculum

- 1.14 The curriculum offers a broad and balanced general education, well suited to all pupils across the full age and ability ranges. It is enriched by valuable opportunities in creative subjects and for modern language study, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 1.15 Equality of access and opportunity is assured. Pupils with particular educational needs receive good support, and challenging tasks are set for the more able.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

- 1.16 Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and are deployed to good advantage. Good relationships contribute to the school's positive atmosphere. A good balance is maintained

between class teachers and specialist subject teachers, including useful input from senior school staff.

- 1.17 The valuable and greatly appreciated contribution of administrative and support staff is committed and enthusiastic. Staff appraisal, development and training are all carefully managed, through appropriate budget arrangements and allocation of time.

Resources for Learning

- 1.18 The books, equipment and ICT, which are needed to support the learning, teaching, study and recreation of the pupils, are very good in quality, quantity and organisation, and are used well.
- 1.19 Pupils enjoy access to very good indoor and outdoor facilities and to several shared whole school facilities.

Libraries

- 1.20 Library facilities offer good support for the curriculum and are effectively and regularly used. The main library is easily accessible by all, is well funded and carries a good variety of both fiction and non-fiction stock. It is supported by classroom and some departmental libraries, as well as access to CD ROMs. Library administration and review is efficient and thorough, and includes the involvement of pupils.

Premises and Accommodation

- 1.21 Buildings, accommodation and other facilities are very good and well suited to the number, abilities and ages of the pupils. They are imaginatively used and enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Accommodation is attractive, spacious and in good decorative order. Much thought has gone into the provision of additional facilities, including ICT suite and library, but also in readiness for the forthcoming change to coeducation.
- 1.22 Access to indoor and outdoor sports facilities is very good, as is that to other whole school areas for which bookings may be made. Extensive display areas provide excellent evidence of the comprehensive variety of pupils' academic and creative work and achievements.

Links with Parents and the Community

- 1.23 The school has developed a very effective partnership with parents and very worthwhile links with the community. Parental response to an ISI questionnaire distributed ahead of the inspection indicated overwhelming satisfaction with almost all aspects of provision, including the curriculum, range of activities, teaching staff, pastoral care and general academic quality of the school. The survey was very supportive of the school overall, and the inspectors' impressions are of significant strengths in important areas and of a committed and supportive parent body.
- 1.24 Relationships with the local community, who have good access to the school for particular occasions, are very good, as is contact with the wider community, nationally and internationally, through good works and cultural links. Pupils enjoy a comprehensive programme of academic and cultural visits, as well as sporting links with local schools.

Pupils' Personal Development

- 1.25 The school provides a very good range of opportunities for its pupils to nurture spiritual beliefs and strengthen their moral code, as well as enabling them all to develop culturally, personally and socially.
- 1.26 The broad curriculum and wide range of activities provide pupils with knowledge and insight into beliefs and values. The school has a strong feeling of community and clear core values.
- 1.27 Assemblies and cross-curricular themes encourage knowledge and understanding of national cultures, faiths, heritage, and way of life in countries around the world. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and the recently formed school council ensures that they have a voice in the school's organisation.

Pastoral Care

- 1.28 The school cares very successfully for pupils' well being, development and safety, through its arrangements for pastoral support, guidance, welfare, and for health and safety, to which parents testify warmly.
- 1.29 Pupils' academic progress and personal development are provided for and monitored efficiently. The school fosters good discipline and behaviour as part of its positive and purposeful atmosphere.
- 1.30 Arrangements for health and safety are very good. Risk assessments and checks are made regularly, and the school complies with all relevant safety and hazard requirements.

Governance and Management

- 1.31 The school's governance and management very appropriately ensure that its aims are met, and that it provides a very good quality of education and of pastoral care.
- 1.32 The school enjoys clear educational direction and offers an environment and working practices that are conducive to sound learning and development. Both senior and junior schools are regarded as interdependent communities, each contributing to the life and well-being of the other.
- 1.33 The governors successfully support and provide for the school's aims and endeavours. Their general awareness of its life and the extent of their liaison with the head are less clear. The head is closely involved with whole school management, and thus able to represent junior school interests and needs.
- 1.34 Management arrangements within the junior school are very effective. Routine administration is efficient and thorough. Teaching and support staff serve the school very well. Overall strategic planning successfully provides programmes to accommodate and encourage pupils' aspirations and needs.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

- 1.35 The range and quality of activities are very good. Some 40 different choices enable pupils to develop their talents, extend their skills and widen their interests. Activities represent many facets of development, including creative, cultural, physical and recreational pursuits, and high standards are often achieved.
- 1.36 The very effective leadership, management and organisation of activities are underpinned by the enthusiastic and committed participation of all staff.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

- 1.37 In the HMC inspection in March 1999, two main recommendations were made, which, together with a further sixteen recommendations under aspect headings, have been dealt with, as have nine under subject headings.

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

- 1.38 No action is required.
- 1.39 In addition to the actions set out above, the school is asked to address any issues highlighted in *What the School Should Do Better*. These are set out as recommendations for the school in Section 2 of the report.

2. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Although the school has no significant weaknesses, it should consider the following areas to further improve the very good education it already provides. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report.

R1 The school should review and amend documentation in English and mathematics to include sufficient detailed medium- and long-term planning. (1.3; 5.13; 7.5; 8.9; 8.15).

R2 The school should extend and develop regular liaison in subjects where several teachers are involved, to devise and establish a common and complementary approach towards meeting pupils' needs. (1.3; 5.3; 5.13; 7.4; 7.5; 8.9; 8.15).

R3 In the contents of reports sent to parents, the school should include details of attainment and progress in physical education and games. (1.3; 5.7; 5.40; 8.46).

3. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 3.1 The junior school is the base for Solihull School boys between the ages of seven and eleven. It enjoys an attractive location on the campus, shared with the senior school, with which it has close links. Junior school pupils are housed in purpose-built premises that were opened in 1991. These premises have since been the subject of significant recent and ongoing addition and improvement, to a considerable extent related to the introduction of full coeducation in September 2005. The junior school head has been in post since September 2002, though she has taught in the school for a total of 12 years. Teaching staff number 11, four men and seven women, one of whom is part-time.
- 3.2 Solihull School has a distinguished heritage. It aims to promote traditional values that are pertinent to present needs and based firmly on academic excellence and Christian principles, through a policy towards pupils of other faiths which is inclusive. The junior school's stated aim is to provide a friendly, rich and varied learning environment to allow pupils to develop their confidence, skills and abilities to their full potential, through making learning a challenging, rewarding and enjoyable experience for all. It makes use of several whole-school facilities, including the Bushell Hall auditorium and performance centre, sports hall, swimming pool, gymnasium, ICT suite, music school, drama studio and refectory.
- 3.3 Current pupil numbers comprise 144 boys, divided into four year groups. Year 3 consists of a single class, while Year 4 has two and Years 5 and 6 each have three parallel classes. Classes are of mixed ability, with grouping by ability only in mathematics in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils mainly come from the Borough of Solihull, but significant minorities are also brought in by bus from Sutton Coldfield, and the Edgbaston and Moseley districts of Birmingham. A few travel independently from further afield.
- 3.4 Many pupils come from professional, middle class backgrounds. Chinese, Indian and Pakistani groups are represented, but ethnic minorities do not figure significantly in pupil numbers. A small number come from homes where English is part of a bi-lingual culture, and two are on the learning support register as requiring special provision in English. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified 18 as requiring special provision, six of whom are moderately or severely dyslexic.
- 3.5 The school aims to attract pupils who will thrive in a challenging academic environment, and is therefore selective. Entry is by competitive examination. Pupils mostly come from other independent or maintained schools in the locality, in a ratio of roughly one-third to two-thirds respectively. New pupils are taken into each year group, depending on the calibre of candidates and places available. Most pupils proceed to the senior school at the age of 11 through competitive examination; numbers moving elsewhere or into the maintained system are not significant. No externally marked or monitored assessment tests are taken, but the school tests all pupils each year in English, mathematics, verbal and non-verbal skills, using commercially available standardised tests. On the basis of these tests it is seen that pupils' average ability is well above the national average. The results are used to identify those requiring further support or extension in teaching and learning, for whom appropriate provision is then made.

- 3.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table:

School	NC	School	NC
J1	Year 3	J3	Year 5
J2	Year 4	J4	Year 6

Key Indicators

- 3.7 Attendance for Second Half of Autumn Term 2004

	Authorised	Unauthorised
Percentage absence	1.3	0.7

- 3.8 Exclusions Over the Previous 12 Months

Temporary exclusions	Permanent exclusions
0	0

4. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and Progress

- 4.1 Pupils achieve good standards overall. Their attainment and progress are at least good and often high at all ages and, in particular, by the end of Year 6.
- 4.2 Replies to an ISI questionnaire sent out before the inspection indicated that the great majority of parents are highly satisfied with their sons' attainment and progress.
- 4.3 Attainment by the age of 11, based on observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, is high in mathematics, ICT, art, DT, music and RE, and it is good in all other subjects. High standards in ICT contribute strongly to attainment across the curriculum through the efforts of the coordinator and all teachers to harness its benefits to induct pupils into its formidable potential as a tool for learning and research. Across the year groups, pupils develop wide vocabulary skills and increasingly demonstrate their ability to sustain articulate and reasoned discussion. Examples of high attainment in mathematics and science, particularly towards the upper age range, stem from pupils' opportunities for independent learning and investigative work.
- 4.4 Pupils throughout the school make good and often rapid progress, the latter most noticeably in art, ICT, DT, PE and games, music and religious education and, in the older age groups, in mathematics and science. Pupils in all year groups make rapid progress in acquiring new skills in music, for example mastering new rhythms with percussion instruments or learning to express the mood as well as the melody of songs. A Year 6 mathematics class, spurred on by the prospect of emulating successful 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' challengers, performed impressive feats of mental arithmetic processes in simplifying increasingly complex fractions. A Year 6 middle ability mathematics class were quick and accurate in finding mean, median and mode for sequence of numbers. Good progress in practical skills was also shown by Year 5 pupils, who were devising chassis for moving vehicles, or completing electrical circuits involving bulbs and motors. Another Year 5 mathematics group rapidly worked out the probability of obtaining particular total scores as fractions or percentages when throwing two dice.
- 4.5 Pupils of all abilities, including those requiring special provision, progress at least as well as and, more often, better than expected in lessons and during their time in school.
- 4.6 The attainment and progress of pupils of different ethnicities and backgrounds, including those for whom English is an additional language, compare well with those of others in the school. Pupils show steadily increasing fluency and accuracy in their written work and, similarly, greater confidence in oral work. The good quality of teaching is a significant factor in the pace and extent of pupils' progress.

Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

- 4.7 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good.
- 4.8 The school is a lively, cheerful, friendly place with good evidence of a positive ethos. Throughout the school, pupils are competent learners who are responsive in lessons. They arrive promptly and are quick to settle to work. They show interest, listen carefully to instructions and explanations and apply themselves very well to the tasks and challenges they are set. Good recall of previous learning is evident. Pupils work well, both individually and in pairs. They are very articulate, perceptive and thoughtful, for example in discussion on

current issues in religious education lessons. Personal study is encouraged and pupils are generally successful in their efforts.

- 4.9 Pupils form positive and constructive relationships with one another, and they have a trusting rapport with their teachers, as well as with others in the school community. The atmosphere in most lessons is relaxed yet purposeful, and the pupils flourish happily in this environment, responding appreciatively to their teachers' interest in them. The pupils from Years 3 to 6 who were interviewed during the inspection, all spoke with pride about their school. The boys accept responsibility readily, by applying to be monitors, and by taking part in the very active school council.
- 4.10 Pupils are respectful of the feelings, values and beliefs of others. In class they listen to each other's views and show a readiness to learn from one another. Attitudes are open and inclusive. Pupils are ready to share their experiences and thoughts openly and with confidence, knowing that they will not be laughed at.
- 4.11 Behaviour in class is always good and often very good, even when the lesson consists primarily of discussion, and pupils are not required to participate other than orally. Outside the classroom, pupils show good self-control and conduct themselves in a pleasant, courteous and responsible manner. Lunchtimes are convivial and civilised, and at play the pupils are sensible and thoughtful. Those interviewed were aware that bullying is not tolerated and good behaviour is expected at all times. Pupils appreciate the school environment, and respond positively to the fact that it is very well maintained, clean and litter free. They benefit from observing much of their work on display in classrooms and in public areas and they clearly appreciate the activities, outdoor visits and expeditions organised for them.

Attendance

- 4.12 Pupils' level of attendance is very good and enables them to take full advantage of the many opportunities offered by the school. They are generally punctual to school, to classes and to activities.
- 4.13 The school has an effective policy and practice for recording and monitoring attendance in the morning and in the afternoon, as well as for some activities which involve larger and constant numbers of pupils. Records of attendance for both junior and senior schools are kept centrally in the senior school, and unexplained or unforeseen absences are followed up, usually on the same day, on the rare occasions of need. Levels of absence are extremely low, according to most recent returns to the DfES.
- 4.14 Attendance registers and the admissions register are correctly completed, maintained and kept up-to-date, and they meet legal requirements.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

- 5.1 The quality of teaching is good. It contributes very successfully to the attainment and progress of all pupils, including the small number receiving learning support. In four-fifths of the lessons observed teaching ranged from excellent to mostly good or very good in almost equal numbers. Of the remaining lessons, all were sound. Teaching in the creative and aesthetic areas and in science is of particularly high quality.
- 5.2 Most lessons are carefully planned and clearly presented, with teachers drawing on their secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects in order to take account of the ages, abilities and circumstances of the pupils. Class management is mostly of a high standard, and creates appropriate conditions for successful learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and work well as a team. They have good working relationships with the pupils, encouraging and rewarding them whenever possible. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked, and they are guided by positive and constructive comments to strive to improve their performance. Homework is appropriately set and marked. Very good use is made of resources, and the variety of methods and approaches employed are usually well suited to the needs of the pupils. Teachers employ a good range of activities to encourage creativity, some very good examples of which are evident in the art and creative writing on display.
- 5.3 Teaching is particularly successful when expectations are high and an appropriate range of strategies supports the least capable and extends the most able. Learning in these lessons moves forward at a brisk pace, as, for example, in a Year 6 lesson in which pupils wrote letters of complaint, which they then read with enthusiasm to the class. Methods and approaches used by teachers complement lesson objectives skilfully, and teachers challenge and stimulate the pupils with penetrating questions, with the result that attainment is very good for pupils' capabilities. Guidance offered by teachers enables pupils to make good and sometimes rapid progress, telling examples of which occurred in mathematics, where appropriate provision for revision and extension is made, and in the swimming pool, where pupils strove rapidly to master basic survival skills. In a few instances, the rate of progress is slower because expectations are too low, especially of the most able. For example, the slow pace of some lessons, with too much time devoted to discussion, leaves insufficient time for the development of pupils' writing skills.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for teaching?

- 5.4 Yes.

Assessment and Recording

- 5.5 Methods used for assessing and recording pupils' achievements, progress and needs are accurate, consistent and generally effective.
- 5.6 A thorough and comprehensive series of nationally recognised and diagnostic tests is administered. Results are marked in school, collated and stored centrally, enabling pupils' progress to be tracked. Additional assessments are made for all pupils, including annual reading and spelling tests and, for Years 5 and 6, twice-yearly internal examinations in English and mathematics.
- 5.7 Science is assessed in Years 3 and 4 by end-of-topic tests and in Years 5 and 6 by an end-of-year examination. Ongoing assessments in ICT are computer generated. Some pieces of work in humanities are graded. Informal assessments are made on work completed in art,

technology and music. No assessments are currently made in physical education and games and no records are formally kept, apart from noting areas and activities in which pupils participate.

- 5.8 Grades are given in the majority of subjects each term, for both attainment and effort. Results of the tests taken on entry to the school are used to identify any pupils who may need some learning support and also those pupils who are very able.
- 5.9 Teachers' marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly and thoroughly. Comments are frequently positive and often indicate how a piece of work could be improved. A useful marking policy is in place and adhered to well. Teachers keep detailed and up-to-date records.
- 5.10 Assessment information is being increasingly used to influence curriculum planning and development, notably, for example, in English, mathematics and science.

Curriculum

- 5.11 The curriculum provided by the school offers a broad and balanced general education, well suited to all pupils across the full age and ability range.
- 5.12 The curriculum in Years 3 to 6 is good and has considerable breadth. It takes account of the National Curriculum, but does not follow it exactly. English, mathematics and science form the core of the education the pupils receive, well supported by a full range of other subjects. French, Spanish and German are introduced in Year 6 to provide a useful introduction to modern language study. Except for DT in Years 3 and 4, where the subject forms part of the art syllabus, and the absence of specific personal, social and health education lessons in Years 5 and 6, all National Curriculum subjects are included. ICT is primarily skills based, but good evidence suggests that its integration into the curriculum is developing well in a number of subject areas, for example art and DT. Specialist teaching is preferred in music, PE, DT and modern foreign languages, but the value of class teaching is recognised for Year 3 boys. The amount of class teaching suitably decreases as the pupils grow in maturity. The allocation of time given to teaching and learning during the week is mostly in line with national recommendations, as is the balance of time for each subject.
- 5.13 Planning is at least sound and often good. The majority of subjects in the curriculum have detailed schemes of work, which successfully provide continuity and progression and in meeting the needs of all pupils. They are good in science, religious education, art and ICT, but lack clarity in English and mathematics, where long-term planning in English and medium-term planning in mathematics are not fully in place. Several members of staff are involved in the teaching of these two subjects, but, owing to insufficient liaison, the progress of some pupils is not yet fully monitored and safeguarded according to their abilities. The head of the junior school monitors the subject progression that takes place between years. The introduction of monitoring by subject coordinators is now well established in some subject areas, notably in science. The regular curriculum meeting provides a useful forum for teachers to continue to review and develop the curriculum.
- 5.14 In most respects, equality of access and opportunity is assured. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 benefit from ability grouping for mathematics, and those in Years 5 and 6 are divided into three parallel groups for English, thus allowing them to receive small group tuition. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support, and challenging tasks are provided for the gifted and talented, particularly in mathematics and science. Effective small group support is given to pupils for whom English is an additional language.

- 5.15 The curriculum is very significantly enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in the areas of music and sport. This programme, usefully augmented by that relating to personal, health and social education, adds to a strong sense of community with the active involvement of all pupils and staff. Regular educational visits further extend and enrich pupils' learning.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum?

- 5.16 Yes.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

- 5.17 The teaching staff are well qualified and experienced for the roles they are required to undertake and are effectively deployed. Relationships amongst them are good and this contributes to the positive atmosphere of the school, as does the good balance of age and experience across the staff. Most teachers are responsible for some subjects with their own class, as well as additional lessons in a specialist subject with other classes. Specialists from the senior school provide valuable support for English, modern foreign languages, music, PE and games.
- 5.18 Administrative and support staff are committed and enthusiastic. Their contribution is greatly appreciated by teachers and pupils. The junior school secretary ably supports the head and staff, and her contribution to the school is warmly recognised. The learning support teacher liaises closely with the head and the class teachers, and also combines her role with some specialist teaching. A part-time classroom assistant assists with science, technology and art, where her expertise in display is apparent, particularly in public areas of the school. Two supervisors assist at lunch-time, and are valued members of the staff team, as are the maintenance staff who take pride in ensuring that the school is well looked after. No ICT technician is presently dedicated to the junior school, but valuable and greatly appreciated assistance is given by senior school technicians when requested. A matron and assistant matron are on the school campus at all times to deal with any medical issues. Appropriate checks on records are made before all new staff take up their posts.
- 5.19 Staff development is carefully managed. A very positive and useful appraisal system is administered by the headmaster and the head of the junior school. The review system for teachers includes lesson observation, which is seen by the staff as a valuable means of spreading worthwhile approaches. Teaching staff regard the review process as a valuable and supportive tool for professional development. Individual training needs are successfully identified by the review process, and training is linked to the school improvement plan. Procedures for the induction of new colleagues work well. The school currently has no newly qualified teachers. A staff handbook provides valuable guidance for staff on all aspects of the school and comprehensive job descriptions are listed for the deputy head and subject leaders.
- 5.20 An appropriate budget for in-service training is used well, and provides the staff with necessary INSET. This process is directed by a combination of individual choice and curriculum needs. In addition to external courses organised by the local education authority, some useful whole-school training has been given, for example in pastoral issues and ICT, and the school is looking to develop this further.

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

- 5.21 Yes.

Resources for Learning

- 5.22 The books, equipment and ICT which are needed to support the teaching, learning, study and recreation of the pupils are very good in quality, quantity and organisation, and are used effectively.
- 5.23 ICT provision in the school is very good. The ICT suite, contained within the library, consists of 20 networked desktop computers with internet, intranet and email access. The junior school also has four interactive whiteboards and a further 11 computers sited around the school, all of which pupils use regularly.
- 5.24 Current provision for ICT is sufficient to enable its teaching throughout the school as a discrete subject. Additionally, the main suite and two other ICT rooms, part of centralised, whole school resources, are available, through booking arrangements, to enable individual subject teachers to make wide and effective use of the technology. ICT is, therefore, integrated as a natural tool for learning and providing support in many areas. Evidence showed ICT used to good effect in a wide range of subjects, including art and music, as well as its further application in displays and pupils' workbooks.
- 5.25 The level and quality of other resources throughout the school are good. The provision of up-to-date textbooks and source material in all subjects is at least adequate and mostly good. Subject coordinators are aware of the need to monitor, cull and replenish stock, as well as to provide new material as curriculum requirements indicate. Sports resources, both indoor and outdoor, are extensive, good and well used. Teachers make good use of audiovisual resources in a wide range of subjects.
- 5.26 Budget arrangements are good. The head of the junior school, in conjunction with the headmaster and bursar, is sympathetic and supportive of requests for capital expenditure as well as consumables, and all such requests are treated on their merits in relation to whole school requirements. Teachers use the resources at their disposal most effectively for the maximum benefit of pupils.
- 5.27 The junior school enjoys good access to several shared whole-school facilities, including four minibuses, the Bushell Hall for activities, films or visiting speakers, the pavilion meeting area and the lecture theatre, all of which may be booked.

Libraries

- 5.28 Library facilities offer good support for the curriculum and are effectively used.
- 5.29 The main library is adequately furnished, and its central location makes it easily accessible to both teachers and pupils. It is well funded, with a good variety of stock, currently over 3000 books, sensibly displayed mainly at child height. These include a range of fiction and non-fiction material, all clearly labelled and colour coded for ease of use. In addition to the main library, each class has its own supply of fiction material, so that, in total, the range of fiction provision is good. The number of reference books is generally good, though some subjects fare better than others. Some subjects have additional reference books and CD ROMs in classrooms. The quality of books is generally very good.
- 5.30 Pupils may borrow books during the lunch break, when a steady stream of borrowers is usual. The system for borrowing books is computerised and competently operated by pupil librarians, who have been well trained for the task by the library coordinator. Pupils make regular use of the facility throughout the day to support their research and study. Clear

guidelines for the use of the library are on display, and eye-catching examples of creative writing and posters encourage awareness of topical issues.

- 5.31 The library coordinator takes responsibility for coordinating the budget, and a rolling programme for updating and replacing books ensures the availability of up-to-date and relevant material. An effective communication system allows subject leaders to submit requests for new reference materials. Senior school librarians are available to give valuable help and advice to junior school pupils when needed.
- 5.32 The school has developed useful links with the town library, a librarian from which has helped in the training of pupils. Many pupils also make good use of this and other local libraries.

Premises and Accommodation

- 5.33 The buildings, accommodation and other facilities are very good and well suited to the number, abilities and ages of the pupils. They are well used and enable the curriculum to be taught effectively.
- 5.34 The junior school is housed in a purpose built classroom block, which was opened in 1991. The accommodation is attractive, spacious and in good decorative order. The classrooms are mostly light and airy, with good storage facilities. It is planned that the recently built extension will house the Thompson library, which, along with the entrance foyer and adjacent offices at the front of the school, provides attractive and valuable additional space. The school office, conveniently situated next to the main entrance allows the secretary to monitor access to the buildings. The ICT suite and library are located in a central position to allow easy access for the pupils, and both are used to good effect. Accommodation for art, science and technology is also spacious and well appointed. Plans to refurbish and redesign the central part of the school in readiness for the change to co-education are well advanced.
- 5.35 Corridors are uncluttered and visually stimulating. The extensive display areas, both here and in the classrooms, are effectively used to give a comprehensive variety of pupils' academic and creative work and achievements. Art work of a high standard features strongly in many areas of the school. Cloakroom, changing and toilet provision is adequate for the number and age of the pupils, and these facilities are set to improve on completion of the planned building programme for September 2005.
- 5.36 The junior school pupils benefit from the extensive sporting facilities on the site, as well as the use of the Chapel and impressive 900 seat theatre, the Bushell Hall, for assemblies and concerts. Practice rooms in the music school are effectively used for instrumental lessons, but the Chapel's size and open plan makes it less appropriate for the younger pupils' music lessons. Junior school pupils take their lunch in the spacious and civilised surroundings of the refectory. Sports facilities are excellent and include a sports hall, swimming pool and all-weather area. The well-maintained and extensive playing fields are immediately adjacent to the school and easily accessible to the pupils, who make good use of them.

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

- 5.37 Yes.

Links with Parents and the Community

- 5.38 The school has developed a very effective partnership with parents and very worthwhile links with the community.

- 5.39 Almost 80% of parents returned a completed ISI questionnaire prior to the inspection. The majority of parents indicated overwhelming satisfaction with almost all aspects of provision. Very positive responses were received in praise of the curriculum and the academic quality of the school, the high quality of pastoral care and the teaching staff and the variety of extra curricular activities. The survey was very supportive of the school overall, and the inspectors' impressions are of significant strengths in important areas and of a committed and supportive parent body.
- 5.40 The arrangements for formally relaying information to parents about their child's progress are very good, consisting of written reports twice a year, effort and attainment grades each term and meetings with parents in October and February. Parents are also invited to visit the school during a working afternoon. The written reports are of a high quality. They describe the quality of the pupils' work, comment on progress and outline the content of the work covered. However, no detailed report is given for physical education.
- 5.41 Parents of new pupils receive a very informative handbook, and are kept well informed thereafter by newsletters sent each term from the head of the junior school. Information regarding the junior school is also to be found on the whole school website. Good day-to-day links between school and home are maintained through the use of a homework diary. Highlights of the year and contributions from junior school pupils are included in a section of the whole-school annual magazine. The school has a readily available complaints policy.
- 5.42 Very good opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in activities in the school and with their children's work. Helpfully, parents form a regular rota to assist with reading. They also accompany visits and support sporting events, drama productions and concerts. The strong and active parents' association works tirelessly to raise funds for extra resources to benefit pupils, for example the provision of table tennis tables, music equipment and garden benches for the grounds.
- 5.43 Relationships with the local community are very good. The elderly are invited to concerts and chapel services. The Bushell Hall is used by local churches, schools and charities. Further links with Birmingham City Football Club and the University of Birmingham flourish. Through its charity fund-raising efforts, such as the marathon afternoon, the school contributes very significantly to local and wider communities. Daffodils are sold in aid of the local hospice and close involvement has been established in strong support of the Joshua Foundation in Tanzania. Within the school community, a positive ethos of support prevails, with senior school pupils providing enthusiastic and valued assistance in music and some clubs. A very comprehensive programme of academic and cultural visits is available for pupils of all ages, as well as active links with local schools for sport fixtures.

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

- 5.44 Yes.

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

- 5.45 Yes.

6. PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

Pupils' Personal Development

- 6.1 The school provides a very good range of suitable opportunities through which all pupils can develop culturally, personally and socially, and also nurture a system of spiritual beliefs and strengthen their moral code.
- 6.2 The range and quality of opportunities providing pupils with knowledge and insight into beliefs and values and helping them to develop a spiritual awareness and knowledge of self is very good. Spiritual development is imaginatively fostered through assemblies, led each week by the school chaplain, the headmaster and the head of the junior school. Pupils and their families may attend Sunday services in the school chapel. Assemblies primarily centre on Christian values, but festivals and aspects of other major faiths are celebrated. The World Holocaust Memorial Day assembly was thought provoking and contained excellent spiritual content. Such aspects of the curriculum as class discussion in RE lessons, study of poetry in English lessons and meditation club, enhance this development. A strong spiritual element was observed in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils showed mature sensitivity in learning about Amnesty International's symbol of a candle.
- 6.3 Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on moral issues. The school has a strong feeling of community and clear core values. Respect and courtesy are strongly promoted and regarded highly. Assemblies and PSHE lessons include topics dealing with honesty, truthfulness, the importance of trust and ethics in dealing with other people and relations with other countries.
- 6.4 RE, geography and history lessons enable pupils to learn about the heritage, way of life, music and religious views in countries around the world. Involvement in several national charities and a link with a school in Tanzania reinforces awareness, as do visits to places such as the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham and Lunt Roman fort. Assemblies include musical contributions, sometimes by senior school bands. During the inspection the samba band played and a Year 5 boy, who is an international Irish dance champion, gave a mesmerising display.
- 6.5 Pupils in Years 3 & 4 have one period of PSHE each week in which topics such as friendships, bullying and healthy eating are discussed. Similar topics are dealt with as they arise in Years 5 and 6, who do not have timetabled lessons in PSHE. The school encourages pupils to relate positively to one another and to participate fully in the school community. They are keen to take on duties and many posts of responsibility are filled conscientiously by the older pupils. Pupils write letters of application prior to the appointment of form and house captains, monitors and librarians. The house system encourages them to compete in a variety of competitions, including singing, a range of sports and general knowledge. Year 6 pupils train as mentors for the younger pupils. The school council, which was recently responsible for recommending the restructuring of homework diaries, comprises a representative from each form, who gives the views of his classmates and reports back the proceedings. Skills in leadership and co-operation are developed in Year 5 during a residential stay in North Wales. Pupils' progress, effort and contributions to the life of the school are rewarded by prizes presented annually. The emphasis on the value of individuals and the commitment shown by teachers to the care of pupils, are all important contributory factors to the warm, friendly atmosphere.
- 6.6 *Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils?*
- 6.7 Yes.

Pastoral Care, including Welfare and Health & Safety

- 6.8 The school cares very effectively for pupils' well-being, development and safety through its arrangements for pastoral support, for guidance, welfare and for health and safety. The parents' response to the ISI questionnaire showed that almost all the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school promoted worthwhile attitudes and values, achieved high standards of behaviour and were happy with the help and guidance given to their sons.
- 6.9 Pastoral care is very good and is a strong aspect of the school's provision. The detailed monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development contributes usefully to their care and support. All members of staff are very committed to the care and support of the pupils, with the form teacher playing a key role. Mutual respect is evident between pupils and staff and the ethos of the school is positive and caring. Pupils receive positive encouragement, resulting in their good confidence and high self-esteem. They thrive and feel secure in the purposeful and positive atmosphere created by the staff. All pupils are screened on entry and those few identified as requiring learning support, or who have English as a second language, receive good advice, support and guidance. Teachers encourage pupils to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses and to consider personal targets for improvement.
- 6.10 The school provides good measures to promote discipline and appropriate behaviour amongst pupils. A clear code is in place for rewards and sanctions, which pupils perceive as fair. Good academic work and behaviour are awarded merits. Pupils are fully aware that good behaviour is expected of them and that bullying is unacceptable. They know what action they should take should problems arise and they confirm that teachers deal promptly with bullying on the rare occasions that this occurs.
- 6.11 Measures to promote pupils' health and well-being are very effective, and education in these areas is good. Medical care within the school is good, with a matron on call throughout the school day in the sick bay. First aid arrangements are very good, and all accidents are recorded. School lunches are varied and of very good quality. A balanced diet is encouraged through PSHE and science lessons, and sweets are allowed only at Thursday break and on special days. An appropriate child protection policy is in place and the second master in the senior school is the designated child protection officer.
- 6.12 Arrangements for health and safety are very good, and the junior school is represented on the whole-school health and safety committee. Risk assessments and checks are made regularly and results recorded. Clear guidelines are in place for school visits and expeditions. Pupils are made aware of the dangers of fire and the avoidance of accidents. In science and technology lessons, pupils are taught about hazardous substances and how to handle equipment safely. Procedures are clear for the supervision of pupils before and after school, as well as at breaks and lunchtimes. The school complies with the relevant safety and fire regulations, and all reasonable measures to reduce the risk of fire have been taken, with appropriate fire drills being held each term.

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

- 6.13 Yes.

7. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Governance and Management

- 7.1 The school's governance and management are good. They ensure that the school's aims are met and that it provides a very good quality of education and of pastoral care. They also ensure that sufficient and appropriate resources of good quality are deployed for teaching and learning.
- 7.2 The junior school benefits greatly from the committed direction of its head, which is well supported by corresponding commitment from all staff. This leads to clear educational direction and an environment conducive to effective learning and development, in the context of a friendly, supportive and united community. The inspiration for these essential cornerstones for a successful school stem from the senior school headmaster's enthusiastic vision for the development of the two schools, which are seen very much as an interdependent community, each part contributing to the life and well-being of the other.
- 7.3 The governors view the junior school as the cradle of the foundation. They very effectively support the school's aims and endeavours by ensuring the provision of appropriate up-to-date, well-equipped and resourced buildings and facilities. Their general awareness of the life and workings of the junior school and the extent of their communication and liaison with its head are less clear, though indications of welcome developments and intent in this respect are apparent.
- 7.4 The junior school head has responsibility for day-to-day running, is a member of the whole school senior management team and works closely with and is responsible to the headmaster. Junior school management comprises its head, the deputy and the subject coordinators, who have well-defined roles, which are incorporated in job descriptions. Regular meetings are held between the head of junior school and the headmaster, the bursar and management staff in the senior school. The junior school head attends academic board meetings. Periodic meetings also occur between the headmaster and members of the junior school staff to discuss general strategy. Similar meetings between subject coordinators and heads of department in both schools are held, some more consistently than others. The junior school head is therefore closely involved with overall management, and is thus able to represent and promote junior school interests and needs within the context of whole school governance and management.
- 7.5 Management arrangements within the junior school are mostly effective. Weekly staff meetings ensure awareness of situations affecting pupils and regularly take the pulse of the school, so to speak. Subject leadership and management are generally sound, but some weaknesses are evident. Subject coordinators have produced comprehensive documentation, which, in specific areas, lacks medium- and long-term planning. Subjects in which a number of teachers are involved lack the necessary liaison to devise agreed strategies to promote consistency of teaching to pupils' needs. Arrangements for the appraisal of teaching staff are effective and appreciated by them. Similar arrangements to cover support staff are imminent. Curriculum development and opportunities for INSET are generally good, though whole school focus and direction are not assigned to a coordinator.
- 7.6 Routine administration is effective and efficient. Teaching and support staff serve the school very well in all areas. Overall strategic planning has ensured the careful evaluation of development to foster the value of a very good all-round education for the encouragement of pupils' individual achievement, confidence and self esteem. On the initiative of the head and with good support from colleagues, the junior school development improvement plan is central to the creation of a united set of objectives across the school. Academic and personal

development programmes have been carefully devised to accommodate and promote pupils' aspirations and needs.

8. ACHIEVEMENT AND QUALITY IN SUBJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Achievement and Quality in Subjects

English

- 8.1 Pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities throughout the school. They read well and with understanding and are articulate for their ages. Their listening skills are very well developed and they express their ideas orally with clarity and self-confidence. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 6 class, the pupils expressing themselves with imagination and self-confidence when reading aloud letters of complaint, which they had written. In a Year 5 class, the pupils showed a good understanding of the structure of a 'rap' poem and contributed lucidly to the ensuing discussion. Pupils in Year 4 read a demanding and extensive passage with understanding and expression. Pupils in all year groups are articulate and express their ideas clearly and with imagination.
- 8.2 Written work is well presented and the use of grammar is often secure. Year 6 pupils attain good standards when writing independently and their written compositions, attractively displayed in the classroom, are thoughtfully constructed and, at best, show liveliness and clear expression. All pupils in a Year 4 class had made contributions of a good standard to a book of extended stories and imaginative creative writing featured prominently in wall displays. Year 3 pupils have a good command of grammar in the work books, but here creative or extended written work is less in evidence, as greater emphasis is placed upon the development of speaking and listening skills.
- 8.3 In all lessons progress was never less than sound, in many it was good and in a small number it was rapid. The less able, in all years, are well supported with carefully chosen tasks which enable them to maximise their learning. The most able are not always encouraged to produce the volume or range of written work of which they are truly capable and, in these instances, their progress is not as rapid as it could be. Clear progression in the acquisition of skills is evident, both within year groups and from one age group to another.
- 8.4 The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is good and often very good. They show a desire to learn, participate fully and oral contributions are often enthusiastic. Many are able to work independently and show high levels of concentration, even when there is protracted oral work in the form of discussion or explanation. In all of the lessons observed, an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance was evident. Pupils are well behaved, courteous and attentive.
- 8.5 The quality of teaching is sound. Of the lessons observed, the majority were sound and many were good, with a small number very good. Teachers are supportive and encouraging, praising the pupils and rewarding their efforts. Teachers encourage the pupils to involve themselves in the lessons and this often leads to very good pupil participation. Pupils are encouraged to work independently, but in a significant minority of lessons they are not led into written work quickly enough, often leaving insufficient opportunity for them to tackle the written component of the lesson, or for the most able pupils to extend their writing fully. Variety in the styles of teaching employed included some effective role-play, but often too much time is devoted to oral work.
- 8.6 Effective provision is made for pupils requiring learning support by a support teacher, who is on hand to give advice on strategies for individual pupils.

- 8.7 Pupils' work is assessed in line with the marking policy and work is marked promptly. Written comments praise the pupils and are often very good, invariably identifying areas for improvement. Assessments are recorded and progress monitored. Reading is monitored efficiently and a reading record is kept for each pupil.
- 8.8 The subject is very well resourced in all respects with ample supplies of textbooks, all of which are of very good quality.
- 8.9 Leadership and management are good, with some weaknesses. The newly appointed subject leader has devised a useful policy document and guidelines for the staff who teach English, which now needs refinement. Teachers submit detailed short-term plans but, as yet, no overview is provided, and schemes of work do not illustrate clearly enough how all components of the subject are to be developed. Meetings of teachers within year groups are effective in ensuring a common purpose, but liaison does not yet involve all members of the department in devising written strategies to be adhered to throughout the school. Useful links with the senior school department include some teaching by the head of the lower school.

Mathematics

- 8.10 Pupils' attainment in mathematics is good in the earlier years and high for their ages, abilities and aptitudes by the time they are eleven.
- 8.11 While the school does not formally enter for the national tests at age 11, the results of these tests, marked informally by the school staff, indicate that pupils' attainment is high in relation to their abilities. By the age of eleven, standards are high. Many pupils demonstrate a high level of mental agility in a wide range of mathematical concepts. Year 6 pupils capably complete long multiplication and division sums, use positive and negative coordinates and solve simple algebraic equations. Mental arithmetic is practised regularly and, by the time they are in Year 6, the majority of pupils demonstrate very good speed and accuracy. In each year group, the pupils attain well in the basic functions of mathematics often thinking of good strategies to reach answers. For example, Year 4 pupils thought of a variety of ways in which to multiply three numbers together. Year 5 pupils showed probability as both a percentage and vulgar fraction, and Year 6 pupils expressed amounts as vulgar fractions, decimals or percentages.
- 8.12 Pupils' overall progress in mathematics is at least sound, nearly always good and sometimes rapid. Pupils are grouped by subject ability in each of Years 4, 5 and 6, which enables them to work at appropriate levels of difficulty. Investigative work and "brain teasers" regularly challenge and are enjoyed by the more able pupils, whose progress benefits from such opportunities.
- 8.13 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is good. Sometimes it is very good. Pupils respond well, show generally very good motivation, and work cooperatively in pairs when so required. They usually listen very carefully to instructions and explanations. Many pupils are competent thinkers, who respond well to questioning. Behaviour is very good and attitudes purposeful.
- 8.14 The quality of teaching is good. It was always at least sound, and in over half of the lessons observed it was good or very good. The best teaching is characterised by a brisk pace, good planning and clear explanations. Most teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think logically. The majority of lessons were well-paced and used time and resources well. Good relationships between pupils and staff were observed. Short-term planning is good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and appropriately. Occasionally, expectation of the less

able pupils could be higher. The subject is supported by a wide range of textbooks, work sheets, practical equipment and IT programs.

- 8.15 Leadership and management are largely effective. The newly appointed coordinator has made some use of assessment results to improve curriculum planning. Long- and medium-term planning systems are in the process of development. Documentation has not been fully agreed across the department and, therefore, does not yet ensure that appropriate study of all strands of mathematics occurs, both over the years and across the groups within each year. This leads to some omission and repetition of topics. Formal assessment strategies are extensive but do not include the means to make better use of those assessments which improve curriculum planning. The coordinator organised two very valuable INSET days for the staff, which focused on extending skills for the most able. Good liaison with the senior school mathematics department takes place and it is planned to extend this important link.

Science

- 8.16 Standards of attainment are good. Evidence of achievement observed in books and in lessons indicates that pupils are proficient and knowledgeable across the whole science curriculum.
- 8.17 Good attainment is characterised by the pupils' ability to relate previous learning to new work and to develop a sound understanding of the concepts of biology, chemistry and physics. Year 6 pupils studying micro-organisms applied their knowledge of the requirements of living processes to conclude that yeast is a living organism. Throughout the school subject-specific vocabulary is used correctly and with confidence. Good examples of pupils developing practical and observational skills in experimental and investigative work are apparent and appropriate emphasis is given to predicting likely outcomes. Year 4 pupils were aware that the suitability of materials for specific uses is dependent on the properties of the material and they devised a fair test to confirm their hypothesis. Year 5 pupils understood the effect of pressure on a liquid and knew that when liquid evaporates it forms a gas. They were also aware that water can displace air from the gaps in porous materials. Year 6 pupils had completed personal research into the work of Jenner, Pasteur and Lister and understood that micro-organisms cause decay and disease. They were beginning to evaluate their work and to emerge as competent independent learners.
- 8.18 Pupils' progress in lessons and over time is good and sometimes rapid. High-achieving boys were inquisitive and perceptive, while average pupils were eager to answer questions, but less willing to explore more than they were required to do. Pupils with special educational needs receive the necessary support to maintain the same rate of progress as the rest of the class. All pupils follow a balanced science course. Challenge and reinforcement ensure that tasks are matched to the abilities of the pupils. A recently purchased commercial scheme contributes to good progress and continuity from Year 3 to Year 6.
- 8.19 Pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are cooperative and attentive, follow instructions very well and respond readily to their teacher's questions. They generate their own ideas when working collaboratively and show respect for the safety criteria when working practically. At all times pupils are polite, but very occasionally their attitude is only satisfactory if their contribution to the learning process is not allowed to be sufficient because the lesson is too teacher-dominated.
- 8.20 The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching. An excellent lesson was observed where the pupils' attention was captured from their entry into the classroom. The approach was exemplary, producing a brisk and lively pace so that the teaching impacted fully upon the pupils. Most lessons are suitably planned with realistic expectations and good pace to match the learning objectives and the needs of the pupils. Teachers are secure in

their knowledge. They have good relationships with their pupils and their organisation of classes is very professional and appropriate. Lessons are well resourced and when the science technician is available to assist with preparation, both the teaching and learning are enhanced.

- 8.21 The science department is very well led and managed. The policy is good and the scheme of work detailed. Long- and medium-term plans are very thorough and serve as a useful tool for the non-specialist teacher. A comprehensive overview exists of the teaching of science in the school and there is a very sound vision for the future. Regular monitoring of the scheme of work and pupils' exercise books is ongoing. Records of pupils' attainment, 'Check and Review', are comprehensive and are an example of good assessment practice. The results of assessment are reflected in short-term lesson plans. The Year 5 planning proforma is particularly clear and thorough and its use may be extended to all years. The approach to marking is consistent with constructive comments to aid pupils' progress. Pupils benefit from a purpose-built, well equipped laboratory. They are able to undertake the full range of practical work in a safe environment. The use of appropriate computer software has become integral to the teaching of science. Sufficient reference books in the library and science laboratory complement learning and research.

Geography

- 8.22 Standards in geography are appropriate to pupils' age and abilities. Throughout the year groups, they have a sound knowledge of basic facts and reach sensible conclusions from their own observations. In Year 3, pupils could name types of cloud and understood the meaning of weather symbols. Pupils in Year 5 showed a good knowledge of the political and physical map of Europe and used atlases effectively for individual research. A Year 6 class showed a good grasp of work being tackled on life in a cold climate and contributed lucidly during class discussion. Across all year groups, work books contain detailed and well-presented material on a good range of topics, with accurate analysis, graphs and charts. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge and grasp of basic geographical facts and skills.
- 8.23 Progress made by pupils in all lessons is at least sound and often good, but sometimes pupils do not move quickly enough to write down their good ideas during the lessons. Workbooks show clear progression since the start of the academic year, with a satisfactory volume of written work completed. Presentation of written work is often of a good standard.
- 8.24 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is generally very good and never less than good. Pupils show interest and are keen to demonstrate their previous knowledge, which in some cases is extensive. They respond enthusiastically during question-and-answer sessions and appreciate the teacher's humour. They work with a sense of purpose and concentrate fully on the task in hand, even when oral work is protracted during lengthy explanations. An atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect pervades the lessons. Pupils show a desire for learning, both co-operatively and independently. They are unfailingly courteous and listen patiently to each other's views.
- 8.25 Teaching across all year groups is sound. It is often good. Lessons are mainly teacher led, with some opportunities offered for independent work. Some tasks enable the more able pupils to gain a greater depth of knowledge and understanding. Interactive white boards enable the internet to be used to good advantage in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and secure in their subject knowledge, but just occasionally the pace of lessons is too slow with too much time being devoted to discussion.

- 8.26 Assessment consists of a test at the end of each topic and the clearly defined and suitable grading policy is adhered to. Books are marked regularly, with encouraging comments to identify areas for improvement.
- 8.27 The subject is well led and managed. Regular meetings are held to identify curriculum priorities. The range and quantity of resources are more than adequate. For Year 6 pupils, the coordinator has established a useful email link with the city of Iqualuit, which forms part of the topic on cold climates. This year group has also recently completed a valuable field work trip to the Jaguar car plant in Castle Bromwich as part of local study, the results of which form part of the excellent display of work in the entrance foyer.

Information and Communication Technology

- 8.28 Pupils achieve high standards within and across all age groups.
- 8.29 From Year 3 onwards, pupils' attainment is high as a result of challenging expectations and their competent and confident use of a wide variety of skills. Year 3 pupils exchanged favourite jokes via email, while Year 5 pupils collected data from friends, including personal details and interests, to incorporate into spreadsheets, using cells, rows and columns whose function they understood and could handle.
- 8.30 Progress is good and often rapid for all pupils, both in lessons and over longer periods. High standards of progress observed both in lessons and through scrutiny of pupils' work, result from insistence on good practice and strong emphasis on the acquisition of sound basic skills from Year 3 onwards. Consolidation and development continue through all age groups. The only inhibiting factor in pupils' attainment and progress is their slow development of confident keyboard skills.
- 8.31 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. All pupils exhibit positive enthusiasm. They listen carefully and follow instructions well. They are highly motivated, sustain concentration effectively and accomplish given tasks successfully, as exemplified in a Year 6 lesson on multimedia presentation, where pupils planned their programmes, imported digital images, searched for animated clips and inserted sound effects. They support each other well, sharing problems and helping when difficulties are encountered.
- 8.32 The teaching is very good. Teachers have enthusiasm, good knowledge and sound understanding of skills required to teach pupils, of whom they have high expectations. Lessons are very well managed to elicit and sustain pupils' enthusiasm and interest. An effective combination of whole-class exposition, demonstration of specific skills and sequences and plenty of time devoted to the giving of individual support help to ensure that pupils of all abilities receive the encouragement and support they need. Activities chosen are appropriately challenging and usefully help pupils at all levels to extend their ICT skills.
- 8.33 The subject is strongly led and very well managed. Policies and schemes of work are well thought out to encourage both colleagues and pupils to recognise and learn to use the subject area as a means for further research and learning across the curriculum. The coordinator advises the junior school staff and is very active in encouraging and assisting teaching colleagues to deploy ICT throughout subject areas as an important tool for teaching and learning, which increases pupils' opportunities and breadth of experience. Curriculum planning is very good and provides well for progression from Year 3 to Year 6, with consequent benefits to staff and pupils. Assessment, which is computerised, is effective, being regularly updated and used to formulate lesson plans and curriculum development.

- 8.34 Excellent use is made of the ICT suite and interactive whiteboards and the emphasis on teaching skills through cross-curricular work is highly successful. The coordinator and his colleagues do not receive dedicated technical assistance, but they do appreciate the strong and willing support of technicians from the senior school.

Music

- 8.35 Standards of attainment in music are high. Year 6 pupils generally possess very well-developed skills. They understand the importance of timing, rhythmic intervals and keeping together by watching as well as listening. They sing without embarrassment, follow a graphic score with confidence and recognise the manner in which music may reflect differing intentions.
- 8.36 Pupils make rapid progress both within lessons and from one year to the next. They use previously attained skills and knowledge successfully in applying them to new learning situations and they also follow a very comprehensive scheme of work and a well-compiled published scheme that encourages continuity and progress.
- 8.37 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and they clearly enjoy their lessons. They work well together, are highly motivated and their concentration is generally very good. They are eager to contribute and are prepared to work hard to achieve pleasing standards of performance. At all times the behaviour of the oldest pupils is impeccable; occasionally the youngest pupils become over-excited, possibly because the size and open aspect of the Chapel make it unsuitable for class music at this level.
- 8.38 The teaching of the subject is very good. Learning objectives are very clearly defined and high targets are set. The planning is thorough and the pace of the lessons is brisk. Pupils receive much encouragement to reach their full potential. Subject knowledge is very secure and the teaching is by very able musicians, who are both enthusiastic and professional in their approach. Informal assessment is ongoing through the lessons and activities are carefully chosen to match the needs of individual pupils. Resources are very effectively used to foster pupils' learning, which is also reinforced by introductory and plenary sessions.
- 8.39 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. A strong foundation in music is laid by dedicated and enthusiastic staff, assisted by a very good policy statement and scheme of work. Pupils' progress is constantly monitored in relation to the National Curriculum and this information is used to develop and encourage strengths and to identify areas of weakness that require attention.
- 8.40 About two-thirds of the pupils take individual instrumental lessons in school. Associated Board awards are attained in a wide range of instruments. Whole-school concerts are strongly supported and pupils perform in assembly. The extra-curricular programme is particularly strong. A significant number of groups rehearse and perform on a regular basis. These range from the chapel choir and orchestra to the beginners' recorders and participation in the senior school samba band. The junior school has good reason to be proud of its music and its musicians who are assets to the school. Music considerably enhances the personal development of all pupils.

Physical Education and Games

- 8.41 Pupils achieve standards which are good for their age and abilities and sometimes very good. Attainment in swimming is particularly impressive; for example, all pupils in a Year 6 class used a variety of strokes competently to complete elements of personal survival. This

included treading water, surface diving and swimming underwater when clothed. All pupils in a Year 5 class completed straddle jumps and made floats from trousers, most whilst treading water. Pupils show good levels of fitness and agility during lessons in the gymnasium, while, on the football field, many show high levels of skill.

- 8.42 Pupils of all abilities make good progress, both independently and in groups. For example, during football lessons, pupils in Years 1 and 2 moved towards good standards of passing and ball control in skills routines, before putting these into practice effectively during a game. Some find the activities demanding, but all make useful progress according to their ability. Pupils make rapid progress in the swimming pool.
- 8.43 The quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour is good. Pupils are well motivated and many enjoy the challenge of the lessons, participating with energy and enthusiasm. They are well disciplined and concentrate on what they are doing. Pupils work together and support each other well. Sessions are popular, with the result that pupils' behaviour and learning are of a good standard.
- 8.44 The quality of teaching is good across all age groups and expectations are high. The junior school PE and games teacher makes imaginative use of his experience and is well supported by other junior school colleagues and specialists from the senior school, whose expertise is effectively used, especially in games lessons.
- 8.45 Pupils have many opportunities to involve themselves in teams which represent all ages. High levels of success are achieved in football, where there is a full list of fixtures, mainly with local primary school teams in the borough. In addition, pupils enjoy cross-country and swimming fixtures with other schools and benefit from the emphasis on athletics in the summer term. Birmingham City Football Club runs a popular weekly coaching course on the all-weather pitch, attended by 40 pupils from the school. The house system is also used imaginatively to involve pupils of all abilities. Teachers are actively aware and vigilant about health and safety issues.
- 8.46 Pupils' progress is not assessed or monitored in PE and games. Parents are notified of their son's participation in school teams but receive no detailed termly report. Leadership and management are sound. Planning is of a good standard and a comprehensive policy document covers all areas appropriately.
- 8.47 Junior school pupils benefit greatly from the use of very good specialist facilities, which include a sports hall, swimming pool and all-weather hockey surface. These are well used during extra-curricular time, when large numbers of pupils participate in the hockey and football activities on offer. The playing fields are extensive, well maintained and easily accessible. Resources are good in quality and quantity and are well used.

Religious Education (RE) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

- 8.48 Pupils achieve high standards. Their written work is good and they are highly articulate in their lessons. They display an understanding and sensitivity beyond their years. Pupils in Year 6 radiate an inner confidence and possess a strong sense of social justice. During their lessons on human rights they were reflective, thoughtful and aware of how the actions of people can affect wider issues. In a similarly sensitive manner, Year 5 pupils listened carefully and gained an understanding of the impact of religious teaching on a personal code for living. Year 5 and Year 4 pupils understood the meaning of 'reconciliation' and 'persecution' and were familiar with the use of symbols to convey the Christian message.

- 8.49 Progress made in exercise books is good. Written work improves in depth and quality from Year 3 to Year 6 and greater understanding is evident when areas of study are revisited at a later stage of pupil maturity. Both orally and in lessons, progress is rapid. Pupils listen carefully, express their own thoughts and benefit from the thoughts of others. Classes move forward as corporate groups.
- 8.50 Pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are responsive to the teaching they receive. Their concentration span is good and they are perceptive and thoughtful. They co-operate fully and their motivation is high. At all times their behaviour is good and frequently better.
- 8.51 The quality of teaching is good and, in some cases, very good. The best lessons have a focus, be it a candle, a picture or a piece of music, to encourage reflection. An atmosphere of calm and security is created and pupils feel sufficiently relaxed and safe to explore their personal beliefs and opinions. Lessons are thoughtfully planned, questioning techniques are well developed to stimulate and provoke positive pupil response and relationships are positive.
- 8.52 The teaching of religious education is supported by the strong, purposeful and caring ethos of the junior school. Assemblies foster a spirit of unity and belonging amongst the boys and encourage reflection and self-dedication. Moral guidance and simple tolerance are also promoted. The religious education provision is based on Christian traditions, but also acknowledges the essence of other world faiths. It covers, together with a discrete personal, social and health education strand across all years, those qualities common to all religions and appropriate to the pupils, such as love, service, patience and honesty.
- 8.53 Leadership and management are good. The well-planned curriculum is based upon the local authority agreed syllabus. For each year group, the subject coordinator has prepared a very good file with guidelines, details of resources, photographs of visits and other useful documentation that provides a good resource for teachers. The supply of artefacts, books and resources is adequate for teaching the curriculum. A good reference base is available. The marking of pupils' work is both constructive and encouraging. Their experience is further enriched by the provision of multi-faith visits, attractive religious education displays of work in the public areas of the school and the opportunity to attend a meditation club as an extra-curricular activity.

Art and Design and Technology

- 8.54 Pupils' attainment in both areas is good from Year 3 onwards, rising to high by the end of Year 6. Year 3 pupils are competent in a variety of skills, including collage, drawing, painting and three-dimensional work. By Year 6, they have expanded their proficiency significantly in relation to their abilities, for example, to develop an understanding of the style and work of prominent artists from different ages and cultures, and they constructively use their imagination and skills and a wide variety of media.
- 8.55 Pupils' achievements and the levels of what they know, understand and can do exceed expectations for their ages and abilities. Attainment is securely based on sound foundations of thorough preparation and research and insistence on the establishment of good codes of safe practice in the use of equipment, materials and tools. A Year 6 class demonstrated very good understanding of skills and techniques in producing African fabric decoration, using batik, starch resist and stencil methods, while Year 5 pupils demonstrated accomplished measuring skills, safe use of tools and accurate assembly in producing chassis for their wheeled vehicle project.

- 8.56 The progress of all pupils is good and often rapid at all levels. Building on the secure foundations of good practice and careful planning insisted upon by teachers, they use and develop their skills effectively. Year 3 pupils made rapid progress in their intricate designs of pattern and colour in mosaics, and Year 6 pupils, again, progressed similarly in constructing electrical circuits to power a lamp and a motor, as part of their model helicopter building project. The standard and variety of work displayed around the school testify to pupils' high standards of attainment and progress. They use their expertise in art and DT to illustrate facets of school life and experience. Examples include a display reflecting a Year 6 sketching expedition in the town, another group's lino printing, coordinate shapes in mathematics, explaining how coordinates are used to determine position, and models from different year groups, showing the function of a crank mechanism, turbines and model cars of their own design.
- 8.57 Pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour are very good. At all levels they are keen to learn and to succeed and they clearly enjoy what they do. They work well together, both independently and in collaboration, showing constructively critical interest in each other's efforts, and demonstrating imagination and initiative. They use planning sessions wisely, to understand exactly what is involved and to determine the best materials and tools to employ. They benefit from these sessions in their understanding of safety measures and proper use of tools and equipment.
- 8.58 The quality of teaching is very good. Pupils' success stems from the very thorough and enthusiastic organisation and planning, excellent class management and subject knowledge and imaginative approach of all involved in teaching these areas. Teachers' patience, observation, support and rapport with pupils are all of a high order. They employ imaginative strategies to stimulate pupils' interest and take them forward. Particularly noticeable is the way in which teachers encourage pupils to work solutions out for themselves; they observe carefully and step in only when guidance is essential. Equipment, materials and time are all used most effectively, and good emphasis is placed on safe and good practice at all times.
- 8.59 Leadership and management of these two areas are excellent. Schemes of work are clear, realistic and appropriately varied to give pupils as much experience as possible in different media and techniques. Accommodation and resources are very good and well supported, for example by small libraries in each area, as well as additional material in the main library. ICT has a role in planning and display. Visiting groups and expeditions outside school, for example to the Barber Institute, or the Jaguar factory at Castle Bromwich provide wider horizons to stimulate pupils' creative abilities and interests.

Short Subject Reports

Short subject reports contain concise evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of provision in the school.

History

- 8.60 Four lessons were observed in Years 4, 5 and 6, and samples of pupils' written work were scrutinised.
- 8.61 Teaching was good in half of the lessons and otherwise sound. The best lessons enjoyed good pace through teachers' enthusiasm and competent subject knowledge. Clear lesson objectives did not always allow development of skills involved in new historical learning. Pupils enjoyed little opportunity to display flair or originality through individual in-depth study. Teachers encouraged thinking beyond the obvious by skilful questioning.

- 8.62 Pupils' quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour were good. They concentrated and responded well to the teaching, demonstrating that they are competent learners, who enjoy discussion and research. They had good relations with staff and with each other, were courteous and listened well.
- 8.63 The curriculum covers a suitable range of historical periods, but newly devised lesson plans are not always appropriate in content or workable for the time allocated. Resources are very good, with much, mostly appropriate, reliance on worksheets. The library has a good selection of history books and video material, and offers useful access to websites recommended for research.
- 8.64 Outside visits stimulate pupils' interest, such as Year 4's visit to Wootton Wawen, where they dressed and acted as monks. Specialist visitors have enabled Year 3 pupils to experience Anglo-Saxon days, and those in Years 4 and 5, Greek and Roman days respectively.

Modern Foreign Languages

- 8.65 The school offers Year 6 pupils an introduction to French, German and Spanish. Two lessons were observed, in German and Spanish. Policy documents and schemes of work were scrutinised, as were samples of pupils' written work. A discussion was held with the two teachers involved, each a native speaker of the two languages.
- 8.66 The quality of teaching was good. Lesson planning was appropriate to pupils' abilities and needs, and drew from well-prepared schemes of work, which contained realistic goals for the limited time available. The emphasis was chiefly on developing basic vocabulary for oral communication.
- 8.67 Pupils' quality of learning, attitudes and behaviour was good. They worked hard to develop good pronunciation and to exchange simple greetings and identities.
- 8.68 Written work, although limited in quantity, is sufficient for the level of study and used mainly to reinforce the oral work which prevails. Resources are appropriate to pupils' needs and a few library books add further useful information on the culture and customs of the countries concerned. Teachers manage the subject area well, and the course offers a useful introduction to three popular European languages.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

- 8.69 The junior school provides a very good range of activities which enable its pupils to develop their talents, extend their skills and widen their interests. Pupils have the freedom to select from a wide variety of over 40 activities, which are appropriate for their ages and abilities. In many of these activities good standards of achievement were observed.
- 8.70 The varied range of activities includes some which last for a term and some for the whole year. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in activities every day, during lunch hours and after school. Sporting clubs in the spring term include football, hockey, tag rugby, table tennis, karate and survival swimming. School teams play to a high standard, winning many fixtures. A Year 6 boy is the under 10 Warwickshire tennis champion. Musical interests are catered for in the choirs, orchestra, wind band, violin, recorder and hand bell groups, where pupils perform with good voice production and good quality of sound.
- 8.71 Pupils can also opt for meditation, computers, drama, art, chess, book club, board games, technology, handwriting, poetry, cookery and Latin, which is led very successfully by an

enthusiastic sixth form student. Opportunities also exist for pupils to take part in school trips such as the Year 5 visit to the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales.

- 8.72 The programme of activities is implemented very effectively. Leadership, management and organisation are efficient and clearly understood by pupils and parents. All members of staff take part in the programme with considerable enthusiasm and commitment.
- 8.73 Pupils' participation in these activities, which is reported to parents, makes a strong contribution to their educational experience and achievement.

9. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 9.1 The inspection was carried out from 24th – 28th January 2005. 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: history; modern foreign languages. The inspectors visited 60 lessons or parts of lessons, examined extensive samples of work by pupils of different abilities in each year and held informal discussions with other pupils. They attended three assemblies and eight registration sessions. They observed 12 out of a possible 20 extra-curricular and sporting activities. They held discussions with 25 teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels in the school. They analysed the 112 responses, out of a possible 144, to a questionnaire distributed to parents in advance of the inspection. They examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

John Marchant	Reporting inspector, former head of two HMC/IAPS junior schools
Brenda Doig	Former head, GSA junior school
Paul Greenfield	Head, HMC junior school
Elizabeth Henson	Former head, GSA junior school